



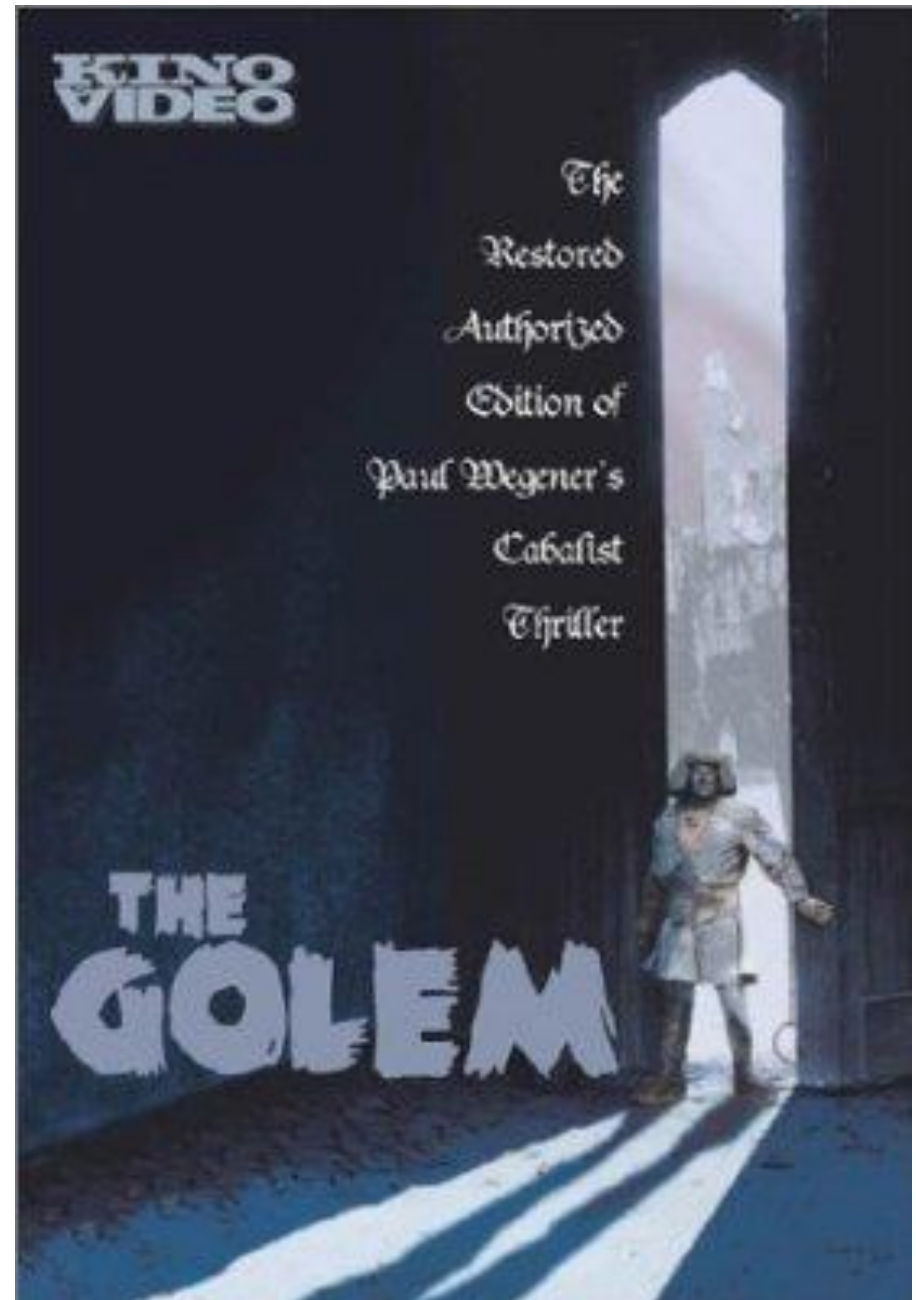
# 1920 Poster for *Der Golem, Wie Er In Die Welt Kam*

*(The Golem: How He Came Into The World)*

What expressionistic features can you identify here?

- Actor-director Paul Wegener made three films built around the mythical creature of Jewish legend: Golem was released in 1914, and a sequel of sorts, Der Golem und die Tänzerin, came out in 1917.

The 1920 version is the only one which has survived and is regarded among the landmarks of early German expressionism.



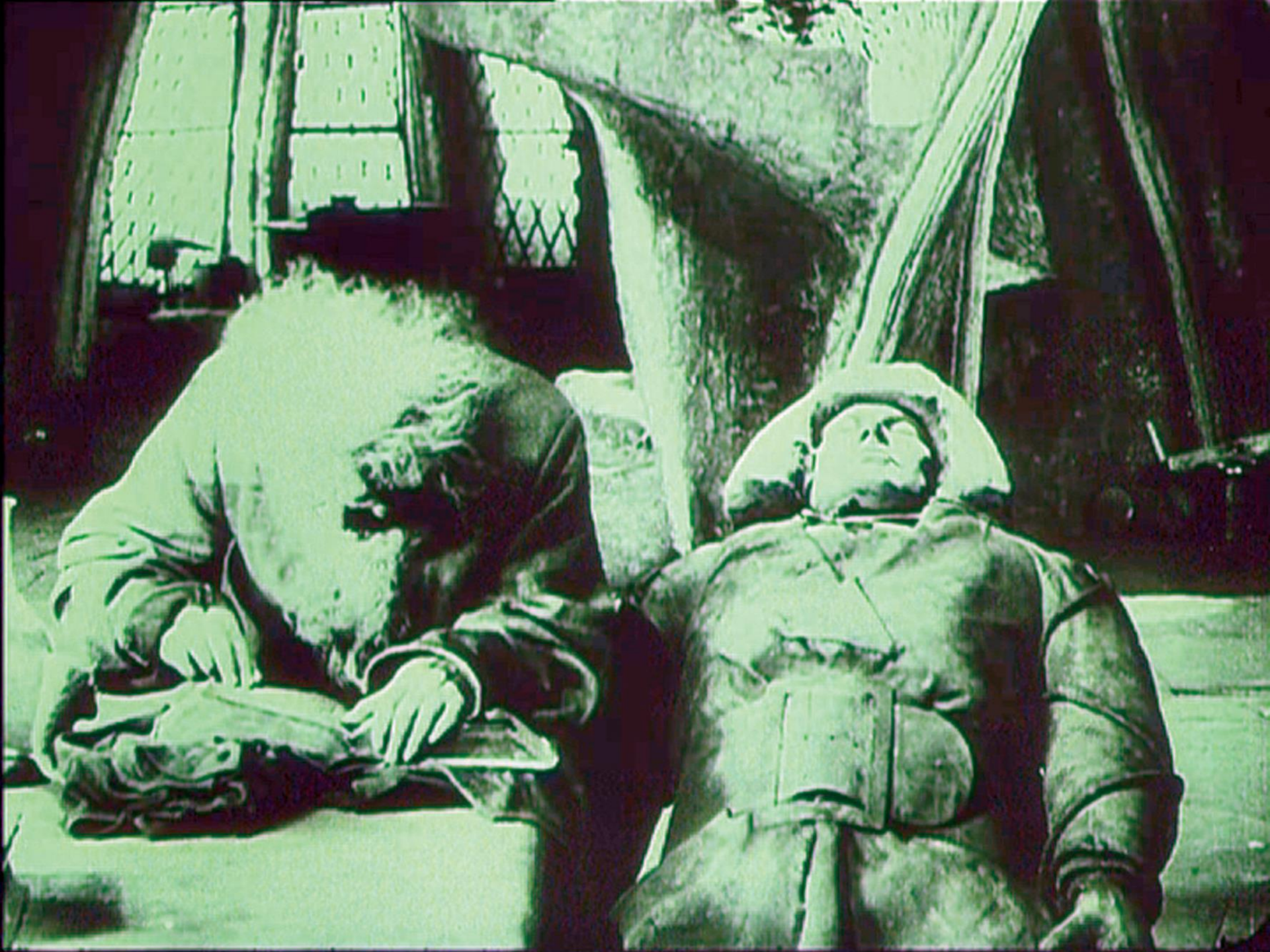
# Der Golem Summary:

- In medieval Prague, Rabbi Loew observes the stars and concludes that trouble is brewing for his people. When the emperor issues a decree threatening the expulsion of Jews from the city, the rabbi, a master of magic, activates the Golem, a monstrous clay figure, to help save his congregation.
- The rabbi's daughter, Miriam is courted by two men, Famulus, the rabbi's assistant, and Knight Florian, a messenger for the emperor.
- Famulus re-activates the Golem to vanquish his rival, and the monster goes berserk. In the end, a small girl stops the golem by removing the magic star from its chest.

Stylized sets and moody cinematography elevated Der Golem above the standard features of its time, its central figure has been the focus of a number of films produced in various countries, and the name has become a generic descriptor for any lumbering creature which can't be easily controlled.







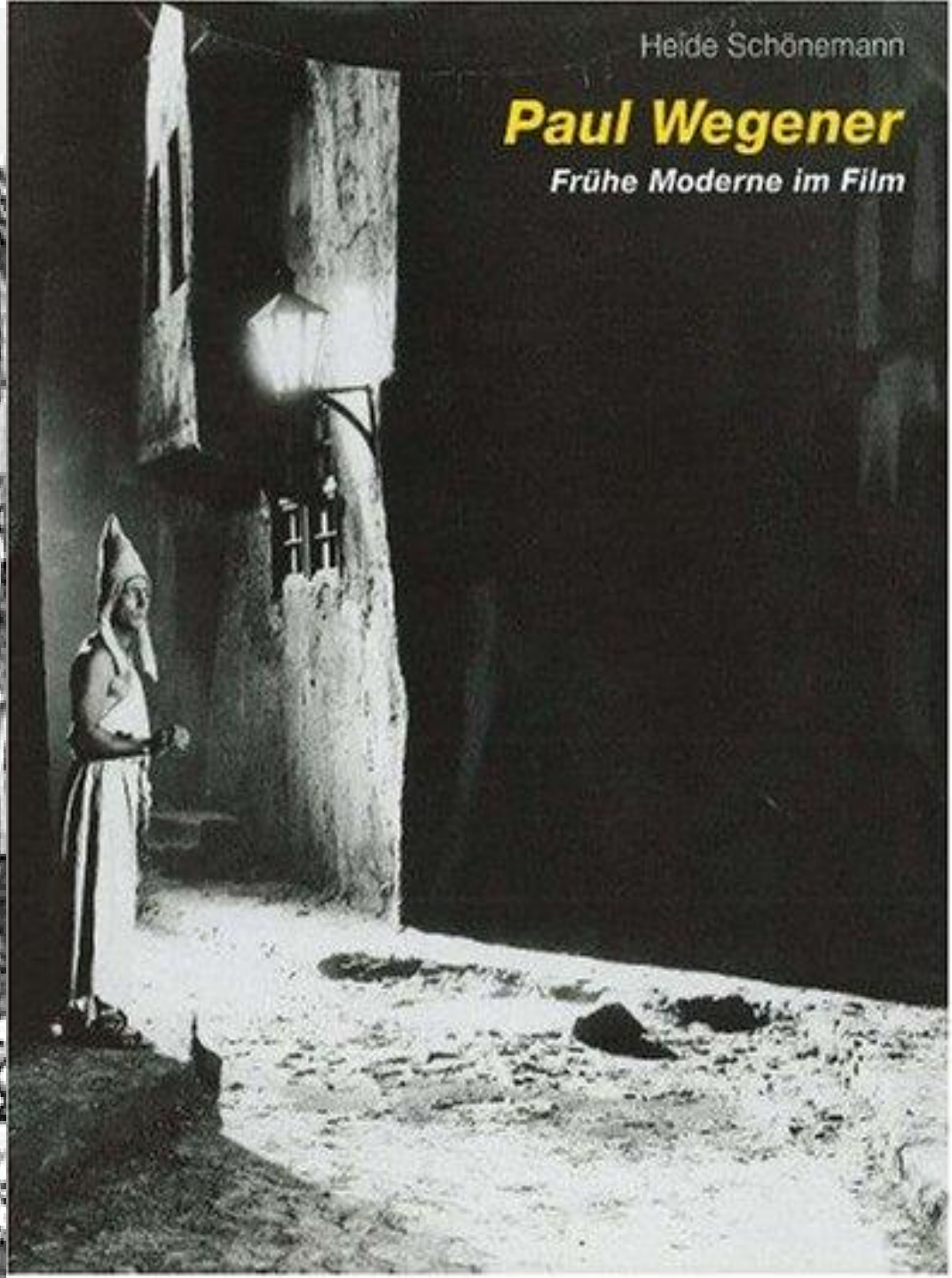




Heide Schönemann

# **Paul Wegener**

*Frühe Moderne im Film*





# An anti-Semitic film?

- Earlier critics focused on the film's universal aspects, such as its aesthetic features, or its socio-historical relevance. **Siegfried Kracauer**, for example, perceived the resentful Golem as reflecting Germans' grudge against their international isolation after World War I, and as anticipating the rise of the Nazi dictatorship.
- The current critical reception of Wegener's *Golem*, however, oscillates between praise for the largely empathetic and historically accurate portrayal of medieval Jewish life on the one hand and charges of anti-Semitism on the other.



**The film largely escapes the anti-Semitic iconography of Jewish figures that was creeping into European theatre and cinema of the time. Friedrich Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), for instance, highlighted the vampire's profile with its large hooked nose as the unmistakable sign of the racialised Jewish body.**

**Furthermore, money, that powerful signifier of the alleged Jewish dominance over the world, plays practically no role in Wegener's construction of the Jews.**

**Abstaining from the dominant Shylock tradition of the cruel and money-grubbing Jew, the bribing of the pain-bent and emaciated gatekeeper of the ghetto by the arrogant Knight Florian instead exposes the Christian dominance over Jewish people at the time.**

**In reversing the notion of the Jews' financial hold over the Christian, *Der Golem* effectively undoes the most dominant anti-Jewish stereotype since the Christian Middle Ages.**

You know a film is  
important when...

