

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Themes in Fritz Lang's Films

Desire / Lust

The Plague in Florence's *The Plague in Florence's* (which Lang contributed as writer) release coincided with the Spanish Flu (the 1918 flu pandemic). It is set in Medieval Italy and tells about the devastation brought by the bubonic plague. A carefree community and its lustful elites indulge in hedonism; ultimately, a female figure personifying the plague arrives to bring infection that wipes out lives.

Metropolis In *Metropolis*, the Master of Metropolis employs Rotwang to give the Machine-Human the appearance of Maria. The faux Maria looks like a caricature of a 1920s flapper and her brazen sexuality is toxic. Fredersen schemes to lure the workers with the agent provocateur, in order to let them ruin the rebellion's reputation themselves. Accordingly, she convinces the workers that the machines are responsible for their misery. When the damage is done at the machine chamber, the femme fatale moves on to Yoshiwara club and seduces the wealthy—consequently, the entire city is thrown into chaos.

Lascivious characters continue to appear—as villains or nuisances—in Lang's later films. Examples are Kinch in *Rancho Notorious*, Prebble in *The Blue Gardenia*, and Stephen Bryne in *House by the River*.