

Phantom (1922)

F.W. Murnau (1888-1931)

OVERVIEW

Auteur: Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau was a German film director, screenwriter, and producer. Beginning in his early years, Murnau was obsessed with film. He studied philology at the University of Berlin, followed by art history, then literature at the University of Heidelberg. In WWI, Murnau served as a company commander and in that capacity, 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*; *Phantom* (1922), an expressionist, romantic, fantasy film; *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* (1931). Murnau died in a car accident in 1931.

Film: *Phantom* is a 1922 German romantic fantasy film directed by F. W. Murnau and it belongs to the genre of German Expressionism. As an expressionistic film, it has a dreamlike quality. The film is about the obsessions and fixations of an aspiring poet for a woman who collides with him in the road while driving two horses and knocks him to the ground. The film stars Alfred Abel, Grete Berger, Lil Dagover, Lya de Putti and Anton Edthofer. *Phantom* was thought to be a lost film for years but was restored by German archivists.

Historical Background: *Phantom* is an adaptation of a novel by Gerhart Hauptmann. The title of the novel is the same as the film and has the subtitle, '*Notes from a former convict*'. The novel was written between 1915 and 1921, and published in 1922. The main character Lorenz Lubota tells the story of his obsession. Fascinated by a girl, he gets involved in criminal activities.

Phantom belongs to the genre of German expressionism, which was prevalent in the 1920s. Expressionism is an art form 'in which the image of reality is distorted to make it expressive of the artist's inner feelings or ideas.' In the films, emotions and the inner world of the subjects are brought to the forefront. Other German expressionist movies include *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920), *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922), and *Sunrise* (F.W. Murnau, 1927). These films were characterized by *chiaroscuro*, the play of light and shadows or the contrasts between dark and light, stylized visuals, and silhouettes. The visual style of the films matched the somber mood of the films the themes of which were insanity, betrayal, disillusionment, and other philosophical and psychological topics.

SYNOPSIS

The film is told as a flashback as the protagonist Lorenz writes his memoirs. Lorenz, an aspiring poet, works as a clerk in a government office. His mother, however, is worried about the future of her children, in particular, Melanie, who she believes is working as a prostitute. One day, while going to the office, Lorenz is hit by two white horses driven by a woman in white. Lorenz is unharmed, but after that day his mind is occupied by the thought of the woman in white, named Veronica. Being an aspiring poet, Lorenz gives a collection of his poems to Father Stabe to judge their merit. Father Stabe assures him that he will be an honorary citizen of the town because of his poetic genius. Anticipating a meeting with a publisher, Lorenz asks pawnbroker Aunt Schwabe for money to buy a new suit. Meanwhile, at the bookshop, Father Stabe and Marie learn that Lorenz's poems are not publishable material. Mr. Wigottschinski encourages Lorenz to celebrate and they encounter Melanie at the party they go to. Melanie becomes Mr. Wigottschinski's girlfriend. Lorenz loses his job for failing to show up for work and threatening an officer for blaming him for stalking Veronica. Lorenz's mother's health deteriorates due to worry about Lorenz's and Melanie's irresponsible lives. As Lorenz finds out that Veronica will be engaged to someone else, he

begins courting her doppelgänger Melitta who is a gold digger. He spends lavishly for her. With Mr. Wigottschinski, he goes to Anna Schwabe once again to get money for Melitta. Anna Schwabe gives him a large sum of money, but soon becomes suspicious and learns that Lorenz will not be a published poet. She demands that Lorenz pay her back the money or she will notify the police. Mr. Wigottschinski concocts a plan to steal money from the old Schwabe so Lorenz can pay back her loan. However, Anna Schwabe discovers them while they try to steal her money and screams to call the police. Mr. Wigottschinski kills her. Later, both Mr. Wigottschinski and Lorenz are arrested. After staying in prison for many years, Lorenz is released and the flashback ends. Lorenz now is delivered from his fixations about Veronica and has begun a new life with Marie.

SCENES

ACT I

A beautiful house in the springtime The film begins with the view of a beautiful house in the springtime. A man named Lorenz is looking out the window in a rather thoughtful way. A woman steps in and asks him what he was thinking about to which Lorenz replies that he was thinking about his past life. The woman asks him to write the story of his life in a book which father himself bound for him. Lorenz asks whether he thinks the memory will be less agonizing if he does so. The woman nods and so does the man agree to write his memories. He sits at the table. His writing goes as follows: 'I, former convict Lorenz Lubota, hereby write down, as my dear wife Marie wills it so, the story of my guilt and my atonement.' Then begins a flashback into the past.



Family A woman with a frustrated and tired expression tells a young man that Melanie doesn't have any time for preparing breakfast. Meanwhile, Melanie is still asleep. She wakes up smiling, looks at her watch, realizes that it is too late, and gets up immediately. The old woman asks the young man to call Lorenz. Lorenz reads a book in his room which he continues to read at the breakfast table. The old woman tells Lorenz impatiently: 'You are always with your books, Lorenz! With the paltry amount of money you earn, even God does not know how you could be able to afford them!' Lorenz says to his mother to just let him have his poor books. 'At least they provide one with dreams of all the things one will never experience...' Next, Melanie comes to the breakfast table, but she encounters her mother's angry looks. Lorenz tells her mother that he will be somewhat late today as he will help Aunt Schwabe with some accounts. The mother becomes angry again. She does not want him to have anything to do with her, whom she calls a 'usurious witch'. After this, we see a scene of a woman feeding a man in a luxurious house. The mother tells Lorenz that Mrs. Schwabe has gotten fat and rich off her cutthroat business whereas she has slaved away her whole life like a horse.



Neighbors are friendly We see a scene from a bookshop where a young woman prepares soup for an old man named Father Starke. The young woman looks out the window and tells the old man that Lorenz will be coming soon. The old man smiles and says that it seems like she divides her day up into Lorenz's comings and goings. The man asks the young woman whether Lorenz knows about her affections. The young woman says that he does not. The man tells her to hold onto her heart and that once Lorenz wakes up from his dream world, he will become aware of the young woman's that is Marie's, presence. Lorenz comes to the bookshop. He has brought a few poems that he has done. He says that he'd like to hear what he thinks of the poems. Father Starke is very pleased to receive Lorenz's poems.



Melanie leaves the family Meanwhile, back at home, Melanie prepares to go to work, however, her mother tries to stop her. Her mother asks her what kind of job she actually has. She looks into her drawer and asks her where she got those silky rags and where she has been running around night after night. Melanie becomes angry and tells her mother to control her anger. She packs her things and tells her mother that she has no desire to wither away and rot in that miserable hole. She tells that she can stand on her two feet and she does not need anybody's help. The mother is devastated, she talks to herself and says that in addition to misery, hunger, and poverty; now disgrace is coming down on her too. Melanie has a sorry look on her face nevertheless, she prepares to leave. Back at home, Melanie is about to leave and says farewell to her mother. The mother, with a sad look on her face, says that there is no turning back from where she is headed.



Work We see the office where Lorenz works. The boss complains about Lorenz and how he is always late. The boss angrily shouts that the good Lord made Lorenz Lubota town clerk in a fit of wrath. Meanwhile, Lorenz is looking at the books of a street seller.

Accident with the woman in white Lorenz realizes that he is late for work. As he walks to work, he gets hit by a woman who he is driving two white horses and is knocked to the ground. The woman and the people gather around him. The woman looks at him to see if he is harmed. Lorenz does not take his eyes off the woman. After she sees that he is not physically harmed, she leaves with her carriage. As she leaves, Lorenz looks at her with rather wistful eyes. Then he runs after her. He sees the mysterious woman go into a mansion. One of the workers there stops him from entering the building and asks him what he is doing there. Lorenz does not answer and the worker sends him away.



ACT II

Poems The second act opens with a scene in the bookshop where Marie and Father Starke read the poems of Lorenz. The father thinks that what Lorenz has, is more than talent, it is genius. Meanwhile, Lorenz is back at the town center. His mind looks rather preoccupied. Someone from his office calls him, but he does not seem to hear anything. Meanwhile, back at the bookshop, Father Starke shows Lorenz's poems to a professor. One of Lorenz's poems reads as: 'Are you the one, Muse /Who takes me in her service, /And like the Sphinx /tears with her claws from my breast / My song'. As Father Starke is showing Lorenz's poems to the professor, Marie sees Lorenz walking hastily. She is sad that he does not stop by. The professor takes the poem book.

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Daydreams When Lorenz comes back home, his mother is crying. Lorenz does not seem to notice this. His mother asks him whether he is ill. She asks him whether he already knows what happened with her sister and she collapses at the table in agony. Lorenz does not seem interested in the subject at all. He daydreams about the woman driving the two white horses and himself chasing after her. His mother brings him a glass of water to bring him back to the present. Lorenz wistfully says that everything is terribly ugly. Then he goes outside to take a little bit of fresh air. Outside, Father Starke sees him and tells him that he is a genius. He tells Lorenz that he gave his poems to a man who would consider it to be an honor to be his mentor and that one day at the hall, where he was once a lowly clerk, he will be made an honorary citizen of their town. At this moment, Lorenz daydreams again of the mysterious woman in white. He daydreams that she brings him flowers in the hall and they kiss. Then he wakes up to the present once again. With childlike enthusiasm, he grabs the hands of both the father and Marie and asks them whether they believe that he can become a famous poet one day. Then he abruptly leaves the bookshop without saying a word. The father believes that he might be losing his head after the realization



that he is a poet. Next, we see Lorenz infant of the mansion of the mysterious woman. He asks one of the playing children the name of the daughter of the house. The child answers that it is Veronika. Lorenz gives a coin to the child. As he is about to knock on the door, the child asks him for more money. He says that he does not have any more money to give her. Then realizing his poverty, he leaves the mansion and walks away.

Visit to Aunt Schwabe, the Pawnbroker Lorenz goes to a pawnbroker. Aunt Schwabe is known for being a cutthroat, ruthless, pitiless pawnbroker. Aunt Schwabe asks him whether he knows Mr. Wigottschinski. Mr. Wigottschinski asks Lorenz to pretend as though here were not there and feel at home. Lorenz explains to Mrs. Schwabe that he gave a collection of his poems to an excellent judge of literature called Father Starke and now he will introduce him to a well-known publisher who is supposed to print his poems. Aunt Schwabe looks exhilarated at this news. In a parallel scene, we see the publisher visit Father Starke's bookshop and tell him that even though the poems are nice, they are certainly not, and will never be publishable material. Back in Aunt Schwabe's house, Lorenz states that he dares not go to the publisher with his shabby suit. Aunt Schwabe tells him that considering his impending fame, he indeed looks shabby and that will have to be fixed. She goes to get some money for him. Mr. Wigottschinski tells Lorenz that she seems to have taken a fancy to him. Aunt Schwabe loans him money. Mr. Wigottschinski tells Lorenz that he will accompany him to look for new clothes as he is something of an expert regarding that. Lorenz and Mr. Wigottschinski buy new clothes. Mr. Wigottschinski says that they should be drinking to the beginning of Lorenz's promising career.



The party Melanie is at a party, drinking and celebrating. She notices that Lorenz is in the same place, too, and becomes worried. Chaos ensues as Melanie constantly looks at her brother and some man next to him becomes jealous. Soon, everybody starts fighting even though Melanie explains that Lorenz is her brother. Melanie, Lorenz, and Mr. Wigottschinski escape from the fight. On their way back home, Mr. Wigottschinski explains that old Harlan wants to have his daughter Veronica engaged to rich Wiedenberg. Lorenz is shocked at this statement. They stop by Veronika's house and Lorenz tries to get in the house, but Melanie and Mr. Wigottschinski stop him. Then they arrive at Lorenz's house. Lorenz is devastated at the news. Melanie waits outside in the carriage. She does not enter her house and finally leaves with Mr. Wigottschinski.



ACT III

Lorenz gets sick Meanwhile, Lorenz lies sick in his bed, with his mother sitting by his bedside and waiting for him to get better. Lorenz talks with Veronica's mother and tries to learn whether Veronica will truly be engaged to Mr. Wiedenberg. The mother does not wish to answer Lorenz's question. She asks the servants to call her husband in. Meanwhile, Lorenz explains that he only once saw her daughter and that he cannot go on any longer without the hope of someday acquiring her for himself.



The doppelgänger of Veronica Lorenz says to Veronica's father that he cannot leave without the assurance that he will be allowed to court his daughter to which the father replies that they might discuss this matter further a year from now. Later, Lorenz goes to the best tavern in the city. In the tavern, he sees a doppelgänger of Veronica, an old woman with a strange resemblance to her. The woman leaves the dinner table. Lorenz goes after her. Lorenz accompanies the woman to her house. He seems perplexed



as to what he has become involved in. The doppelgänger of Veronica steps into the room where Lorenz is. She asks her who he is. He replies that he is an unfortunate poet who chases after a shadow, a *phantom*. She approaches him romantically and tells him that she wants to know what drove him to her like a sleepwalker and that she wants to know who he thinks he is kissing when he kisses her. The man has a flashback of the daydream of the white horses. Then they start kissing each other.

ACT IV

Doppelgänger leads Lorenz to borrow money Lorenz looks rather troubled and thoughtful. The doppelgänger's mother brings some coffee and tries to talk to him. She tells that her daughter and she are unfortunately destitute. She further tells that Melitta (the doppelgänger) let slip that Lorenz is a well-known poet and that she hopes his income corresponds to his fame! Lorenz replies that there is a price for everything. Meanwhile, a man from the town hall comes to notify that Lorenz is fired from his job. The mother is sad to receive this news, however, she knows that there is not much that she can do about this. Mr. Wigottschinski thinks that they can get the money from the old Schwabe. He asks how it would be if Lorenz put the royalties on his poetry up as collateral. After all, if Lorenz passes himself off as a poet, he must pay the consequences! After thinking of Melitta, Lorenz accepts Mr. Wigottschinski's idea. Melanie is very concerned about what might happen to her brother, but she cannot prevent them from going.



Lorenz lies and borrows money Lorenz and Mr. Wigottschinski are at Aunt Schwabe's house. Mr. Wigottschinski tries to persuade Aunt Schwabe to give them money. Lorenz tries to gain her sympathy by only she can help him. 'The world is closed to those who come with empty hands!' Aunt Schwabe says that each and everyone in the world is a scoundrel with one exception and that exception is Lorenz. After Aunt Schwabe's words, Lorenz has inner doubts as he does not want to be a scoundrel, nor does he wish to deceive Aunt Schwabe. However, Mr. Wigottschinski tells him that he will forever be a poor man if he does not go according to the plan. He also makes Lorenz think about Melitta. Lorenz finally accepts the money, that is 60,000 marks from Aunt Schwabe.



Anna Schwabe's doubts After Lorenz gets the money, Mr. Wigottschinski gets his share too. However, Anna Schwabe has doubts about what Lorenz will do with the money, so she goes to his house to speak with him. Lorenz is not at home. His mother says that she hasn't seen him for a long time. Meanwhile,

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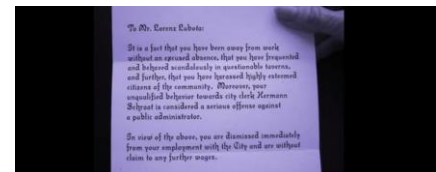
Lorenz spends the borrowed money Lorenz is giving the loan money to the gold digger Melitta. Lorenz and Melitta buy pieces of cloth. Mr. Wigottschinski tells Melanie that they should celebrate the founding of the Wigottschinski-Lubota firm. Lorenz goes to his house to give the piece of cloth that he bought for his mother. His mother looks ill and she tells him that Anna Schwabe expects to see him that day. When Lorenz sees Anna Schwabe, she tells him that he is the biggest scoundrel she has ever seen.



She demands back the money he swindled her out of. She asks him what he did with the money to which he replies that he doesn't owe an explanation to her about how he uses his money. Anna Schwabe is shocked by his shamelessness. It seems to her as if he has been possessed by the devil. At that moment, we see a scene where Melanie and Mr. Wigottschiński are celebrating without a care in the world. Everybody seems drunk. Their irresponsibility is of the same kind as that of Lorenz. Anna Schwabe tells him that if he doesn't give back her money, she will have no qualms about handling him and his fine friend over to the police. She gives him three days to clear the matter up. While returning, Lorenz hallucinates the buildings falling over him. He runs as quickly as he can and finally tumbles to the ground in despair.



Lorenz gets fired from his job Lorenz has been negligent to his job. Finally the company fires him.



ACT V

Lorenz is helpless Lorenz goes to the place where Melanie and Mr. Wigottschiński are staying. He tells them that Anna Schwabe has been to see their mother. Meanwhile, the mother is getting sicker day by day. Mr. Wigottschiński says that the 'old beast' knows no pity when she knows her money is in danger. He says that Lorenz will have to pull the wool over her eyes a second time. Lorenz does not want to deceive the old Schwabe a second time. He'd rather admit his mistakes in the square. He swears that he will pay back every penny. However, Mr. Wigottschiński reminds him that he cannot pay back the money by his means as he is a discharged clerk. He also cannot pay from the royalties from his poetry. Lorenz goes to see Melitta. He wants her to help him as he is on the brink of madness. But she says that she would not love him anymore if she had saved him from his mental illness. The next day, Melitta and Lorenz go shopping. The next day, Melitta and Lorenz go shopping. Then they eat at a restaurant and go dancing afterward. Melitta and Lorenz go shopping. Then they eat at a restaurant and go dancing afterward. Then they eat at a restaurant and go dancing afterward.



Final begging for mercy Lorenz goes to Aunt Schwabe one final time to ask her for forgiveness. He says that he cannot give back the money or explain what he did with the money. He begs for her to have mercy on him. Anna Schwabe says that he can ask the gentleman who discovered his talent to post bail for him or he can sign his future royalties over to her...Lorenz finally admits that these are all lies and nobody would give him even 50 marks for his ten measly poems. After hearing this Anna Schwabe is infuriated. She says it would have been better for him if he had kept lying. She is determined to have the police as much on the woman's throat whom he spent the money for, as they are on his. After this, Lorenz goes to Mr. Wigottschiński who tells him that he has no other choice anymore as if what he did comes to light, he will soon be in jail and that will be the death of his mother. They agree to steal from Anna Schwabe.



ACT VI

Stealing Money and Aunt is killed Mr. Wigotschinski goes to Anna Schwabe, she asks about the money, but he tells her that he does not want to speak about the money, but only wants to have dinner with her. He finally persuades her with flowers to have dinner with him. They have a luxurious dinner together. Meanwhile, Lorenz is still up at 2 o'clock. At night, Mr. Wigotschinski steals the keys from Anna Schwabe's case and throws them to Melanie who is waiting outside. Melanie brings the keys to Lorenz who says that they are all lost and gone to ruin. Lorenz and Mr. Wigotschinski are about to open the case of Anna Schwabe and take the money. However, at that moment, someone rings the old lady's night bell which wakes Anna Schwabe up. Anna Schwabe calls for help, but Mr. Wigotschinski kills her. Meanwhile, the crowds gather in front of her house. Soon the police come to handcuff them both. Melanie goes to her mother's house. She sees her mother for the last time. She asks Hugo to be good to her mother and wishes him farewell. Then she disappears...



Atonement and Redemption Lorenz goes to jail. Years later, he is released. Father Stabe and Marie wait for him outside. They go together to a new house where Lorenz starts a new life with Marie, and writes his memoirs. He writes in his memoirs: 'I have the consolation that my good mother died in the firm belief that I was a sick man'. At that moment, Marie gives him the news that she has a letter from his sister. The letter says: 'Life toyed with me like sea toys with a rudderless boat. Now I've reached dry land, far away. Think of me with love, as I think of you.' Lorenz seems glad to have received the letter. Marie asks whether the father's book fulfilled its duty. Lorenz nods happily. They hug and kiss each other.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Lorenz (*Creative, Sensitive, Manipulable*)

Lorenz is the protagonist of the story who recounts his experiences through writing his memoirs. His flashbacks build the main story whereas, in the frame story, he tries to purge his mind through writing from the fixations and obsessions that have haunted him in his past.

Creative Lorenz is a creative person. He is an aspiring poet in parallel to his minor position within the government. He gives his collection of poems to a bookshop owner called Father Stabe so that he can judge their merit. Hopeful that he will soon be a published poet, he starts taking loans from pawnbroker Anna Schwabe. However, his poems do not turn out to be the products of an artistic genius, rather they are mediocre at best. Nevertheless, we see his creative strain continue until the end of the film. In the frame story, we see him writing his memoirs which is a sort of art therapy for Lorenz to purge his fixations on the mysterious woman Veronica. Thus, his love for creativity and writing is one thread that continues uninterrupted throughout the film.

Sensitive Sensitive and imaginative nature of Lorenz comes to the forefront when he gets hit by the horses that are driven by the woman in white or Veronica. After this accident, what happened plays over and over in Lorenz's mind. He dreams of marrying her one day. He becomes fixated so much on her that he accepts courting a gold digger who looks like her and spends a sizable amount of money to make her happy. His sensitivity is akin to a two-edged sword in that it makes him creative but also vulnerable to being shaken by outside influences.

Manipulable Lorenz's sensitive nature predisposes him to be manipulable by others. There is nothing that Lorenz cannot do for the doppelgänger of Veronica. That is the reason why he goes to Anna Schwabe several times to ask for loan money and lavishes her with expensive things. He is also manipulated by Mr. Wigotschinski to deceive, that is, steal from Anna Schwabe so that he can pay his debts. Even though he does not want to be a scoundrel or be a bad person, his fixations and manipulable nature

cause him to engage in immoral and illegal acts. His unguarded sensitivity makes him manipulable by opportunistic predators.

Melanie (*Unstable, Irresponsible*)

Melanie is Lorenz's sister. She works as a sort of courtesan. Despite her mother's worries about her, she is determined to stay that way and in her words 'stand on her two feet'. Later in the film, she becomes Mr. Wigottschinski's girlfriend and helps Lorenz and him in stealing money from Anna Schwabe. She disappears at the end of the film after seeing her sick mother one last time. In the frame story, we find out through the letter she sent to Lorenz that she has finally built a better life for herself.

Unstable Melanie is prone to changes in mood. Even though she is happy with the path she has chosen for herself, she gets into arguments with her mother who is concerned about her future. She makes rash decisions such as the decision to leave home because of the arguments. She behaves erratically, especially at parties. Her relationship with Mr. Wigottschinski develops suddenly over the night as well which further reflects her impulsive, rash, and unstable nature.

Irresponsible She does not take care of her mother when her health deteriorates. She spends the time partying and behaving wildly at celebrations. Melanie also does not try to prevent her brother Lorenz from engaging in immoral acts such as stealing from Anna Schwabe. On the contrary, she becomes their crime partner. Nevertheless, she finds a way to escape from the thief scene and many years later, build a brand new life for herself. This presumably means that through her character development, she has finally become a more responsible person.

Marie (*Good-hearted, Loyal*)

Marie works in the bookshop with her father. She has feelings for Lorenz, however, Lorenz seems not to be aware of them as he is always occupied with his books and after the accident, with the thoughts of Veronica. Nevertheless, Marie always tries to be there for Lorenz and his family. Not once does she have doubts about his trustworthiness and inner goodness.

Good-hearted Marie is a good-hearted person. She becomes very happy about the possibility that Lorenz's poems might be published. Furthermore, when Lorenz's mother gets ill, she always stays by her side and takes care of her. It can be said that Marie takes care of the mother more than her children do. She also always believes in the integrity and morality of Lorenz even when he engages in immoral acts.

Loyal She waits for Lorenz throughout the series of unfortunate events that befall him. She not only remains loyal to him as he is bewitched by and fixated on Veronica, but she also remains faithful when Lorenz becomes convicted as a criminal and goes to prison to pay his sentence. Her unwavering loyalty and trust in Lorenz act as a catalyst for his personal development and moral betterment.

Mr. Wigottschinski (*Cunning, Immoral*)

Mr. Wigottschinski works as Anna Schwabe's assistant. He always has plans in his head to get money from her. When Lorenz comes to meet Schwabe to ask for money for a new suit, Mr. Wigottschinski sees Lorenz as an opportunity to get more money from her. Later on in the film, he becomes Melanie's boyfriend. He concocts the devious plans to steal money from Anna Schwabe so that Lorenz can pay his loans. We do not know what happened to him after he is arrested after he murders the old Schwabe. Presumably, he is handed a life sentence.

Cunning He is a cunning person which is visible in his facial expressions, body language, and behavior. He uses every opportunity so he can get extra money from Anna Schwabe. When Lorenz is in need of money so that he can provide a luxurious life for Melitta, Mr. Wigottschinski asks how it would be if Lorenz put the royalties on his poetry up as collateral. After Anna Schwabe gives 60,000 marks to Lorenz, Mr. Wigottschinski gets his fair share as well. However, his cunningness leads him to make immoral choices which eventually make him end up in prison.

Immoral Mr. Wigottschinski is an immoral man. He comes up with the plan to steal from Anna Schwabe so that Lorenz can deceitfully pay his loans. He does not have any moral scruples throughout the film. It can be said that he uses the sensitive and easily manipulable nature of Lorenz for his own aims. He even thinks that he can get away with murdering Anna Schwabe after stealing her money. Despite his wishes, his immorality does not go unpunished and he suffers the consequences of his actions by serving in prison, presumably for all his life.

Anna Schwabe (*Strict, Suspicious*)

Anna Schwabe or Aunt Schwabe is a cutthroat pawnbroker. She has made a fortune out of loaning money with high-interest rates. She lives with her assistant Mr. Wigottschinski. To her, everyone in the world is a scoundrel except Lorenz. That is the reason why she accepts to give a sizable amount of money to him without at first questioning what he will do with the money. She is murdered at the end of the film by Mr. Wigottschinski.

Strict Anna Schwabe is a principled and strict person when it comes to her business. When Lorenz first goes to see her to ask her for money, we see her speaking on strict terms with someone whom she does business with. She says: 'Either the money or the pawn ticket! There must be order in this word!' It is this strict attitude of hers when it comes to her job that has gained her wealth and to a certain extent, fame.

Suspicious After she gives Lorenz 60,000 marks, she soon becomes suspicious about for what purpose Lorenz is going to use the money. Therefore, she goes to Lorenz's house and talks with his mother only to find out that her suspicions were correct. Her suspicious and attentive nature serve her well, however, these qualities are not enough to save her from murder at the hands of her assistant and lover Mr. Wigottschinski.

Lorenz's mother (*Responsible, Unhappy*)

Lorenz's mother is also the mother of Melanie and Hugo. Hugo goes to art school. Therefore, the mother does not worry very much about him. However, the lives of Melanie and Lorenz are questionable from a moral point of view, therefore the mother gets too worried about their lives and future. Soon, her health deteriorates and we learn at the end of the film that she died before she knew that Lorenz was arrested as a criminal.

Responsible As she is the head of and the oldest person in the family, she is responsible for each of her children even though they are not 'children' anymore. She tries to make sure that they lead good lives. However, as she herself says, she is someone who has slaved away all her life trying to take care of her children and she does not have the energy she once used to have.

Unhappy Because Melanie works as a courtesan and Lorenz goes not go to work because of his fixations, the mother is deeply unhappy. Her health greatly deteriorates after she witnesses Lorenz's scandalous behavior toward the town officer. All her life, she has worked so that her children can have a good life. Nevertheless, it seems that her efforts have not given fruit and she dies an unhappy person.

Veronica (*Mysterious*)

Veronica is Harlan's daughter. She belongs to a rich and renowned family. The class differences between her and Lorenz make it impossible for them to be together. Veronica's family tries to evade Lorenz's advances by telling him that they can talk about his plans to marry Veronica a year later which is not only to postpone the event but get rid of Lorenz altogether. It is curious to note that after the accident, Lorenz and Veronica never meet again.

Mysterious Veronica is a mysterious, young lady who knocks Lorenz to the ground as the horses she drives hit him. She is dressed in white symbolizing innocence, youth, a sense of elevation, and mystery.

After the accident, she checks Lorenz to see if he is physically harmed. She seems to be a sensitive and compassionate individual which together with her beauty affects Lorenz profoundly.

Melitta (*Opportunistic*)

Melitta is the doppelgänger of Veronica. However, it seems that their characters differ. Melitta is an unscrupulous person who is ultimately after Lorenz's money. She uses Lorenz's vulnerabilities, sensitivities, and fixations so as to live *la dolce vita*.

Opportunistic Melitta is an opportunistic gold digger. When Lorenz explains that he is an unfortunate poet who chases after a ghost or a *phantom*, Melitta takes advantage of his pitiful situation. Her mother explains that they need money, so Lorenz goes to Anna Schwabe to ask for loan money from her. She experiences a luxurious lifestyle with Lorenz's money. They go to restaurants, shows, shopping, dancing, and so on. As much as Lorenz is greedy for love, Melitta is greedy for money and the comforts it brings.

THEMES

SOCIETY (Class)

Class One of the important threads in the film is the distinction between the upper and lower classes which prevents relations from being formed between people from distinct ranks. Lorenz belongs to a middle-class family whereas Veronica belongs to the higher class. This is one of the reasons why when Lorenz comes to talk to Veronica's parents, they wish to get rid of Lorenz as quickly as possible. Moreover, the reason for Lorenz's visiting Anna Schwabe to ask for loan money is that he wants to change his shabby suit so that he can present himself more suitably and fashionably to Veronica. However, he realizes later on that he cannot contact Veronica because her parents do not approve of such a relationship because of differences in their social status. The reason why Lorenz goes to the pawnbroker a second time is because of the doppelgänger of Veronica who is a rather destitute person and wishes to live a luxurious lifestyle which she hopes to do through Lorenz. Because he belongs to the middle class and can never earn enough money from being a clerk in a minor government office, his only option is to ask for loan money from Anna Schwabe which prepares the series of unfortunate events that will soon befall him and everyone around him. Thus, it can be said that income inequality and the pronounced contrast between different classes prepare the ground for the conflicts, and perpetuation of states of mind like greed, moral transgressions, and crimes.

JUSTICE (Injustice, Punishment)

Injustice There are several instantiations of injustice in the story that Lorenz shares with us the viewers through his flashbacks. It can be said that the situation that his mother finds herself in is a case of injustice as although she has worked so hard all her life, she has not seen her efforts being rewarded and still lives in a poor condition with her children. Moreover, she is in poor health. In contrast with her situation, Anna Schwabe has gotten quite rich from her money-lending-business. This injustice seems to stem from class differences as explained above. People from classes, no matter how much they work, may not always get the fruit of their labor. Another case of injustice is that that is done by Lorenz and Mr. Wigottschinski to Anna Schwabe. Lorenz not only loans 60,000 marks from Anna Schwabe to provide Melitta with a luxurious lifestyle, but he also agrees to Mr. Wigottschinski's plan to steal from her so that he can deceptively pay back his loan money. Mr. Wigottschinski's taking the life of Anna Schwabe might further be considered another instance of injustice. Fortunately, these crimes and instances of injustice do not all go unpunished and Lorenz takes his lessons.

Punishment Lorenz gets punished for his misdeeds by going to prison and spending years there. Mr. Wigottschinski, likewise, goes to prison. Although we do not learn what happened to him in the end, we can presume that he serves a life sentence because of murder. By staying in prison, Lorenz has time to reflect on the consequences of his irresponsible and injudicious actions. Furthermore, judging from the end of the frame story he seems to have finally understood the far-reaching consequences of his fixation on Veronica. He seems to have purged himself of the unhealthy obsessions about the mysterious woman

in white and built for himself a brand new life. Looking from that perspective, it seems that the punishment Lorenz has had has been educative for him.

PSYCHOLOGY (Sadness)

Sadness The two characters in whom sadness is most pronounced are Lorenz and his mother. Lorenz's mother has been almost a 'slave' all her life, however, she is still poor and still labors whereas Melanie has chosen an immoral lifestyle for herself and Lorenz is living in a dream world of his own and his judgment is clouded by his fixations. Therefore, Lorenz's mother who goes unnamed in the story is the anonymous mother who has been through hard times and to whom life has not shown its joyous side. Another sad character is Lorenz himself. He is someone sensitive and artistic, therefore he is more vulnerable to being lost in dreams and personal creations. He is sad that he cannot get to Veronica. Later, he is sad because he cannot provide Melitta with the luxuries that she wants to have. He is also sad that he agrees to Mr. Wigottschinski's plan to steal from Anna Schwabe. However, it seems that he is being caused to act in certain ways by the powers of fate, his obsessions, and other people.

RELATIONSHIP (Caring, Desire/Attraction)

Caring The most caring individual in the story is Marie who is an affectionate and compassionate character. She cares for Lorenz's mother when she is ill and no other children of hers are by her side. Moreover, she waits for him as he serves in prison showing her unwavering loyalty and compassion. The relationship between her and Lorenz is different from the relationship between Veronica and Lorenz. Whereas the relationship between Veronica and Lorenz is characterized by obsessions and infatuation, their relationship is based on values such as friendship, loyalty, devotion, and caring.

Desire-Attraction The plot of the film is ultimately based on the attraction that Lorenz has toward Veronica. When he is hit by the white horses she is driving and falls to the ground and sees Veronica for the first time, his whole world becomes changed. Because he is already a sensitive and artistic person who is prone to dreaming and building entire stories in his mind; he becomes obsessed with the mysterious woman in white. He frequently daydreams about her. In his daydreams, he either chases the horses that she is driving or even dreams that they get married in a church in an idyllic scene. His attraction to and desire for Veronica is again what drives him to Melitta and causes him to ask for loan money from Anna Schwabe. At the end of the film, he finally understands the danger inherent in his obsessions. However, on many levels, it is too late. Anna Schwabe is dead and he has to go to prison for his moral wrongdoings.

PAST (Memory)

Memory Lorenz is haunted by his memories and dreams starting from the moment when he is hit by Veronica. He cannot function normally anymore as his mind is filled with images of Veronica and her white horses. It seems to him that he finally gets to live the kind of adventures that he has always read about in his books. He dreams of marrying her or chasing the white horses and the carriage that are ridden by the mysterious woman in white. His dreams create a second world for him where he and his mind get lost. His disconnection from reality makes him unable to see Marie's affection for him and that Veronica is not interested in him as he is in her. His memories and dreams also cause the series of events that bring the downfall of Anna Schwabe, that is her murder at the hand of Mr. Wigottschinski.