**CALIGARI, Cabinet of Doctor (1922)**

*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* [*Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, 1922] is a silent German Expressionist film made by Robert Wiene, and is considered among the most influential films in the history of cinema. The film was originally conceived out of an anti-Fascist screenplay by Hans Janowitz and Carl Mayer, and was directed by Robert Wiene after Fritz Lang turned down the offer. *Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* is a cinematic political text ranking alongside films like Eisenstein’s *Strike* and *Battleship Potemkin*. A stunning visual narrative of necromancy, horror and hypnotism, *Caligari* revisits an old German myth in the Nazi Germany of the 1920s. Wiene’s film was remarkable for its architecture of the uncanny, structured in an Expressionist visual vocabulary that attracted the attention of Modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf. With its oblique chimneys, arrow-shaped windows, treelike arabesques and silhouetted photoplay, *Caligari*is considered the classic cinematic construct of political as well as mental anarchy. This theme is symbolically extended in the film in the never-ending merry-go-rounds and chaotic fairgrounds where the undead exist with innocent children. Logically emerging as a madman’s fantasy in the end, *Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* remains a story of ambivalence where the borderlines between political control and terror, medical benevolence and imprisonment, logic and madness are eventually unresolved.

**References and further reading:**

Eisner, Lotte H. (1969) *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt.* London: Thames and Hudson.Kracauer, Siegfried (1947) *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Entry writer: Avishek Parui

Durham University UK.