

The Founders of Microbiology on Movie Posters

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Summary:

Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch are the founders of microbiology. Their grand social impact, at least during the first half of the 20th Century, permitted the debut of two biographical movies about the French scientist and one in 1939 about the German. Their images were the central object of the films' publicity.

Keywords: Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, Movie posters, Movies/Film.

Microbiology and cinema are two fruits of the 19th Century which grew and reached their peak toward the end of the 20th Century. Their goals were very different, but the creativity of the cinematography made it such that their paths crossed on occasion. One of these crossings was the making of biographical movies about historically important microbiologists.

The Fathers of Microbiology

Microbiology owes its discovery to the French chemist Louis Pasteur (1822-1985). This famous investigator put an end to the theory of spontaneous generation by showing that the content of open swan-necked flasks would stay sterile with the passing of time. Furthermore, his investigations demonstrated the microbial theory connecting infectious diseases to specific bacteria. Among his achievements is the development of vaccines, which established the scientific processes of obtaining them. These studies began in 1881 and culminated in 1885 by vaccinating a human being for the first time against rabies. Pasteur started the process of sanitizing food called pasteurization (1866-1887). He drew an endless number of followers, which contributed significantly to the growth of microbiology. He also created the institute with his that carries his name (1888), which

continues making important contributions to the field of microbiology¹.

The German doctor Robert Koch (1843-1910) is associated with the scientific birth of medical microbiology. With his famous postulates (1876-1884), he demonstrated the specific origins of a grand part of infectious diseases. In addition, he discovered the agents responsible for diseases such as tuberculosis (1882-1884) and cholera (1883). He and the members of his school made important contributions in the fields of dyeing, cultivating, isolating and identifying bacteria. In 1905, he received the Nobel Prize of Physiology and Medicine for his contribution to bacteriology. The first of its kind was given in 1901 to his disciple, Emil Adolf von Behring, for his development of an anti-diphtheria serum².

Means of Advertising for Cinema

Film is both an art and business. To realize its works, masters or not, the cinematographic industry invests money, in many cases enormous amounts of it, that with its exploitation tries to earn it back, with interest. Very expensive movies have failed, despite reason, or have made strong production companies disappear. Because of this, since the beginning of the industry, like any other, they have advertised their products. The mediums and tactics of marketing have

varied and in many cases evolved with the development of technology.

Some, such as posters, have endured time with their presentation at festivals and trailers.

Trailers have adapted to new mediums of social communication and the appearance of audiovisual aides. Now, they not only announce upcoming or current releases during viewings at the theatre, but also on television, videotapes, (now on the brink of extinction) and DVDs. Furthermore, they are used for launching the promotion of the two aforementioned supports. Even better, they are not only announcements, but have become a "content", they are sold as an extra of DVD's.

While some methods of promotion have disappeared, such as radio announcements and lobby cards, others have developed – for example, promotional tours, where smiling and kind celebrities (real or make believe) speak of the excellence of the product they have helped produce and bring to life.

Movie posters, carteles de cine, affiches de cinema, locandine dei films, filmplakate...

Posters are fundamental to film; one would not imagine a commercial film not having a corresponding poster(s), since Auzolle made the first one in 1896 for the movie *L'Arrosen Arrose* by the Lumiere Brothers.

Movie posters have been an important piece and without a doubt, have gone beyond fulfilling their goals, and continue to accomplish them, though studios and distributors continually change them. Important films are launched accompanied not by one poster, but many. An award implies its inclusion on the posters. And a re-release or remake is nothing unless it has a new poster. The launching onto video or DVD also requires a poster.

The first posters were printed using lithography; however, the introduction of offset and its varieties made printing easier and quantity became dirt cheap, helping distribution costs.

Numerous types of posters exist, derived from the objective of their use. Their size varies (for placing on walls, on store windows or to give to viewers, etc.), shape (square or rectangular, with different widths and heights or cut borders or cut-outs), arrangement (vertical or landscape) and structure (simple, folded or with handouts). Furthermore, many of the parameters are characteristic of the country in which they are used. Some types have disappeared but have been substituted for others. In Spain, the small and multifaceted hand programme disappeared with

the arrival of the 70's; although in reality, some theatres distribute something similar in a single colour, larger size which contains the poster and information about the movie, as well as magazines, which include posters and information.

The artistic quality of posters grew at the same rate movies grew and developed. The design and manufacture has been and is in many cases anonymous, by voluntary or being forced. In these circumstances, the studios and distributors guard the identity of the artist. This act reflects the lack of importance companies give the creator of the poster or his claim to part of the publicity. Occasionally, the characteristic style of the poster reveals the origins as that of a particular artist, but most of the time, the majority of posters are anonymous. There have, however, been periods in many countries where generations of artists flourished, carrying the movie poster to the category of art, announcing and satisfying the economical needs of the seventh art.

The styles that have been employed for their creation have varied, depending on the style at the time, always having yielded the final objective to call the attention of the potential viewer - new styles for new times.

The beauty and creative value of posters is varied, but no one can doubt they are not works of art. As a result, they are now displayed in museums as permanent pieces or temporary expositions, and are collectables. Those more fortunate buy them at elevated prices at auction or in specialty stores. Those less able have within their reaches reproductions or compilation books. Technological development has made a place for electronic collections. Through some web pages, its users are creating an invaluable work in the search, compilation, conservation and distribution of movie posters³. If the poster paper is of poor quality, it can deteriorate easily, endangering its permanence, particularly if the works of its makers have disappeared as well. The same could happen to posters as what happened with many films, particularly those of silent movies, which have been lost.

The great obligation for movie posters and their makers was the making in each nation of their own versions, as much for domestic as for imported films. In Spain, at one point, posters were imported and to them the Spanish title was merely glued on top of the foreign title⁴. The majority of posters share the same image, particularly movies from the big studios. Then titles and credits are added in the language of the different countries.

The poster is composed of a written part and of images, which can be photographs, drawings or a

combination of both. Photographs have been used in black and white, sepia, colourized, colour and paint over photographs, alone, or in photo compilations. The image techniques used are various - painting, illustration (press posters) and drawing, with realistic, humorist or caricature styles.

Given that the object of the poster is to call the attention of the potential viewer, its graphical content is of fundamental importance. Of the written section, the title plays a primal part, the awards won as well, (new editions are made to include them) and on occasion the name(s) of the leading actor(s), whose font size can even outdo that of the title. The identity of the director and author, if it is an adaptation, usually have less importance. The chosen images depend on the plot of the movie and the people who made it possible. A good poster maker should transmit the genre of the movie, including the plot. They can range from symbolic representations of the most important scene(s) to including the lead actors. If they have enough popularity, they sometimes appear alone. One can observe handsome chaps or divas, desirable couples, or various stars of the business grouped by rank, in lines, clustered or other associated forms. For this reason, it's interesting to know what happens when the object of the movie is the life

of a scientist: Does this have sufficient attraction as to be the figure on the poster?

Pasteur and Koch on movie posters

The image of Pasteur has been brought on five occasions to film⁵, but only in two feature films with distribution in theatres. One, *The story of Louis Pasteur*, from America, directed by William Dieterle, and debuted with different titles in various countries. The other, *Pasteur*, is French, directed and interpreted by Sacha Guitry, was less widely distributed. Both movies debuted in 1935, although *The story of Louis Pasteur* only in its presentation.

Pasteur must have had a huge social impact at the time for producers to have chosen his image and name as if the only motive of the posters were to announce his biography. This case is easily explained in France, his native country, but not so much in the United States. However, the image of Pasteur must have been known in America, outside of scientific circles, since his life headed the series of biographical movies directed by Dieterle for Warner Bros.

The debut of *Pasteur* took place in the theatre "Colisée" in Paris, September 20, 1935. For its presentation in France, a poster by Jena A. Mercier was used (figure 1). This work reflects the official portrait of the famous subject. Pasteur, with a serene composure, is dressed for the occasion with the Grand' Croix de la Légion d'Honneur on his chest, which he deservedly earned. For the re-release in 1938,

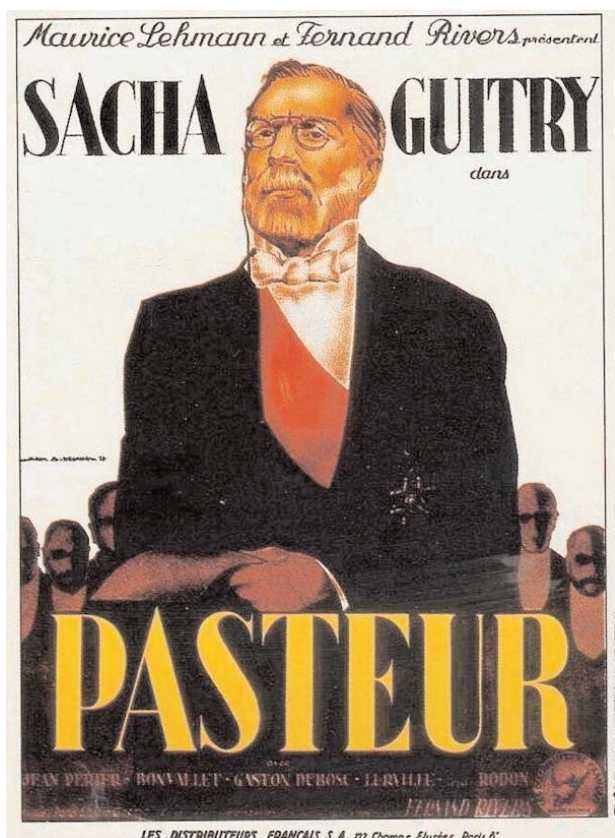


Figure 1: Poster from the debut in France (1935)



Figure 2: Poster from the re-release in France (1938)

Venabert designed a poster with a similar visage in which Pasteur appears in front of the characteristic image of a laboratory of microbiology. The size of the name of the interpreter, in both works, is smaller than the famous microbiologist (figure 2).

The greater part of the posters of *The story of Louis Pasteur* are recreations of the same image, that of the prudent face of Pasteur with an inquisitive expres-

sion. Surely the producer demanded this image on the posters. It is logical to think that the studios sent a

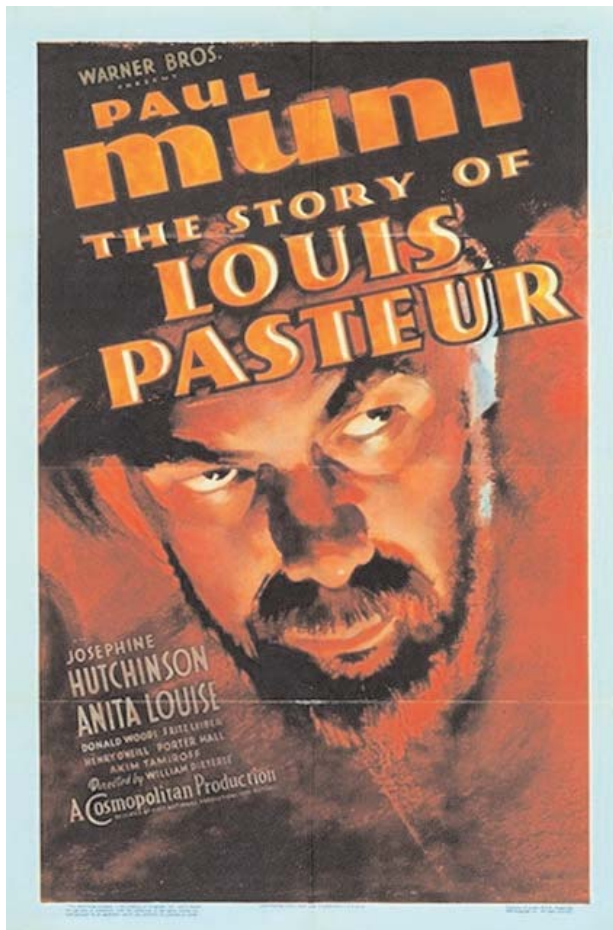


Figure 3: Poster from the United States (one-sheet)

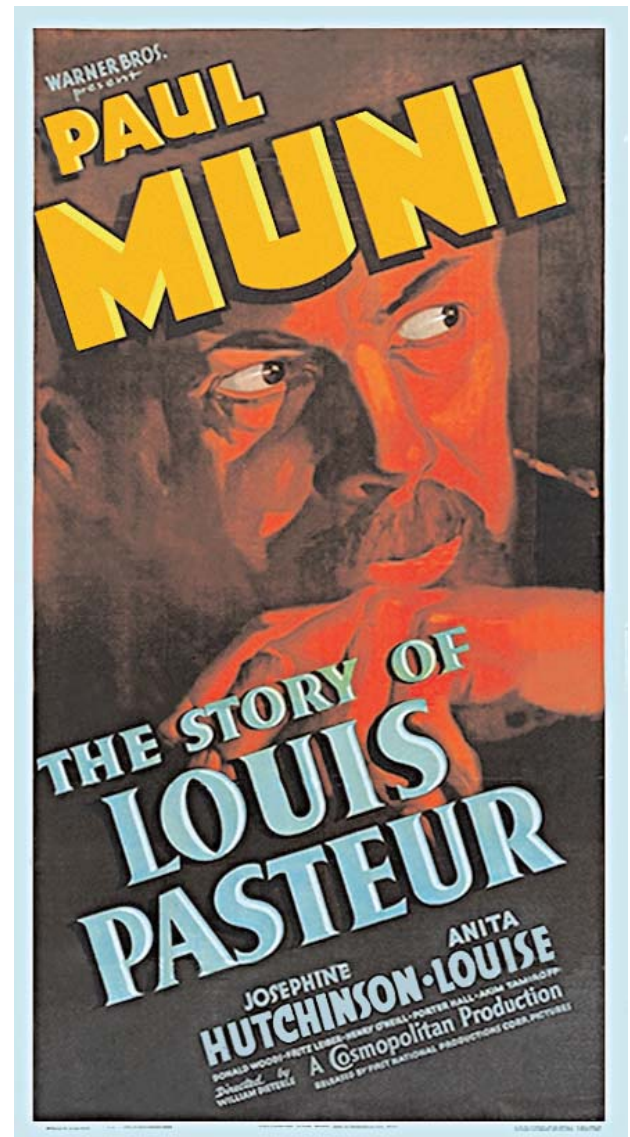


Figure 4: Poster from the United States (three-sheet)



Figure 5: Poster from the United States (half-sheet)



Figure 6: Lobby card from the United States

model, which was repeated to excess in each of the countries where the movie debuted. This circumstance limited enormously the creative capacity of the artists who made the posters.

In the United States, various formats of the posters were used. The one-sheet, contains the aforementioned model as a graphic pattern (figure 3). In the three-sheet it shows Pasteur, in a more natural image, resting his chin on his hand (figure 4). The half-sheet combines three faces, that of the microbi-

ologist, his wife (Josephine Hutchinson) and daughter, Annette (Anita Louise) (figure 5). The lobby card captures a scene in which the scientist appears accompanied by Charbonnet (Fritz Leiber), facing him, and Radisse (Raymond Brown) (figure 6). On the six-sheet, the characteristic face, a central graphic, is accompanied by an affectionate scene between his daughter, Annette, and Jean Martel (Donald Woods) (figure 7). According to the type that captures the name of the protagonist, Paul Muni, he should be

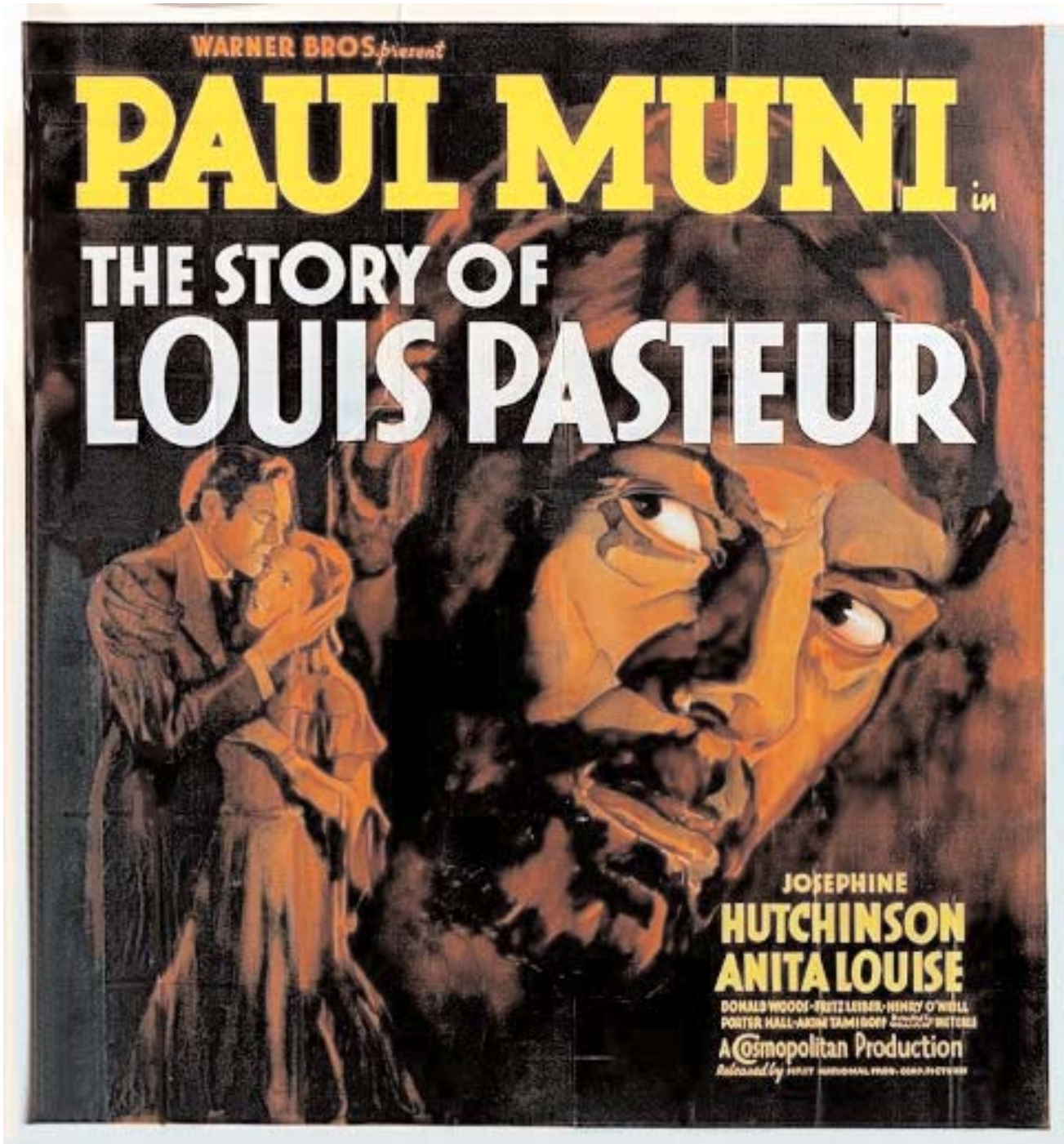


Figure 7: Poster from the United States (six-sheet)

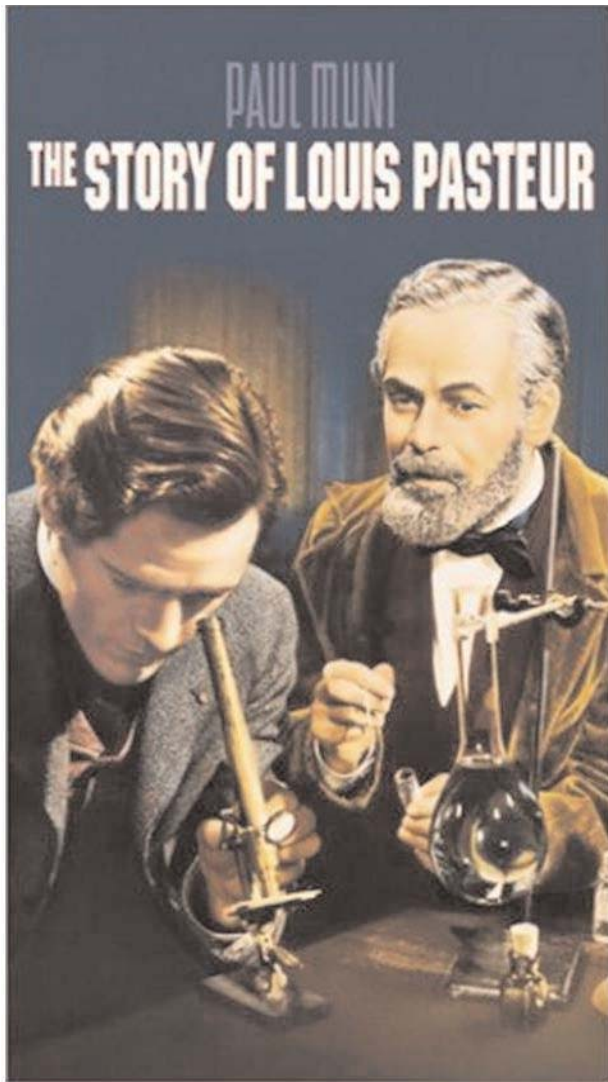


Figure 8: Video cover from the United States

much better known in the United States than Pasteur, or at least Warner Bros. considered him to have a greater hook to grab viewers. This act was repeated on the posters of other countries.

The cover of the video, like many others, is of a simple achievement, a simply colourized photogram, in which Pasteur shows Jean Martel a microscope slide (figure 8).

The great poster maker Luigi Martinati created a poster for its debut in Italy. Pasteur's face, this time in red, is accompanied by two images related to his life: some glass tools characteristic of his investigations which due to its transparent nature allows one to see one of the rabid wolf-attacked- Russians who he later vaccinated (figure 9). In Denmark, it was promoted with a local version of the standard poster (figure 10).

A photograph of an angered Paul Muni was selected for the cover of a "press book" in Cuba (figure 11), and a colour pictorial was created of the



Figure 9: Italian poster by Luigi Marinati

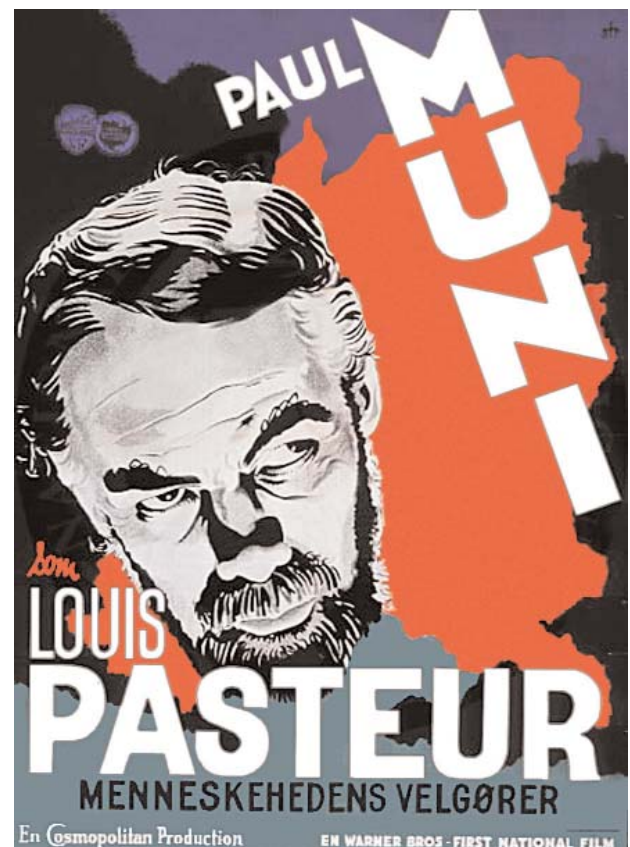


Figure 10: Danish poster



Figure 11: Front of the Cuban "press book"



Figure 12: Argentine poster

traditional face for the Argentine poster (figure 12).

The title accompanied exclusively by the face of Pasteur, was used to announce the movie in the Spanish press (figure 13). One of the hand programmes (a small poster given to the movie viewers) was printed in format landscape, and had two traits, for one, its image coincided with the video cover from the United States and in it appeared the name of Paul



Figure 13: Spanish press announcement

Muni (figure 14). In the Spanish version, the outside of the folded hand programme shows a new face of the scientist (figure 15). On the inside, a photo collage made from various photograms from the film and the characteristic legend: "a movie as big as the wise man it immortalizes. A movie as heroic as the man who sacrificed love and defied his own death to rescue humanity from the reign of an invisible terror (figure 16).

In spite of the fact that Paul Muni received the Oscar for best actor for the movie and that it was nominated for best movie, this fact did not figure into any of the posters.

In 1939, a German film produced by Tobis



Figure 14: Spanish hand programme



Figure 15: Spanish hand programme (exterior)

debuted *Robert Koch, der Bekämpfer des Todes*, which captures the life of the famous microbiologist. It was directed by Hans Steinhoff and the character of Koch was interpreted by Emil Jannings. Sadly, the work was made for the high glory of the National Socialists and the Arian race⁶. Because of this, Jewish characters important to the life of Koch disappeared, as if they never existed. This was the case of Paul Ehrlich. Luckily, another German, Wilhelm Dieterle (William Dieterle), did him justice and made *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet* in the USA in 1940.

The poster in figure 17 corresponds with the German debut, in which the scientist appears engulfed by his lab coat in front of a cadaver. This photograph served as the basis of a pictorial poster and was used in other promotional motifs (figure 18). In the inside one can see an edited lobby card.

Much more cheerful is the Belgian (figure 19), a poster which captures the tender family scene and the Czech (figure 20), with him working in his laboratory, with his wife in the background. The names of the creators do not appear on the works. As in the case of *The story of Louis Pasteur*, Robert Koch and Emil Jannings share the same font size.

Pasteur and Koch are not the only microbiologists whose lives have been brought to film. Other

microbiologists, real or fictitious, have played the lead in or have been supporting roles in other films. In any case, as mentioned with *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet*, they have returned to be the central motif of movie posters.



Figure 16: Spanish hand programme (interior)

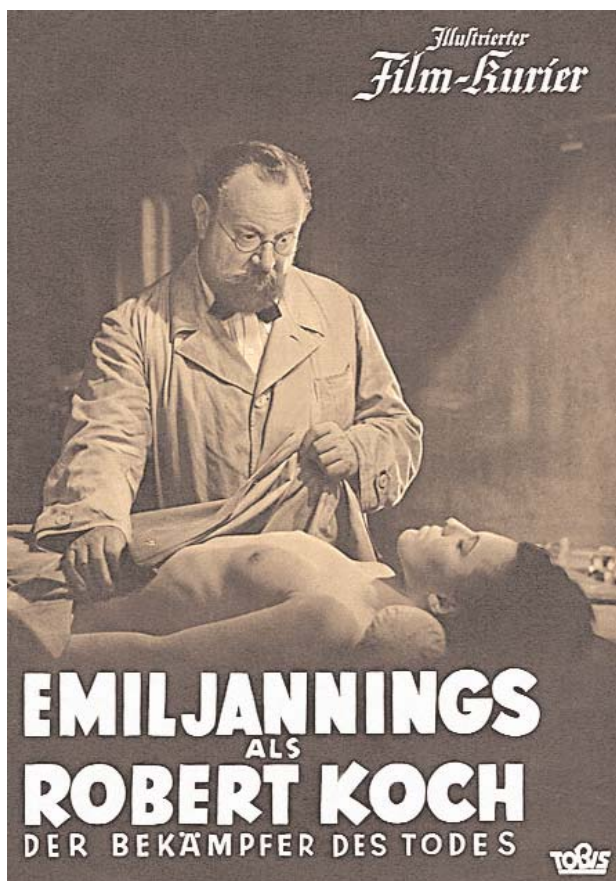


Figure 17: German poster

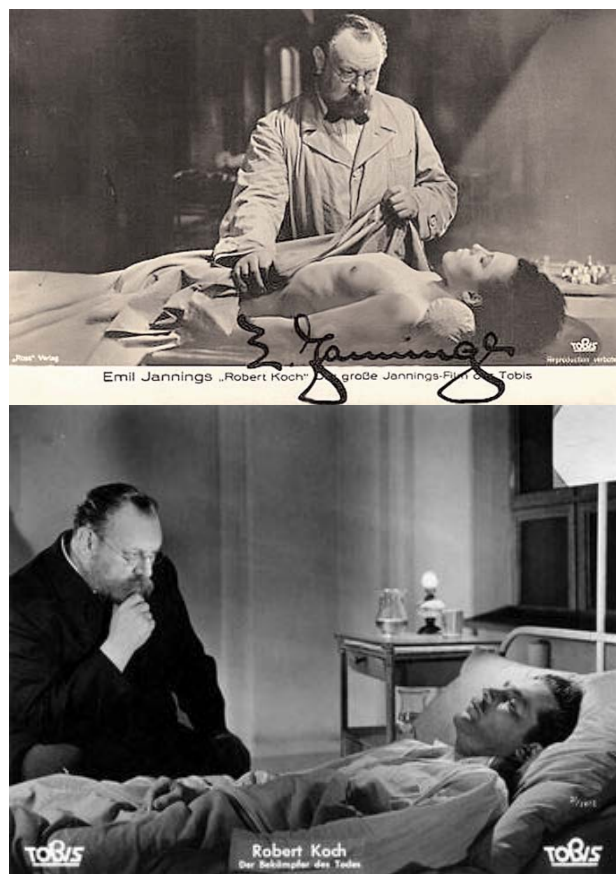


Figure 18: German lobby cards



Figure 19: Belgian poster



Figure 20: Czech poster

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