

The Haunted Castle (1921)

F.W. Murnau (1888-1931)

OVERVIEW

Auteur: Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau was a German film director, screenwriter, and producer. Murnau had an obsession with film since his childhood. He studied philology at the University of Berlin; and art history, and literature at the University of Heidelberg. In WWI, Murnau served as a company commander. He joined the Imperial German Flying Corps and flew missions. After the end of WWI, he established his film studio with Conrad Veidt. His noteworthy films are *Der Januskopf* (1920), an adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; *The Haunted Castle* (1921), a silent mystery film; *Phantom* (1922); *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1922), an adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*; *The Last Laugh* (1924); *Faust* (1926); *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927); *City Girl* (1930); and *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas* (1931). Murnau died in a car accident in 1931.

Film: *The Haunted Castle* (German: *Schloss Vogelöd*) is a 1921 silent mystery film directed by F.W. Murnau. It is one of the earliest known surviving films of Murnau. The film premiered in Berlin at the *Mar-morhaus* on April 7, 1921. It is a murder mystery (*whodunnit*), that is a story about a murder in which the identity of the murderer is not revealed until the end. The film is sometimes incorrectly described as a horror or a supernatural film, however, both these descriptions are false. The film stars Olga Tschechowa who would a decade later become one of the Third Reich's biggest stars. *The Haunted Castle* was reconstructed in 2002 from the following materials: an original negative from the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin, and a nitrate print with Portuguese intertitles from the Fundacao Cinemateca Brasileira, which is on deposit at the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Koblenz. In the reconstructed version, the film has the subtitle '*The Exposure of a Secret in 5 Acts*'.

Historical Background: *The Haunted Castle* was adapted from a novel called *Vogelöd Castle: The story of a Mystery* by Rudolf Stratz published in *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. Rudolf Stratz (1864-1936) was a successful novelist, theater critic, and essayist. Murnau described the novel as a "semi-highbrow, semi-commercial" story. The film was shot between February 10 and March 2, 1921, with two days taken to build the sets. The film was remade in 1936 by Max Obal.

CHARACTERS

Lord von Vogelschrey: The owner of the castle, a proud man who is suspicious of Count Johann Oetsch

Lady v. Vogelschrey: Wife of Lord von Vogelschrey who tries to console Baroness Safferstätt in her bad moments

Count Johann Oetsch: Brother of the late Count Peter Oetsch, an angry man that everyone is suspicious of, accused of murdering his brother

Count Peter Paul Oetsch: Late husband of Baroness Safferstätt who had an obsession with spirituality before being murdered

Baron Safferstätt: The new husband of Baroness Safferstätt who seems to have a lot of secrets

Baroness Safferstätt: Ex-wife of the late Count Paul Oetsch who always looks serious and sad

Father Faramund: A religious man who comes to visit his relatives from Rome

Provincial Judge: A retired judge who has a lot of opinions about people

The Anxious Man: A man who is fearful in nature

SYNOPSIS

A set of men gather for a fall hunt in the castle of Lord von Vogelschrey. Because the weather is rainy, they spend their time in the castle. An uninvited man, Count Johann Oetsch, also arrives who is suspected of having murdered his brother several years ago. The men, in particular a retired provincial judge, gossip and spread rumors about Count Oetsch. The widow of the murdered Count Peter Oetsch also comes to the castle with her new husband. A friend of the deceased husband, Father Faramund, also arrives to see his old acquaintances.

The Baroness talks to Father Faramund about her previous marriage. She confesses that things were not all harmonious between them as the late Count Peter Oetsch had become obsessed with spirituality. She wanted something evil to happen, such as murder. Hearing her wishes, Baron Safferstätt shot the Count. However, the Baroness accused Count Oetsch of having shot his brother. After hearing this confession, Father Faramund goes to the Baron, and takes off his wig and false beard; he reveals himself as Count Oetsch. Baron Safferstätt, knowing that Count Oetsch has learned the secret, shoots himself. Later on in the day, the real Father Faramund arrives at the castle.

SCENES

ACT I

The Guests at the Castle The setting is the Castle Vogelöd fall hunt, which for days has been interrupted by rain. Guests are reading and writing, some are playing cards and smoking. All of a sudden Count Oetsch appears which makes everyone turn silent. The retired provincial judge starts to speak about Count Oetsch by saying that 'he reputedly shot his brother to death three years ago and thereby became sole heir'. Judge speaks further that 'every single person who followed the proceedings at the time is convinced that he is the murderer'.



Conversation between Lord von Vogelschrey and Count Oetsch

Meanwhile, Lord von Vogelschrey and Count Oetsch speak in another room. Lord von Vogelschrey tries to explain that he is expecting his brother's widow as a guest that evening. The men further talk about how the widow of the victim remarried Baron Safferstätt a year ago. Lord von Vogelschrey tries to explain that he wishes to spare them all the experience of the Count running into the Baroness. However, the Count does not speak at all and smokes in a relaxed manner. Then the Lord says that whatever happens will be on the Count's head.



A shot or even two will be fired Guests anticipate the arrival of the Baroness. Lady v. Vogelschrey is anxious that the Baroness is about to arrive any minute and that Count Oetsch is in the castle. A horse carriage is seen coming through the muddy roads. The men continue to speak among themselves. One of the men says to Count Oetsch: 'So, you claim to have learned the art of prophecy in India?' to which Count Oetsch nods in reply. The man asks further: 'In view of this, this rain-drenched hunt, would you care to reveal whether we're ever going to get off a shot?' This question makes all the men laugh. Count Oetsch says with a serious look on his face that a shot will be fired. 'Maybe even two...' These serious remarks make the men go rather silent. We see the horse carriage enter the doors of the castle.



The arrival of the Baron and the Baroness Baron and Baroness enter the castle. Lady v. Vogelschrey tells the Baroness that Count Oetsch is inside which makes the Baroness stop and hesitate, however, they go into the main room where the guests are. Count Oetsch looks down as the Baron and Baroness come into the room. He has a very angry look on his face.



Will the Baroness stay? Lady v. Vogelschrey tries to console the Baroness. The Baroness tells Lady v. Vogelschrey that under these circumstances they cannot stay with them which makes Lady v. Vogelschrey cry. She tells the Baroness that she cannot just leave because Father Faramund from Rome will be here. Baroness is surprised to hear the name of Father Faramund. Lady tells with excitement that she will now get his letter for her to read. After the lady leaves, Baroness looks at her husband and repeats the name of Father Faramund with a wistful look on her face. The lady comes happily and tells Lord von Vogelschrey that Baroness will stay to wait for father Faramund. As the lady and lord are leaving, Count Oetsch has a thoughtful look on his face.



Letter of Father Faramund Baroness Safferstätt is reading the letter of Father Faramund who writes in his letter that he is filled with great joy to find out that the wife of his so tragically deceased relative is going to be the guest of the Lord von Vogelschrey. He blesses the circumstance that has led him north again after his decades-long sojourn in Rome.



ACT II

The kids and women play happily The next day, it is sunny, and the kids and the women are playing happily in the forest. The lady asks the baroness why her husband is always quiet. The baroness does not answer but stays silent.



Hunt does not happen and the Count goes away The men prepare to go hunting. However, Count Oetsch does not go. When asked by someone whether he does not hunt, he answers that he only hunts when there is wind and rain. After about a quarter of an hour, it starts raining and soon the men return to the castle. A servant notifies the lady that reverend Father Faramund will be arriving that evening. Meanwhile, Count Oetsch goes hunting. The men are surprised about him hunting in the bad weather. They ask: 'That bizarre Oetsch is really going hunting in this weather?!' The judge says that 'he would, of course, know to avoid the arrival of his relative, the Father'. Meanwhile, the baroness tells the lady that she will have much to discuss that evening with the father.



The arrival of Father Faramund That evening, Father Faramund comes. He wishes to talk to the baroness if she also wants to. When the baroness finds out that Father Faramund is in the castle, she looks as if she is about to faint. The lady says that now their house is blessed in reply to which the baroness shakes her head from side to side in a disagreeing way. The baroness asks the lady to think kindly of her no matter what happens.



The meeting of Father Faramund and Baroness Safferstätt Father Faramund and Baroness Safferstätt meet in a room. The father admonishes her to speak. The baroness tells him that this is such a



strange encounter. She says that she had to deal with her thoughts all these years and that he is, as the friend and the relative of her dead husband, the only person she can talk to. She can barely stand up, looks like she is about to faint. So, she sits on a chair and tells the Father that it has been four years now.

ACT III

Flashback to the happy past The baroness starts to tell the Father about their marriage. She tells him that at first, their marriage was like one long day of bliss. At this point, a flashback to their marriage starts. We see a scene where the baroness tends to the flowers. Then her husband comes and she happily runs to him. She says that they spent months drunk with happiness. One day her husband Peter goes away. After weeks he comes back.



Peter fixates on spirituality and renunciation He is a different person now. He buries himself in writings and holy books. We see a passage from one of the books he reads which says: 'Believe me, dear child, true happiness lies only in the renunciation of worldly things'. The Baroness is not happy with what Peter is reading. She tries to make him put his books aside. However, this does not work because he is very interested in spirituality. Peter soon becomes a saint and wants to see only the saint in her. The baroness explains further: 'It was like that for Months I grew cold...the purer he became, the more terrible my earthly bonds seemed...!' She further says that she thirsted to see and desired evil. Then she meets Baron Safferstätt.



Husband is shot to death Her husband wants to give away his possessions, to divide his fortune amongst the poor which leads to terrible arguments between him and his brother. In the night that follows, her husband is shot to death. At this moment, the baroness realizes that she cannot go on anymore and can only continue tomorrow.



Comic relief It is dinner time. Meanwhile, the men gather to talk about the tales of their hunt. One of them asks whether they don't believe that he bagged a lion one time. This scene provides comic relief and all the men seem amused. There is a lot to work going on in the kitchen as the servants prepare the dinner. One of the servants, a young boy, eats a little bit of the dessert. As soon as the cook notices this situation, he slaps the child on the face and makes him go away from the kitchen.



Father Faramund is lost That night the baroness asks the servants to ask Father Faramund to see her. Father Faramund does not open the door for a quarter of an hour. The men gather around his door. They search around the entire castle to find him, but to no avail. Finally, they enter his room and see that it is empty. The anxious man looks even under the bed. He thinks that it is getting creepy. One hour later, there is still no sign of the father.



The Lord and the retired judge gossip about Count Oetsch The judge talks eagerly to the Lord about Count Oetsch. They talk about whether Count Oetsch might have committed a crime against Father Faramund.



Dream of the anxious man The anxious man is frightened because of Father Faramund's disappearance. He puts tables and chairs behind his door to protect himself. The anxious man is sleeping. In his dream he sees hands crawling behind the window pane. Then the windows open and a monstrous creature reaches him with its big hands. The anxious man wakes up in fear, nevertheless relieved to realize that everything has been a mere nightmare. Still, he decides to leave the castle tomorrow.



Dream of the kitchen boy But, meanwhile, the dreams of the kitchen boy are also haunted by events of recent hours. This scene provides comic relief for the viewers as the boy is being fed a sweet white cream by Father Faramund and the cook is seen standing next to them, yet he is not angry. The boy slaps the cook, yet the cook does not respond to the boy in any way.



ACT IV

Some of the men leave the castle It is the morning of the third day. A few of the men leave the castle. The anxious man tells the lord that important matters require his immediate attention. The Lord asks the judge whether there is anyone who is not frightened by his house. The judge says that he has notified the authorities concerning his suspicion of Count Oetsch.



The Lady is worried about the Baroness The lady comes near the lord and tells him about how strange the baroness is: "She says nothing...nothing at all...about the missing Father...?!" The lord tries to console the lady by hugging her.



Has the Baron ever committed a murder? It is lunchtime in the castle. Count Oetsch asks jokingly to the Baron whether he once committed a murder. They all stand up in horror and alarm. The Baron asks what he means by that. The Count asks the gentlemen why they do not let him finish. He says that is what he dreamt last night. The Lord tells him that at that moment, the mood in his house is not well suited to such jokes. Count Oetsch looks interestingly relaxed and content. He lights his cigarette utilizing the candle. The baron, on the other hand, seems to be shaken by the talk of the murder.



The judge has a lot of judgments to make The judge keeps talking to the Lord. He says that he has a practiced eye for spotting criminals: '...and Count Oetsch is definitely connected to the Father's disappearance. He acts superior in order to conceal his latest crime.'



Count Oetsch reveals secrets The judge goes to speak with Count Oetsch. He asks him whether he knows who people suspect in the disappearance of the Father. Count answers: 'Me! But I know even more than that, Mr. Retired Provincial Judge. I can tell secrets as well.' At that moment, the Lord and the Baron come to the scene as well. The Count goes near them and says: 'For example, I would now like to reveal to our Baron here one of his secrets.' The Lord interrupts with: 'Count Oetsch, if you know the secrets of another, you should not reveal them to the entire world!' Count replies: 'I will honor your opinion. I want to whisper just a couple of words to Baron Safferstätt. After he whispers



to the Baron, the Baron stumbles. He says: 'No...I...am...no...murderer...' Then he leaves the room in a hurry. The men are puzzled. The Lord asks what these insinuations are all about. The judge asks the Count whether he is perhaps trying to accuse the Baron of murdering his brother. The Count replies with a mysterious: 'Perhaps.'

The Baron is shaken by the accusations The Baron looks shaken by the insinuations of the Count. He can barely breathe and looks frightened. Then the Baroness enters the room. She seems to have understood what is going on by looking at the face of the Baron. He goes near the Baroness with open hands as if pleading for help. Then he falls to his knees and hugs her. However, she soon lets go of him.



The Baroness accuses Count Oetsch of murder We see the Baroness walking down the stairs. She stumbles into the Lord and says to him: 'Today I will reveal it!' She points at Count Oetsch and says: 'He killed my husband. He shot his brother to death in an argument.' The Count looks at her, then leaves the room without saying a word.



ACT V

The Baroness is feeling ill Half an hour later, the Baroness is sitting on a couch looking ill. Next to her is the Lady of the Castle. She urges her to speak about what she knows about back then. The Baroness does not reply a word.



Father Faramund is back Meanwhile, Father Faramund comes back to the castle. Servants are the first ones to see him. The servant notifies the Lord that Father Faramund has returned. Father Faramund is with the Baroness. The Baroness looks very nervous and she says: 'Yesterday I wanted comfort. You didn't come! Today... I will confess to you!' The reason why she confesses to him is that he, as a priest, must remain silent. The Lady of the castle wishes to speak to the Father. But the Lord stops her from doing that by saying: 'We can't do anything right now. Probably the events of recent days will soon become clear.'



A second flashback into the mysterious past of the Baroness

The Baroness speaks to Father Faramund: 'Some days before the murder of my husband...' A second flashback into the past begins. Peter talks about spirituality to her and Baron Safferstätt. The Baroness looks like she is suffering as she says that she dreads so much holiness. She stands up and says: 'I would like to see something evil...something utterly evil...! A murder!' The baron who is consumed by passion for her gravely misunderstands her words and shoots her husband. Two days later, he confesses to her about the crime he committed. Then she recognizes her guilt as well. She goes on further: 'The count was arrested. If he had been convicted...we would have poisoned ourselves... in order to prove his innocence...' But Count Oetsch was not convicted. That is why the Baron and the Baroness carried on with their lives, 'fearing life' and 'fearing death'. 'Together cursed' Bound by our guilt! We married! That is our marriage! Thus we were two comrades. And today I have redeemed him!' She further confesses that she accused Count Oetsch of fratricide: 'This is how far fate has driven me!' 'And know...having heard everything...you must remain silent!' Father Faramund says that he understands her. She falls to her knees.



Father Faramund is Count Oetsch! Then he leaves and goes to the room where the Baron is staying. He takes off his eyeglasses. Then he takes off his beard and wig. It turns out that Father Faramund is Count Oetsch himself. He tells the Baron to conduct himself like a man. The Baron can hardly look him in the face. He talks about how he was not a happy man. Then he holds Count Oetsch's hand. Later, the Count leaves. As the Count walks down the stairs, the men are shocked to see him in Father Faramund's clothes.



The baron shoots himself The baron shoots himself. The men who have heard the sound of the shooting, run upstairs. In the evening, everything looks so peaceful as if justice has been established.



The Lady consoles the Baroness The Lady of the castle tries to console the baroness who has been shaken by the news of the suicide of her husband.



Count Oetsch talks with the Lord Count Oetsch talks with the Lord and says to him: 'I, the innocent outcast, always knew... So all the circumstances had to be just right in order for me to be finally set free from this degrading suspicion!' The Lord has a guilty look on his face as if he is now ashamed of the fact that he had once been suspicious of Count Oetsch. He continues: 'For that reason, I forestalled the arrival of Father Faramund at the castle.' The Lord says that they have got a lot to apologize for. They shake hands.



The real Father Faramund arrives In the evening, the real Father Faramund from Rome arrives.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Lord von Vogelschrey: (*Mannerly, Suspicious*)

Lord von Vogelschrey is the owner of the castle and host of the hunt. He is married to Lady von Vogelschrey. He tries to make sure that everything in the hunt week goes smoothly and that there are no conflicts among the guests.

Mannerly: Lord always tries to make sure that he is a decent, mannerly host. He talks to Count Oetsch at the beginning of the film that he does not want any problems with the Count running into the Baroness. Later in the film, when the Count makes jokes about having dreamt of the Baron as being a murderer, the Lord notifies the Count that he cannot accept such inappropriate jokes in his house. The Lord then goes to talk to the Baron. He says to him that Count Oetsch should apologize to him in front of all the guests for his inappropriate joke. The Lord insists the Baron speak with Count Oetsch. Thus, it can be said that the Lord is always the voice of common sense and decency.

Suspicious: It can be said that Lord von Vogelschrey is a suspicious person. The reason for that is he has always thought of the Count as the guilty person. He has listened to the judge talk badly with many prejudices about the Count and he has not objected to his harsh statements and rumors. At the end of the

film, however, once he realizes that the Count is not guilty of murder, he feels sorry and shakes hands with him, which signifies the end of the Lord's suspicions and the peace between them.

Count Johann Oetsch: (*Angry, Investigative*)

He is the brother of the late Count Peter Oetsch. He is suspected by almost all of having murdered his brother because of a disagreement about whether they should divide their fortune amongst the poor. He almost always has an angry look on his face. We later find out that he is not guilty, rather he is an innocent outcast.

Angry: Count Oetsch looks angry in many scenes of the film. The viewers find out that his anger is justified, after all, he is wrongly accused of shooting his brother, where in reality he is innocent. He is also angry about the fact that the truly guilty people are not punished.

Investigative: Count Oetsch plays a game with all the people in the castle. He dresses like Father Faramund and makes everyone believe that he is indeed Father Faramund. The Baroness confesses to him all that they are guilty of. After her confession, Father Faramund reveals himself as Count Oetsch to the Baron. Realizing Count Oetsch knows about his crime, the Baron shoots himself. Thus the film might be considered an investigation taken up by Count Oetsch to find out for certain the people who committed his brother's murder. His investigative nature shows both his loyalty to his brother and his will to establish justice.

Baroness Safferstädt: (*Non-spiritual, Sad*)

Baroness Safferstädt is the widow of Count Peter Oetsch. He later marries Baron Safferstädt. When she comes to the castle, she wants to leave because the brother of her former husband is also in the castle. However, upon learning that Father Faramund will also be there, she changes her decision and stays in the castle. She has a sad countenance and looks thoughtful throughout the film.

Non-spiritual: In contrast to her late husband Count Peter Oetsch, she is non-spiritual. She dislikes it when her husband reads about spirituality and renunciation. The more her husband talks about spirituality, the more she likes to engage in evil and immoral acts. One night, while her husband is talking about religion to her and Baron Safferstädt, she finally says that she wants something very evil to happen, such as murder. Because the Baron takes her words literally, he kills her husband. Thus, it might be said that one of the factors that cause Count Peter's death is his wife's hatred of everything spiritual.

Sad: The Baroness almost always has a sad, thoughtful look on her face. We the viewers learn later on that she has a dark past filled with many secrets. She knows who is guilty and committed her husband's murder, however, she does not reveal this secret; as she also had a role in bringing about Count Peter's death. Her sadness deepens further after her second husband, the Baron, commits suicide.

Baron Safferstädt: (*Silent, Passionate*)

Baron Safferstädt is the new husband of the Baroness. They marry after Count Peter Oetsch is murdered. He is the real murderer, however, this is a secret that only the Baron and the Baroness know. After Count Johann Oetsch makes Baroness Safferstädt confess all that has occurred, he goes to the Baron to let him know that he knows who the murderer is. The Baron cannot handle the guilt anymore and shoots himself.

Silent: He is a silent person. His silence stems from the fact that he is guilty of murder even though nobody suspects him. When Lady von Vogelschrey asks why the Baron is always silent, Baroness Safferstädt's happy countenance changes into a bitter sadness, remembering that the Baron shot her previous husband.

Passionate: The reason why the Baron shot Count Peter Oetsch is he is consumed by passion for his wife. Because of his irrational passion he misinterprets her words and speech and commits murder. After Count Johann Oetsch definitively finds out about the Baron's crime, the Baron chooses to shoot himself,

thereby punishing himself instead of spending a lifetime in prison. His shooting himself can be seen as another instance of his impulsive and passionate nature.

Count Peter Oetsch: (*Spiritual*)

Count Peter Paul Oetsch is the late husband of Baroness Safferstätt. He leads a very happy life with his wife in the first months of their marriage. However, he finds himself increasingly interested in spirituality. These ideas of renunciation make him distance himself from his wife. Later, he gets shot by Baron Safferstätt who misinterprets the words of the Count's wife. His death deeply saddens her wife and affects also his brother who gets arrested as he is suspected of murdering his brother

Spiritual: Count Peter reads books that assert that true happiness is found in renunciation. It can be inferred from his facial expressions that he is utterly happy to read about spirituality. His wife does not share his enthusiasm for spirituality. Because he wants to give away his possessions and divide his fortune amongst the poor, he and his brother have a lot of arguments. He is shot the following night. His interest in spirituality may be seen as noble, however, it causes him to distance himself away from his wife and ultimately brings about the series of events that lead to his death.

The retired judge: (*Gossipy*)

The retired man used to be a provincial judge. He has a lot of prejudices and judgements to make about Count Johann Oetsch. The viewers see him frequently either talking among the guests or with Lord von Vogelschrey.

Gossipy: The moment Count Oetsch comes to the castle, the retired judge starts spreading rumors about him. First of all, he tells everyone how Count Oetsch is suspected of having shot his brother three years ago and that everyone who has followed the proceedings is sure that he is guilty. Moreover, he directly connects Father Faramund's disappearance with Count Oetsch and tells the Lord about his suspicions that Count Oetsch might have committed a crime against Father Faramund. He is very confident in himself that he has a trained eye for spotting criminals and even notifies the authorities concerning his suspicion of Count Oetsch. It can be said that because he is a former judge he sees in himself the authority to make such pronouncements, however, he does not make any mature judgments. Rather he has a lot of prejudices about Count Oetsch, comes to quick conclusions, and inappropriately gossips about him.

Lady von Vogelschrey: (*Helpful*)

Lady von Vogelschrey is the wife of Lord von Vogelschrey. She tries her best to host and always tries to make the Baroness comfortable.

Helpful: Lady von Vogelschrey takes care of her hosts the best she can. When the Baroness comes, she always accompanies her and makes sure she is comfortable. She is there to comfort her when she is sad. Her helpfulness can be seen, for instance, when she tries to comfort the Baroness when she first comes to the castle and tries to make her stay by mentioning that Father Faramund will also soon be there, or when she tries to console the Baroness who is recently shaken by the news of the suicide of her new husband.

THEMES

SOCIETY (Religion)

Religion One important theme in the film is the juxtaposition between a religious or ascetic life versus worldly life. Count Peter Oetsch with his ambition for religion and spirituality loses his ties with the material world, that is, his marriage takes on a lesser importance than learning about spiritual truths. Renunciation, a word that catches our eyes in the intertitles, requires that one breaks one's worldly chains or bonds. That is why there evolves a gap between the Count and his wife which eventually leads to his

wife's rebellion against all things spiritual or ascetic. Mysteriously, the wife longs for something evil to occur. Baron Safferstätt, a man already consumed by passion for her, misunderstands her words and shoots her husband. Thus, it can be said that worldly affairs win against the spiritual values that are represented by Count Peter Oetsch. Worldly passions and sensuality kill spiritual life. The juxtaposition between an ascetic life and a worldly life is something that the viewers of the film can contemplate about too, and perhaps decide for themselves which side they agree with. One curious point to consider is that even though the Count is brutally murdered, the two people who are the perpetrators of this act never have any real peace afterward which shows us that a pure worldly life that involves harming others does not lead to any lasting peace or happiness either.

JUSTICE (Injustice, Punishment, Guilt)

Injustice It might be said that there are several instances of injustice that are done throughout the film. One of those instances is when Count Peter Oetsch does not spend time with his wife and is fixated on spirituality. Despite not being a crime, not spending enough time with his wife starts the series of events that eventually lead to his downfall, which is death. The biggest injustice, which is also a legal case, is when the Baron shoots Count Peter because of misinterpreting his wife's words. However, he does not get (legally) punished for his misdeeds. A third injustice is that is done against Count Johann Oetsch as he is accused of being the murderer of his brother by his brother's wife. Count Johann Oetsch knows that he is not guilty, however, he also has the difficult task to prove his innocence to everyone and this task comprises the biggest part of the film plot.

Guilt The Baron and the baroness are ridden by guilt as they are the direct and indirect perpetrators of this horrific crime who must be brought to justice. They spend these years in secrecy and silence, and as can be inferred from their behavior, with inner turmoil. It is because of this guilt that eats her up that the Baroness decides to confess everything to Father Faramund, unknowing that Father Faramund is Count Oetsch in disguise. Her confession does not relieve all her guilt, however, she feels less burdened by her secret. As the Baron realizes that Father Faramund is Count Oetsch, he is also heavily burdened by the guilt of not only having murdered Count Peter but also have allowed an innocent man to be arrested and his name getting thus stained.

Punishment It can be said that both the Baron and the Baroness are punished by their conscience through years of secrecy. Nevertheless, the real punishment happens when Father Faramund reveals himself as Count Oetsch to the Baron. The Baron knows that Count Oetsch knows about the real perpetrators of the murder and rather than spending a lifetime in prison, he chooses to shoot himself. Thus, he gives himself his own punishment. We do not know what happens to the Baroness afterward or whether she is also found to be legally guilty. But we see that she carries the guilt of having indirectly or accidentally caused the murder of her husband and that she has to live with this guilt all her life which is in itself a psychological punishment.

RELATIONSHIP (Marriage)

Marriage Marriage is an important topic in the film. A marriage that does not function properly can cause many problems for both the wife and the husband. Count Peter's excessive interest in spirituality means that he distances himself further and further from his wife. Therefore, his wife comes to dislike or even hate everything to do with spirituality, religion, and renunciation. Her utterance that she would like to see a murder, which is an impure act, is a reflection of her stance against the subject of spirituality her husband is so fond of. It might be said that even though the Count had a great interest in religion, he should have remembered his duties as a husband and not distanced himself from his wife. Looking from such an angle, we can draw the inference that the husband brought his downfall through his own acts and his lack of affection toward his wife.

PSYCHOLOGY (Sadness, Loss)

Sadness We see that the Baroness has a sad look on her face for most of the film. The only scenes where she looks happy are at the beginning of her marriage and when she plays with the kids and Lady

von Vogelschrey in the forest. Otherwise, she always looks pale and silent, as if she is about to faint. Her physical appearance and facial expressions reflect her inner state of turmoil, regrets, and harrowing sadness.

Loss The person who experiences losses is Baroness Safferstätt. She first experiences the distancing of her husband from herself. Then, she loses her husband as a result of his being murdered. For several years, she lives with the effects of this murder and loss. Secondly, she also loses her second husband, Baron Safferstätt. Even though Baroness Safferstätt is never physically harmed, it can be said that she is the one who goes through the most psychological suffering.

FLAW (Anger)

Anger Count Oetsch seems very angry throughout the film. We find out later on in the film that his anger was justified as he had been wrongly accused of having murdered his brother. Unable to prove his innocence and being arrested, but not convicted; everybody is distressed and unsettled by his presence. That is why he is throughout most of the film seen with an angry countenance. His anger turns into peace after he proves his innocence through his investigation. After the Baron shoots himself, we see a scene from nature, a peaceful lake, signifying that justice has finally been achieved as the real perpetrators have been found. At the very end of the film, the real Father Faramund appears, a holy man, which symbolizes the arrival of peace and justice.

QUEST (Investigation)

Investigation The whole film may be seen as a secret investigation by Count Oetsch. What seems to be a hunting week is a criminal investigation by him. His very presence has a disturbing and unnerving effect on the others because he is suspected of having shot his brother. After he disappears to go hunting in the rain and wind, Father Faramund from Rome appears and starts listening to the confessions of the Baroness. After he has heard the secrets of the Baroness, Father Faramund finally reveals himself as the Count. His investigation has been an impeccable and flawless one. The only small flaw that may be said to have occurred is that people become suspicious of Count Oetsch when Father Faramund disappears and they wonder whether the Count might have done something to him, such as committing a second murder. Father Faramund, however, is soon back. And thus the suspicions of the people turn out to be wrong. After the Baroness confesses everything and Count Oetsch goes near the Baron, they shake hands which is a symbol for the revelation of all the problems and secrets into the daylight. After the Baron shoots himself, Count Oetsch also talks to the Lord and shakes hands with him. This symbolizes the end of the investigation as the innocence of the Count is finally proven.

APPEARANCE (Secrets, Dreams)

Secrets The baron and the Baroness have secrets that cause their inner turmoil. They know that they are guilty of causing the death of Count Peter Oetsch, however, they hide this truth from everyone for years. That is why the Baron is always silent and the Baroness has a sad appearance. Their secrets get revealed by Count Johann Oetsch's 'secret' investigation. After the truth is known by everyone, justice is finally established.

Dreams The dreams in the film provide us with comic relief. The dream of the anxious man reflects his fears as a monstrous creature reaches for him from behind the window pane. Even though this scene is a scary one for the anxious man, it is a comic scene to the viewers as we well know that his fears are only a reflection of his inner reality and not that of the external world. The second dream we see is that of the kitchen boy who dreams of being fed a lot of sweet white cream by Father Faramund. He also gets to slap the cook who cannot do anything against him in response. This innocent and funny dream provides us the viewers with a nice comic relief before the events take a turn for the worse and become more serious.

PAST (Memory)

Memory We learn about the Baroness' story through her memories. The flashbacks give us insight into her past. The memories also serve as the truth that reveals the guilt of both the Baron and the Baroness. It might be said that the memories serve a two-fold purpose in this film. The first purpose is that it is only through them that the Baroness confesses her story to Father Faramund. The second function is that the memories always haunt the people who have engaged in misdeeds. The Baron and the Baroness are always haunted by their memories of wrongdoing. Thus, it is not only the castle that is 'haunted'. Rather it is the very minds of the perpetrators that are haunted by agonizing memories.