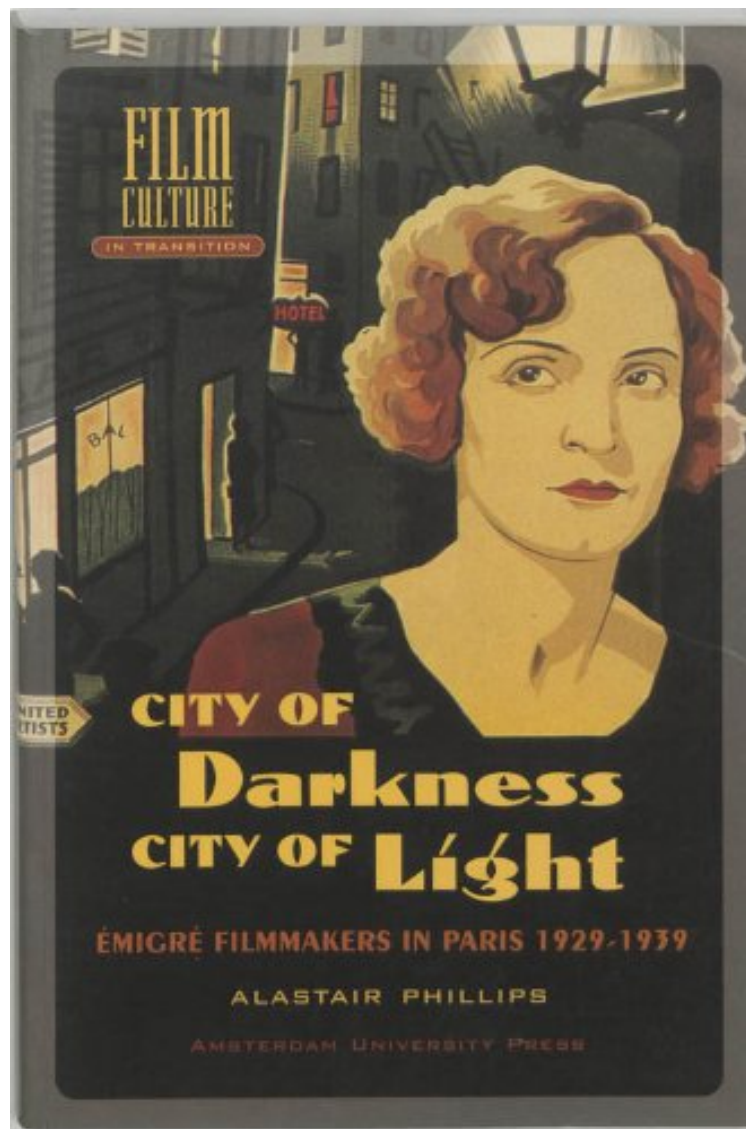


[Read and download] City of Darkness, City of Light: Emigre Filmmakers in Paris, 1929-1939 (Film Culture in Transition)

## City of Darkness, City of Light: Emigre Filmmakers in Paris, 1929-1939 (Film Culture in Transition)

*Alastair Phillips*

*DOC | \*audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#4211055 in Books 2003-12-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.50 x .70 x 6.251, .99 #File Name: 9053566341256 pages | File size: 23.Mb

**Alastair Phillips : City of Darkness, City of Light: Emigre Filmmakers in Paris, 1929-1939 (Film Culture in Transition)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised City of Darkness, City of Light: Emigre Filmmakers in Paris, 1929-1939 (Film Culture in Transition):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. German emigres working in pre-WWII Paris By John Colaresi'City

of Darkness, City of Light - Emigre Filmmakers in Paris 1929-1939' by Alastair Phillips mostly concerns German-speaking directors who worked in Paris before relocating to Hollywood (Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Robert Siodmak, and others in lesser detail) after 1933, including other foreigners like Anatole Litvak who left Russia in 1925 and worked in Weimar-era Germany. Unlike those who chose to work in England, their French films that took place in Paris were generally better received than English films made by emigres, but these people also faced similar problems: anti-Semitism, their films considered too 'German' or heavy in atmosphere, and protests about them taking jobs away from their country host's counterparts. For more info, see my reviews of Theatre and Film in Exile: German Artists in Britain, 1933-1945 and The continental connection: German-speaking migrants and British cinema, 1927-45 France had a love/hate relationship with Germany. They liked their culture, but held harsh memories from their wars. During the 1920's the two countries began working together to make foreign silent and sound versions of their films to show in both countries and to fight off American competition, and soon there were more German exports to France than French ones to Germany due to Berlin's technically-advanced studios. More German directors, producers, cameramen, set designers, and composers arrived during the early days of sound film where film plots took place in and around Paris. These stories were rooted in past conceptions of Parisian life as "the early sound cinema may be seen as a crucial site for the visualizations of a certain set of depictions of the capital which relied on past notions of Paris. In this sense, instead of being a place of confrontation with the shock and disturbance of modernity as in Berlin, the French cinema auditorium instead became an important site of remembering. The French cinema, crucially, had no real need for the 'blood and soil' mannerisms of the likes of the German 'mountain film' genre to act in sharp contrast to the depiction of modern life." The book's title refers to how films made by the emigres had plots that contrasted the City of Light (The nostalgic gaiety of its illuminated nightlife, nightclubs, and music halls) with the "darkness" of backstreets and crime. The most striking element of these 'hybrid' films, for better or worse according to reviews, was their photography by German cameramen trained in Berlin: "Kurt Courant and Eugen Schufftan attained a level of technical expertise that was unrivaled in all of Europe. They were able to experiment effectively with faster film stocks and new lighting technology. The results of this sophisticated expertise was revealed not only in the films they made, but also in their beneficial role as educators to native French professionals." it was this work that contributed to the later 1930's French film genre known as 'poetic realism' that later influenced American film noir with its use of darkness and Expressionistic shadows and camera angles highlighting crime stories. Courant, who always worked with a French First Assistant and also made films in England, was "a fascinating example of the way in which many of the emigres worked in Paris by fitting in and enhancing the development of 'native' production by at the same time being 'different.'" Siodmak had the most success with several films and stayed the longest before leaving for America when WWII started. Lang filmed Molnar's play 'Liliom' in 1934 starring Charles Boyer which received mostly negative reviews for being too 'Germanic' and in Phillips's detailed analysis, he sums up what he deems the film's problems: "Boyer's performance.... remains at the level of gesturalism and mannerism. It forsakes depth . the seal of 'authenticity' that would allow the film's depiction of the popular milieu of Paris to move closer to the currents of poetic realism. The matter is complicated by the various performance registers and the contributions of Lang and [cameraman] Rudolph Mate to the film's visual style. LILIOM feels divided between a conventionally dark realistic representation of the city and a more moralistic and mystical sensibility, which combines moments of calculated theatrical abstraction." I mostly disagree with this assessment and you can make up your mind by watching LILIOM on YouTube where I enjoyed it for those reasons and thought Boyer gave a good performance. It also didn't help the film's reception by having the French Catholic clergy protesting its portrayal of Heaven and redemption. Lang never made another film in France before leaving for Hollywood via a contract from M-G-M. The film has grown in stature over the years now that it's available for reassessment and Lang has said it's probably his favorite film. The play was the basis for Rogers Hammerstein's 'Carousel' and Lang's film is included in a DVD boxed set with 'Carousel' and some of their other musicals. Most of the films mentioned are unavailable for viewing, but Phillips offers detailed plot summaries for readers to vicariously understand them. Extensive film credits, footnotes, and a long bibliography are a welcome addition. One error: German actor Walter Rilla is referred to as Rillo. One quibble: GW Pabst's French version of his THE THREEPENNY OPERA or DIE 3-GROSCHEN-OPER known as L'OPERA DE QUAT'SOUS is hardly mentioned and it would be interesting to see how they compare, but you can find a multimedia comparison on Criterion's edition of THE THREEPENNY OPERA that includes the French version. I would have liked to have seen info about German actors appearing in French films, but the author's intent was to focus on emigres working behind the camera. Overall, this book is easy to read, informative about Parisian culture, and a good companion piece to the two about emigres working in England. You can read the Introduction and Table of Contents on this page.

The volume is the first-ever book-length study of the cinematic representation of Paris in the films of German migrant filmmakers, many of whom fled there as a refuge from Hitler. In coming to Paris a privileged site in terms of production, exhibition, and film culture these experienced professionals also encountered resistance: hostility toward Germans, anti-Semitism, and boycotts from a French industry afraid of losing jobs to foreigners. Phillips juxtaposes the cinematic portrayal of Paris in the films of Robert Siodmak, Billy Wilder, Fritz Lang, Max Ophüls, Anatol Litvak,

and others with the wider social and cultural debates about the city in cinema.

'Alastair Phillips has produced a meticulously researched work covering a fascinating aspect of French cinema, or, more accurately, cinema in France.' - Roger Crittenden in Times Higher Education Supplement  
About the Author  
Alastair Phillips lectures in film and television studies at the University of Reading, UK.