

The Commodified Double in

Der Student von Prag

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Stellan Rye's *Der Student von Prag* (1913) was one of the first German films to explore the motif of the double.¹ Set in 1820, in the old town of Prague, it tells the story of the student, Balduin, who makes a mysterious bargain with a devilish man named Scapinelli: a purse of gold in exchange for an object of value from his apartment. The transaction concludes – to Balduin's shock and confusion – with Scapinelli animating his mirror image and leading it out of the apartment. Thereafter Balduin is not tormented by the devil nor does he lose his soul. Rather, throughout the rest of the film, his mirror image returns to haunt him, driving him to madness and eventually to suicide. The distinction of the double in *Der Student von Prag* lies in its visual compulsion: the look-alike figure is rejected in favor of a divided self. It is a real part of his very being, which, on account of this transaction, has gained its own consciousness and mobility, and has now become detached from the whole. However, this division does not give Balduin's mirror image agency. It only enables a kind of repossession – ownership moving from Balduin to Scapinelli – in which the divided self must now do the bidding of its new master.

The double in this film has already elicited numerous interpretations production.² Despite the rich analyses of this film, there is no study that has analy-

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1 | For a thorough background on the film's literary atmosphere of German Romanticism, see Stephen Brockmann: *Der Student von Prag* (1913) and Learning to Look. In: *A Critical History of German Film*. Rochester (NY) 2010, p. 35 f.; Sabine Hake: *German National Cinema*. New York 2002, p. 22; Thomas Elsaesser: *Weimar Cinema, Mobile Selves, and Anxious Males: Kracauer and Eisner Revisited*. In: *Expressionist Films. New Perspectives*. Ed. by Dietrich Scheunemann. Rochester (NY), pp. 42–46; Hanns Heinz Ewers: *Von Kinema*. In: *Kein Tag ohne Kino: Schriftsteller über den Stummfilm*. Textsammlung. Ed. by Fritz Güttinger. Frankfurt a. M. 1984, p. 22.

2 | For various interpretations on the film, see Otto Rank: *Der Doppelgänger*. In: *Idem: Psychoanalytische Beiträge zur Mythenforschung*. Leipzig 1919, pp. 267–354; cited in: Gerald Bär: *Das Motiv des Doppelgängers als Spaltungsphantasie in der Li-*

zed the visibility of the double within the film's economic codes. The first half of the present article (I.) focuses on the double in *Der Student von Prag* as economically-encoded, arguing that Balduin is primarily a consumer and his double is actualized as the result of his material pursuits. It utilizes Jean Baudrillard's sociological theory, *The Consumer Society*, in order to show how the double in *Der Student von Prag* is a cinematic dramatization of a Marxist critique of human alienation under conditions of industrial capitalist production.³ In analyzing the double as economically-encoded, this article shifts the focus from its association with politically-based anxieties of the disintegrated self to an embodiment of the problems associated with pursuing social mobility through the modern economic schemes of capitalism. The second half of this article (II.) provides a comparative analysis of the double in *Der Student von Prag* and Albert von Chamisso's novel *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (1814). These two stories find their point of mutuality in the bargaining of a part of one's self (Balduin's mirror image and Peter's shadow respectively) for a money purse and the subsequent binding relation that this creates with their devilish dealers. This second section highlights the contract with devil, as well as the wages earned and the loss of identity. It then considers how *Der Student of Prag* makes use Chamisso's tale as a point of departure in order to construct a distinctly modern economic discourse.

THE ECONOMIC DOUBLE

The first segment in *Der Student von Prag* establishes the film's economic frame. A romantic drama, set in an outdoor café, begins to unfold with the subtext, »Es herrscht ein lustiges Leben unter den Prager Corpsstudenten.«⁴ The scene is cluttered with tables and chairs, students are drinking and eating, and women move about as entertainment. The *mise-en-scène* alone reveals the emphasis of consumption in which the desired objects – both for visual craving and culinary appetite – fill up the entire space. Jean Baudrillard aptly describes this phenomenon when he states, »there is all around us today a kind of fantastic conspicuousness of consumption and abundance, constituted by the multiplication of objects, services and material goods, and this represents something of a fundamental mutation in the ecology of the human species.«⁵ The mutation

teratur und im deutschen Stummfilm. Rodopi 2005; Stefan Andropoulos: The Terror of Reproduction: Early Cinema's Ghostly Doubles and the Right to One's Own Image. In: New German Critique 33 (2006), No. 3, pp. 151-170; Siegfried Kracauer: From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film. Princeton (NJ) 1947.

3 | Jean Baudrillard: *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. London 2003.

4 | *Der Student von Prag*. Berlin: Deutsche Bioscop GmbH 1913 [Film].

5 | Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, p. 25.

in this scene consists of a distinct lack of interaction between men. Each man sits alone, isolated in his obsessions, including the film's protagonist. Indeed, the spatial organization of men here signifies the socio-economic organization. Balduin sits at a table in the fore, a space reserved for the rich throughout the film; and even though he is currently not wealthy, his placement indicates his preoccupation with money. The separation in this scene also provides the diagnosis for Balduin's future. His desire for social mobility, for wealth and for the consumption of goods, does not allow for greater integration within society; rather it creates an ever-growing gap. He has come to live »beneath the mute gaze of mesmerizing, obedient objects«⁶ and instead of wanting to interact with his fellow man, he can only think of how to gain more things.

The film's charlatan, Scapinelli, becomes the enabler of Balduin's material desires. This proto-romantic figure, who comes dressed in a black suit with a top-hat and cane, creates an immediate association with modern company owners who dictate contracts and prices. Scapinelli's visit to Balduin within his own home in the fourth segment symbolizes the first invasion of modern economics into the personal sphere.⁷ He entices Balduin with a money bag that pours out a large pile of cash, thereby presenting commodities in profusion, for which »piling high are clearly the most striking descriptive features«.⁸ In fact, the pile of wealth becomes of greater significance than the quantity, for it provides »the manifest presence of surplus, the magical, definitive negation of scarcity, the maternal, luxurious sense of being already in the Land of Cockaigne.«⁹ Scapinelli's melodramatic gesture of piling money on Balduin's table reinforces the magical quality of modern economic schemes within capitalism that enables wealth. The money-bag that Scapinelli brings also stands in contrast to the bouquet of flowers that Balduin holds, which he had unsuccessfully attempted to use earlier in courting Countess Margit. (Count Schwarzenberg had brought a bigger bouquet, forcing Balduin to retreat back to his room, flowers still in hand.) Scapinelli even mocks this bouquet and, in offering him the money purse, insinuates that modern courtship should be conducted not through romance but through economic transactions. The amount of money, however, that Scapinelli provides Balduin allows for more than just his courtship with Margit. He offers money in excess, a »prodigious fecundity.«¹⁰ But this, as Baudillard

6 | Ibid

7 | The division of space within Balduin's home, and in particular Scapinelli's positing within it, also plays a significant role. For an interpretation of the formal aspects of this scene, see Leon Hunt: »The Student of Prague«: Division and Codification of Space. In: *Early Cinema: Space-Frame-Narrative*. Ed. by Adam Barker. London 1990, pp. 389–401.

8 | Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 26.

9 | Ibid.

10 | Ibid.

argues, is precisely the point. In terms of the consumer's desire for excess, he states, »we find here the fervid hope that there should be not enough, but too much – and too much for everyone [...]. And this metonymic, repetitive discourse of consumable matter, of the *commodity*, becomes once again, through a great collective metaphor – by virtue of its very excess – the image of the *gift*, and of that inexhaustible and spectacular prodigality which characterizes the *feast*.«¹¹

In return for the money, Balduin signs an agreement: »Ich bestätige den Empfang von 100.000 Goldgulden. Ich gebe dafür Herrn Scapinelli das Recht, aus diesem Zimmer mitzunehmen, was ihm liebt. Prag, den 13. Mai 1820.« In this economic contract, the exchange centers around supposed equal items of worth. Balduin will receive 100.000 florins of gold in exchange for something of value in his room. The exchange is at the heart of the fable of the consumer society. Balduin's reward is not the result of his hard work or of any sort of production process, rather it is presented to him as a miracle, a supernatural actualization of his wishful thinking. Consequently, Balduin takes on a »consumer mentality,« in which consumption is governed by a form of magical thinking. Indeed, for Balduin, daily life is governed by a mentality based on miraculous thinking. In a moment that attests to his utopian thinking, Balduin views Scapinelli as the plentiful capitalist owner, who distributes his wealth generously to those who have less. Balduin eagerly accepts the contract, telling Scapinelli, »ein sonderbarer Kanz – aus meiner Bude – bitte – was Euch beliebt.« His thinking reveals that he experiences Scapinelli's (and hence the capitalist's) aid as something natural and expected.

But it is exactly this economic pact that actualizes the double. Scapinelli reveals that his choice of possession is nothing less than Balduin's reflection (his »Ebenbild«). Scapinelli has not given away his money purse in a utopian attempt for equal wage distribution, but rather as a purchase for Balduin's own body. Balduin has inadvertently sold his self for money. The result is a split between subject and commodified object. The film once again illuminates this economic split in its spatial organization. The left half of the screen is allocated to Balduin as subject and the right half of the screen for his double with Scapinelli standing in between the two selves thereby highlighting his instigation of their split. The commodified object then leaves the mirror and exits the lodgings. His exit signifies the beginning of the opposition between the subject and the mirror image as object. The commodified object is now under the control of a new owner, Scapinelli, and must do his bidding. Balduin as subject has neither knowledge nor agency to counter this force. Nevertheless, these two selves continue to engage in a complex *pas de deux* of construction and counter-construction. The two selves are bound, in using Baudillard's terms, by »gold and gold alone,« namely commodity logic and exchange value.¹² Eventually the two spaces they

¹¹ | Ibid.

¹² | Ibid., p. 188.

occupy converge in a dramatic and destructive manner revealing that this economic split cannot be sustained indefinitely.

Balduin, however, not yet fully conscious of the implications of this economic bargain, begins his ascent to high society. The seventh segment in *Der Student von Prag* makes two statements to this effect: »Für Balduin ist jetzt eine neue Zeit angebrochen« and »Balduin ist zu einem Ball beim Statthalter auf die Hofburg eingeladen.« The ball is a significant moment in his social mobility. This is evident, first, in his spatial movement throughout this scene: »Balduin enters from the extreme rear of the frame, repeating his movement from far to near [...]. He moves not only into a new, bourgeois society but directly into the privileged space occupied by the Countess«.¹³ Second, it is at the ball that he begins officially courting Margit. His consumption of wealth has laid hold of the whole of his life such that all of his activities – material objects, bourgeois behavior, social engagements and even love interests – become sequenced into one combinatorial mode. This organization is termed by Baudillard as »the phenomenology of consumption,« in which a »perfected ›consummated‹ [*consummé*] stage of evolution [...] runs from affluence pure and simple, through interconnected networks or objects, to the total conditioning of action and time.«¹⁴ In other words, Balduin's consumerism homogenizes his life and as such he inadvertently becomes complicit in making his consumer identity his only identity. His courtship, for example, which begins at the ball, is not only made possible by his possessions, it is also driven forward by it. In this new encounter with Margit, Balduin does not bring a bouquet of flowers. Rather, his new gift to her is simply himself, a wealthy man who possesses material objects.

Balduin's pursuit of social mobility, at the same time, initiates the return of the double. This commodity returns as a phantasmagoria (literally: a ghost in the marketplace).¹⁵ It breaks into Balduin's ever-growing »transcendent, autonomous and abstract sphere«¹⁶ of consumeristic living and draws him out to the balcony at the governor's mansion in order to confront what is real. Though Balduin may think he is a wealthy man, the double's position at the outermost edge highlights the continuation of his poverty. This juxtaposition is also highlighted in their dress. Though Balduin is now better dressed, the double's clothes reflects his former existence as a student. The confrontation with his poorer, commodified self initiates a »dizzying whirl of reality.«¹⁷ Balduin as subject is confronted with two forms of knowledge: the dimensions of his consumption (his needs and desires) and those of his commodification (his limitations). The-

13 | Hunt, »The Student of Prague,« p. 400.

14 | Ibid., p. 29.

15 | For more on Baudrillard's use of »phantasmagoria,« see David Clark: Jean Baudrillard. Fatal Theories. Oxon 2009, p. 110.

16 | Baudrillard, The Consumer Society, p. 35.

17 | Ibid., p. 34.

se two forms of knowledge make manifest that the confrontation is »not merely [the result of] the subject becoming object, nor just the loss of this reified self: it is above all the [result of the] continual visitation of the subject by the self-same subject become object, the inescapable haunting of oneself by oneself.«¹⁸ Balduin, however, rejects the received warning. The double disappears and he returns to the ball.

The double's hauntings, however, do not merely serve to highlight residual poverty. Rather, they foreshadow the pending climax of commodification, namely violence. In the seventeenth segment of the film, the double kills Margit's fiancé, Count Schwarzenberg, in a duel, and Balduin can only stare in horror at the crime committed. This is the real problem of consumerism in the film. Since it is »aimless and objectless,«¹⁹ it becomes the breeding ground for other aimless and objectless acts, the greatest of which is violence. Indeed, as Baudrillard argues, »violence and affluence go together; they have to be analyzed together.«²⁰ That is, the wealthy – often because of boredom, other times for reasons of competition – can be just as violent as the poor. The act of murder fully deconstructs the mythical thinking surrounding Balduin's economic contract with Scapinelli. His affluence does not construct a paradise. Instead it allows Scapinelli to construct a dystopic society in which economic owners enslave their laborers and utilize their bodies for suspect purposes. Count Schwarzenberg had been a romantic competitor to Balduin for Margit's hand; but he may have been an even greater economic competitor to Scapinelli. Thus, from an economic perspective, Scapinelli uses Balduin to eliminate an economic threat.

It is only in the last few segments of the film that Balduin reaches a vague level of self-awareness. Balduin recognizes what Scapinelli has done to him. He is now »a being turned inside out, changed into something evil, into its own enemy, set against itself.«²¹ His only resort is to confront and destroy his commodification. He pulls out a gun and shoots the double, causing the mirror behind to shatter and his image to disappear. But Balduin's attempted agency in this final moment is too late, for a change in power has already taken place between him as subject and his mirror image as object. Leon Hunt describes how »this is marked directly by a reversal of position within the frame.«²² The divided frame becomes crossed such that Balduin now sits in the right half of the screen, while his double occupies the left half. The arrangement of space reveals that when Balduin fires his gun, he has done nothing more than shoot himself. He has been alienated to such an extent that his commodified self has become his only self and thus to kill it is to end his own life. In this confusion of

18 | Clark, Jean Baudrillard, p. 110.

19 | Ibid.

20 | Ibid., p. 175.

21 | Ibid., p. 190.

22 | Hunt, »The Student of Prague«, p. 401.

identities, the film presents »a pivotal scene, not of redemption and restoration, but of destruction.«²³ Scapinelli's return to the scene thereafter confirms this. This was the fine print in the bargain: the exhausted laborer is no longer of use. Scapinelli rips up the agreement over Balduin's dead body to sanction the completion of his investment and, implicit in his departure is his search for a new worker whom he can exploit in this manner.

THE FILM'S ROMANTIC ROOTS

In a number of ways, this film's mirrored double distinguishes itself from the rich heritage of 19th century German Romantic doubles.²⁴ It differs from the look-alike Sandman figure (Giuseppe Coppola and Coppelius) in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* (1817) and from the look-alike husband (Firmian Stanislaus Siebenkäs and Hoseas Heinrich Leibgeber) in Jean Paul's *Siebenkäs* (1796/97), as well as from the gendered double (Jupiter and her husband) in Heinrich von Kleist's *Amphitryon* (1807). The reason for the difference lies in the monetary discourse of the film. Balduin replaces his image for gold; the double is a manifestation of his actualized monetary desires. However, money is not lacking even in the Romantic prototypes. Interestingly, the depicted triad of money, identity and ownership does find its roots in one particular German Romantic tale: Albert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (1814).²⁵ In it, the protagonist, Peter, sells his shadow to an old man in a grey suit (later revealed as the devil himself) for Fortunatus's fortune bag. No official contract is signed. A

23 | Clark, Jean Baudrillard, p. 115.

24 | This is in part because its narrative stems from an earlier source. For a comparison of the film *Der Student von Prag* with the 15th century »Märe« *Der Student von Prag* by Peter Schmieher, see Sarah Westphal-Wihl: »Vergesellschaftung« in »Mären« transmission: Peter Schmiehers »Der Student von Prag«. In: MLN 101 (1986), pp. 670–694.

25 | Albert von Chamisso: *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte*. Mit einem Nachwort, einer Zeittafel zu Chamisso, Erläuterungen und einer Bibliographie von Karla Müller. Munich 1994. The idea of a mirror image can also be found in other well-known 19th century stories, including E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale *Die Abenteuer der Silvester-Nacht* (1815), Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890/91) and his story *The Fisherman and His Soul*, and Edgar Allen Poe's *William Wilson* (1839). It is possible that these other stories also had an influence in the film's construction of the double, especially since the principal actor, Paul Wegener, considered Hoffman and Poe his favorite authors (his »Lieblingsautoren« [Bär, *Das Motiv des Doppelgängers*, p. 556 f.]). Nevertheless, Peter Schlemihl was also of interest to Wegener, who went on to act in and coordinate a film entitled *Peter Schlemihl* (Thomas Elsaesser: *Weimar Cinema, Mobile Selves, and Anxious Males: Kracauer and Eisner Revisited*. In: *Expressionist Film*. New Perspectives, p. 48).

simple handshake suffices. Whereupon Peter writes in his letter, »Er schlug ein, kniete dann ungesäumt vor mir nieder, und mit einer bewundernswürdigen Geschicklichkeit sah ich ihn meinen Schatten, vom Kopf bis zu meinen Füßen, leise von dem Grase lösen, aufheben, zusammenrollen und falten, und zuletzt einstecken.«²⁶ Chamisso's tale does not have an actual double. Nevertheless, the affinities between Balduin's mirror image and Peter's shadow, in particular the economic codes attached to both, are striking.²⁷ The following section first explicates the purchase of Peter's shadow for money in Chamisso's tale before preceding to an analysis of how the double discourse in *Der Student von Prag* borrows from this text while at the same time rendering it anew.

Albert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihl* is framed by economic concerns. The story introduces a poor man named Peter, a man with only a little »Habseligkeit,«²⁸ who comes to meet Mr. John, a man who owns »ein großes, neues Haus, von rot und weißem Marmor mit vielen Säulen.«²⁹ The quest is simple and clear. The former hopes that the latter will become his benefactor. As such, this tale sets up an allegorical reflection of economic issues within 19th century Germany. Social mobility was virtually impossible for the lower class. Lack of educational opportunities, among other variables, ensured a closed class structure. However, if a peasant could find himself a benefactor, improvement was perhaps possible. This sort of narrative was not only popular during German Romanticism. It can also be identified in numerous folk and fairy tales throughout the 16th and 17th century. From »Cesarino de' Berni« in Giovan Francesco Straparola's *Le piacevoli notti* (1550/53) and »Il mercante« in Giambattista Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti* (1634) to »Der gestiefelte Kater« in the Brother Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812), these tales maintain that heroes and heroines from humble beginnings can achieve a heaven-on-earth happy ending through a dramatic social and economic rise.³⁰

The real benefactor in Chamisso's tale, however, is no man (although he has all the appearances of one). It is the devil himself, posing as Mr. John's servant. In this guise, the devil removes himself of any traditional symbols. Instead of any references to the color red, he wears a grey suit. Though the source of his supernatural powers is not fully explained, it appears at the very least to be

26 | Chamisso, Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte, p. 7.

27 | For a general discussion on reflections and shadows in 19th century literature, see Ernst Fedor Hoffmann: Spiegelbild und Schatten. Zur Behandlung ähnlicher Motive bei Brentano, Hoffmann und Chamisso. In: Lebendige Form: Interpretationen zur deutschen Literatur. Festschrift für Heinrich E.K. Henel. Ed. by Jeffrey L. Sammons and Ernst Schürer. Munich 1970), pp. 67–88; Victor I. Stoichita: A Short History of the Shadow. London 1997.

28 | Ibid.

29 | Ibid.

30 | For a more detailed analysis of rise folk and fairy tales, see Ruth Bottigheimer: Fairy Tales: A New History. Albany (NY) 2009.

subsumed within the mundane. Whenever one of Mr. John's guests make a wish, no matter what the object of desire may be, he pulls it easily out of his pocket – from a bandage and a small letter-case to a beautiful Dolland's telescope, a Turkish carpet and tent, and even three horses with saddles and bridles. Near the end of the party he appears out of nowhere in front of Peter and, as the tale describes, »Er nahm sogleich den Hut vor mir ab, und verneigte sich so tief, als noch niemand vor mir getan hatte.«³¹ The old man's temperament matches his dress; he is quiet (»leise«) and acts like a beggar (»Im Tone eines Bettelnden«). Peter in turn finds himself oddly attracted to him. The devil's behavior and speech intentionally embodies a master-servant discourse. His lack of religious symbolism, his removal from the middle class, his subservient position – all of these elements combine to trick and disarm his audience. For it is exactly the man dressed like a servant who is the master. It is the poorest of the characters who is a benefactor. But more significantly it is the devil who is the real benefactor and not Mr. John. As such, this tale actually deconstructs the notion of a natural actualization of the peasant wish-fulfillment. The only means of gaining money and other material possessions is through the devil alone. It is no surprise then that in the moment that the old man approaches Peter, Mr. John has completely disappeared from the narrative.

Peter's relationship to this devilish benefactor is based on a monetary exchange. The old man tells him, »ich [habe] wirklich mit unaussprechlicher Bewunderung den schönen, schönen Schatten betrachten können, den Sie in der Sonne, und gleichsam mit einer gewissen edlen Verachtung, ohne selbst darauf zu merken, von sich werfen, den herrlichen Schatten da zu Ihren Füßen. Verzeihen Sie mir die freilich kühne Zumutung. Sollten Sie sich wohl nicht abgeneigt finden, mir diesen Ihren Schatten zu überlassen?«³² The devil desires Peter's shadow. He describes it as »beautiful« and »made by the sun.« In these two phrases, the devil speaks metaphorically of God's creation of man. In the same way that man is created in the image of God, the light gives form to the shadow. To take away the shadow is to take away a part of the created image and thus man's inherent worth.³³ In exchange, he offers Peter Fortunatus' fortune-bag, a

31 | Ibid., p. 5.

32 | Ibid., p. 5 f.

33 | For other interpretations of Peter's shadow, see Alice A. Kuzniar: »Spurlos ... verschwunden«: »Peter Schlemihl« und sein Schatten als der verschobene Signifikant. In: *Aurora* 45 (1985), pp. 189–204; Ernst Loeb: Symbol und Wirklichkeit des Schattens in Chamisso's Peter Schlemihl. In: *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 15 (1965), pp. 398–408; Paul Neumarkt: Chamisso's Peter Schlemihl (A Literary Approach in Terms of Analytical Psychology). In: *Literature and Psychology* 17 (1967), pp. 120–127; Marko Pavlyshyn: Gold, Guilt and Scholarship: Adelbert von Chamisso's Peter Schlemihl. In: *German Quarterly* 55 (1982), No. 1, pp. 49–63; Franz Schulz: Die erzählerische Funktion des Motivs vom verlorenen Schatten in Chamisso's Peter Schlemihl. In: *German Quarterly* 45 (1972), pp. 429–442. In particular, for a homosexual reading

purse filled with an unlimited supply of gold. The bargain that ensues is thus a reductive sale. Peter allows something of infinite spiritual value to be purchased and commodified. His image is lost and all that is left of his external identity is a bag of coins. The entire exchange is wrought with biblical and specifically creation references. Like Adam and Eve in Eden, who are expelled after eating the fruit, so too is Peter shunned from Christian society for having no shadow. There is no doubt that Mr. John and his guests, on account of their dealings with the devil, are also lacking in shadows. But, unlike the Christians in the tale, they neither notice nor care. The devil is creating his own community, his own anti-Eden, filled with shadow-less people. In this community, money has no real value because everyone has become entirely dependent upon the devil and his supernatural pocket. In this way the topic of wealth in *Peter Schlemihl* becomes subsumed within a greater discourse on the battle between good and evil.

Der Student von Prag similarly provides an allegorical reflection of real economic issues and conflicts in the Wilhelmine era. Like the Brother Grimm's folk and fairy tales, the film records the breakdown of an old world structure. It reflects both the aspiration and disillusionment of the Industrial Revolution. This was a time of structural transformation for Germany, including a shift from a nation based on agriculture (an »Agrarstaat«) to one defined by its industrial base (an »Industriestaat«). By 1913 the Wilhelmine era was one of the major trading and exporting nations of the world whose volume of exports and imports had grown fourfold between 1880 and 1913.³⁴ Like Peter Schlemihl's quest in Albert von Chamisso's tale, this film records the bourgeois expectations of economic advancement that these structural transformations promised, namely the desire to escape a rigidly stratified society. Millions of men and women who lived in the German Empire were hoping to improve their economic and social situation through occupational mobility. The expansion of the economy, the growing differentiation and complexity of most spheres of life, and the inflation of the administrative apparatus resulted in a considerable quantitative growth of jobs and positions. White-collar employees emerged beside blue-collar workers as industry and commerce slowly moved toward larger units of organization. By 1907 they made up approximately six percent of all those employed in industry.³⁵

of Peter's shadow, see Richard Block: Queering the Jew Who Would Be German: Peter Schlemihl's Strange and Wonderful History. In: seminar 40 (2004), No. 1, pp. 93–110; John L. Plews: »Aus dem Gesicht verloren«: Lavater's Physiognomical Shade and the Coming-Out Story of Chamisso's Peter Schlemihl. In: seminar 40 (2004), No. 4, pp. 327–348.

34 | Volker Rolf Berghahn: Imperial Germany, 1871-1918: Economy, Society, Culture and Politics. New York/Oxford 2005 [1994], p. 3; online: https://books.google.de/books?id=W0thZxyMrMC&printsec=frontcover&hl=de&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&ad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false [2016-02-15].

35 | Ibid., p. 45.

The quest in the film is thus endowed with a certain revolutionary potential. Individual economic advancement is linked to larger issues of social change.

It is this desire for economic advancement that prompts Balduin to conduct dealings with Scapinelli. In prototypical fashion, Balduin is neither prince nor peasant and his double also parallels a kind of middle-class man. The allegory of Balduin is in many ways quite simple: he represents the bourgeois of the Wilhelmine era who had begun to experience the alienation that comes from the discovery that one's qualities (represented here by Balduin's excellence in fencing) does not count in the world unless accompanied by a personal fortune. Scapinelli, on the other hand, is much more complex. His name alone is an intentional harkening back to the bewitched world of the German Romantics.³⁶ He is the character who everyone knows, but no one talks to. His dress (e. g. his black clothes, the scarecrow, his eyeglass) along with his position within society cause people to be both curious about him and at the same time take great pains to avoid him. But, significantly, Scapinelli is not the devil. Nor is his gold purse mythical; it can be emptied. He is instead firmly planted within the natural world, figuring quite simply as a powerful (but not supernatural) man. In this film Scapinelli allegorizes the introduction of capitalism into the Wilhelmine society via industrial monopolies such as the Stinnes Empire, IG Farben and Vereinigte Stahlwerke.³⁷ The fantastic element, the fairy tale moment in the film that has the potential to change the socio-economic future, is Balduin's pact with Scapinelli. While this action resembles the Faustian pact, it is conducted in a modern fashion through a legal contract. It is a wage agreement similar to those set up between management and labor. The signing not only points to the rise of organized capitalism, such as the institutionalization of cartels and the structure of power that was its foundation, but also reveals the rigidity of the German economy which encouraged bureaucratic mechanisms of resource allocation.³⁸ For this reason *Der Student von Prag* no longer needs an actual devil figure. By the beginning of the 1900s, powerful men with great resources of capital had arrived on the scene, assisting as well as manipulating the lower classes with ease. Capitalism, as represented by Scapinelli, had become the new devil.

The relationship between man and devil in *Peter Schlemihl* and *Der Student von Prag* features as the economic climax in both, but it is also the greatest difference between them. In *Peter Schlemihl*, the devil continually resurfaces,

36 | For a comparison of Scapinelli to Mephistopheles in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's »Faust« (1806), see Lotte Eisner: *The Haunted Screen. Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*. Berkeley (CA) 2008, p. 40; for a comparison between Scapinelli and Dr. Caligari, see Thomas Elsaesser: *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary*. New York 2000, p. 82; Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema, Mobile Selves, and Anxious Males*, p. 50.

37 | Detlev Peukert: *The Weimar Republic*. Frankfurt a.M. 1987, p. 114.

38 | Ibid.

wanting to make one more deal with Peter: his shadow in exchange for his soul. The devil's contract reads: »Kraft dieser meiner Unterschrift vermache ich dem Inhaber dieses meine Seele nach ihrer natürlichen Trennung von meinem Leibe.«³⁹ The tale constructs a traditional religious commentary in which the devil wants to control the whole person – in this life and the next. In *Der Student von Prag*, there is no discourse on the soul whatsoever. Balduin's mirror image is his self, which Baudrillard argues, »has literally taken over that moral and ideological function from the soul,«⁴⁰ and, having signed this over to Scapinelli, there is no more to take. Unlike in *Peter Schlemihl*, Scapinelli's full possession of Balduin only requires one economic transaction and, once completed, Balduin has no way of nullifying it. Scapinelli's contract thus proves to be more binding than that of Peter Schlemihl's devil and, for this reason, he is not compelled to have a »haunting« presence in the film. In *Peter Schlemihl* the devil loses in the supernatural battle for a man's soul, but in *Der Student von Prag* the capitalist ultimately triumphs over the dead laborer. In this progression from German Romantic tale to Neo-Romantic film, the capitalist owner is also more powerful than the traditional devil.

39 | Ibid., p. 31.

40 | Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, p. 129.