

Paloma Ortiz-de-Urbina (Ed. / Hrsg.)

German Expressionism in the Audiovisual Culture

Myths, Fantasy, Horror, and Science Fiction

Der deutsche Expressionismus in den Audiovisuellen Medien

Mythen, Fantasy, Horror und Science-Fiction

Popular Fiction Studies 7

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German Expressionism in the Audiovisual Culture /
Der deutsche Expressionismus in den Audiovisuellen Medien

Popular Fiction Studies

edited by Eva Parra-Membrives (†) and Albrecht Classen

volume 7

Paloma Ortiz-de-Urbina (Ed./Hrsg.)

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Paloma Ortiz-de-Urbina

Introduction

The Reception of German Cinematic Expressionism: A Multidisciplinary, International and Contemporary Phenomenon

Paloma Ortiz-de-Urbina

Expressionism is a cultural movement that emerged in Germany in the early 20th century and initially manifested itself in painting. In contrast to previous currents, such as Realism (which tried to reflect reality in an objective and imitative way) or Impressionism (which tried to suggest reality), artists such as E. L. Kirchner and Franz Marc proposed a new aesthetic aimed at reflecting the feeling that reality evokes in the painter. With forceful strokes, loud colours and violent forms, expressionist artists reflected anger, bitterness or pleasure from a subjective perspective, managing to express feelings that strongly impact the viewer.

Expressionist aesthetics soon manifested themselves in media other than painting, appearing in literature (in works by Strindberg, Werfel, Benn, Heym, Döblin and Kafka) and in music (in pieces by Schönberg, Berg and Webern). Simultaneously to the birth of Expressionism, a new art form that fused images, words, and music was also beginning to emerge. It was an art form which burst onto the scene with such an overwhelming force within the German-speaking realm that its power remains undimmed even to this day. That art form was cinema. Between 1920 and 1927, under the influence of Expressionism, German cinema produced classic films such as *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920), *Der Golem* (Paul Wegener, 1920), *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922), *Faust* (F.W. Murnau, 1926) and *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927), whose aesthetic legacy endures. Indeed, a century after these productions, there is no escaping the extent to which the expressionist aesthetics of these films has permeated the visual arts of the 21st century.

These were the first “silent” films, i. e., with sound (live music) but without words (dialogue). Curiously, these silent films without dialogue, despite new

technologies that easily integrate all the arts into a single artistic product (or perhaps because of this), have today become what is known as *cult films*, as they are immensely popular, especially among young people, despite the passage of time. Today's audiovisual media (films, TV series and video games) ooze expressionist motifs: images of vampires identical to Murnau's *Nosferatu* in horror films, recreations of the expressionist Faust, depictions of Wegener's Golem, replicas of the robot Maria from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, fantasy films recreating the motifs of expressionist films, or science fiction films imbued with the languian metropolis. There is a massive current use of expressionist myths, as well as their use in popular genres such as Fantasy, Horror and Science Fiction.

To understand how the expressionist aesthetic, born at the beginning of the 20th century, has permeated the visual arts of the 21st century in such an overwhelming way, we will now try to answer the following questions: In which artistic expressions, apart from cinema, can we find traces of this movement? What aspects are noteworthy in this reception? At what historical moment do we observe this influence? And, finally, in which countries do these traces appear?

In response to the first question, we will see below how the German Expressionist movement left its mark not only in the visual arts but also in literature, music, graphic novels and, above all, in the audiovisual media, specifically in cinema and television series.

As for the second question, this volume analyses the reception of German Expressionism from its appearance at the beginning of the 20th century to the present day in the 21st century. The volume demonstrates that this movement exerts a real fascination on contemporary art that began at the end of the Expressionist movement around 1928 and has continued to grow to the present day.

As far as the remarkable aspects of the expressionist reception are concerned, the extensive use of myths in film, which was already characteristic of German expressionist films, is striking. From the earliest film productions to today, myths are included in numerous audiovisual expressions. Three myths, in particular, stand out and will be studied in this volume: Firstly, the myth of the vampire, which already appears in Murnau's *Nosferatu* from 1922, the first horror film in history, and which has since been found in countless movies and television series today. Secondly, we observe the predominance of the myth of artificial intelligence, the *Maschinenmensch* or the fear of the creation conscious life already present in German expressionist films such as *Der Golem* (Paul Wegener 1920) or *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang 1927) and whose traces can be seen, since then, in a host of audiovisual artistic expressions. Thirdly, the traces of the

expressionist Faustian myth can be observed since the release of *Faust* (F.W. Murnau, 1926) based on the work of Goethe, a clear audiovisual reference for numerous current works of art. To understand these three specific myths (the myth of the vampire, the myth of artificial intelligence and the myth of Faust) and following the study of mythocriticism initiated by José Manuel Losada, this volume analyses the myth from a multidisciplinary point of view. The volume studies the reception of these myths in fields as wide-ranging as literature, graphic novels, cinema and television, theatre, painting and music and also offers interpretative approaches to these myths from disciplines as diverse as literature, audiovisual media, psychoanalysis, politics and sociology. As we will see throughout the volume, the authors also examine the differences and similarities between myths and the popular genres of Fantasy, Horror and Science Fiction.

Finally, regarding the geographical location where we can detect the traces of German Expressionism, we will see below how the imprint of this movement extends beyond the most obvious territories. Firstly, Europe stands out, but the Expressionist imprint can be detected not only in German-speaking countries (such as Austria or Germany) but also in countries such as France and Poland. German Expressionism is also clearly reflected in Russia, North America and Australia. Finally, the volume takes a novel approach to analysing the traces of German Expressionism in non-Western countries such as Syria and Japan.

The volume is divided into five chapters: the traces of Expressionism in literature; the reception of this movement in music; the imprint of Expressionism in the audiovisual media; Expressionist myths; and the reception of Expressionism outside Europe.

The first section of the book, entitled *Expressionism, Cinema and Literature*, analyses a key aspect in understanding the phenomenon of the reception of Expressionism in the audiovisual media: the emergence of a new art form—cinema—and the problematic relationship between this first silent cinema and literature. European literary art, whose beginnings can be traced back to the fall of the Roman Empire at the end of the 5th century AD, has a long tradition. However, the cinema, as mentioned above, was born 15 centuries later, at the beginning of the 20th century, initially related to the entertainment industry but soon showing a unique and overwhelming artistic personality, capable of bringing together the artistic aesthetics of the time in a very complex and subtle way.

Carmen Gómez García introduces us to this artistic tension with an article entitled “The Debate on Cinema in Expressionist Literature”. Gómez García explains how the cinema or “literature without words” had to compete with drama. Although fascinated by the new medium, authors were torn between a

certain aversion to what they described as trivial and an optical seduction that was impossible to escape. However, as early as 1910, psychiatrist and writer Alfred Döblin recommended novelists adopt a “cinematic style”, a style that determined expressionistic prose to an extent they were referred to as “films of words”. Gómez García examines how the ambivalent fascination with the cinema, once the logical reservations of the cultural elite had been overcome, would determine the literary work of the period as well -literature of expressionism, which borrows greatly from silent films. Freed from its beginnings as a form of documenting reality, as simply a rapid succession of images or a type of shadow play, its illusory character would eventually prevail. The integration of this new medium into the broader cultural context went through its phases of denial, integration and adaptation, leading to a rich debate about literature and set against the backdrop of the new culture of the masses, proved to be an unstoppable process. Gómez’s article reflects how today, a century later, we can see that this fascination has retained all its power.

The second article of this chapter, “Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in Francoist Spain”, written by Cristina Zimbrioiu, focuses precisely on the author mentioned above, Alfred Döblin, and analyses his most famous novel, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, published in 1929, a work that has been, from the beginning, closely related to cinema. Döblin’s novel, inspired by Walter Ruttmann’s film *Berlin: A symphony of a big city*, issued in 1927, reached 45 editions within a few years and was translated into several languages. Afterwards, the novel was adapted to cinema in 1930 by director Piel Jutzi in his film *Hampa* (released the following year in Spain). Much better known was Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s fifteen-and-a-half-hour television series made in 1980, later released in cinemas with shorter editing. The relevance of this novel in today’s audiovisual media is also evident in the latest film by German-Afghan director Burhan Qurbani in 2020, a free and modern interpretation of the novel. Zimbrioiu studies also in her article how this novel was welcomed outside of Germany, precisely in Spain, where Piel Jutzi’s 1930 cinematographic version of the novel was released. The paper examines the reception of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in Franco’s Spain, when all writing had to be approved by the censors, as well as the film adaptation of the novel in 1931, 1980, and 2020.

Julia Magdalena Piechocki-Serra focuses in the last article from this chapter, “Utopie und Dystopie in *Die andere Seite* (1909) von Alfred Kubin und *Midsommar* (2019) von Ari Aster”, on the symbolic conformation of a utopia in novelistic and cinematographic fiction. The paper begins with the work of Alfred Kubin, a very good friend of Franz Kafka’s that, like Döblin, also lived for a time in Berlin. Additionally, he strongly influenced Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau’s film work (especially in *Nosferatu*), which will be discussed later

in this volume. Piechocki-Sierra focuses on the utopian/dystopian imagination that the Austrian novelist Alfred Kubin displays in *Die Andere Seite* (1909) and the similarities and differences that this novel allows us to establish when comparing it with the recent film *Midsommar* (2019) helmed by American director Ari Aster. The author pays special attention to how the novel and the film imagine a utopian/dystopian space in which their respective narratives are located and from which they emanate. Despite the 110-year gap between Kubin's work and Ari Aster's film, fascinating similarities can be observed in both Kubin's and Aster's concept of the *city*; another relevant topic that will be discussed (by other authors like Manuel Maldonado) in this volume. As Piechocki claims, in both cases, the desire for a better, more modern world leads to an uncompromising tension and indecision between utopia and dystopia that cannot be differentiated in either Kubin's novel or Ari Aster's film.

The second section of this volume, *Expressionism, Cinema and Music*, approaches the phenomenon of expressionist music, so important in film productions. Despite being called "silent cinema", the art of filmmaking was never silent: from its origins, it has been inextricably linked to sound, specifically music. From the earliest productions, films were accompanied either by piano or live orchestra. For this reason, any analysis of film must inevitably include musical analysis.

First, Magda Polo Pujadas explains one of the most emblematic works of the most famous expressionist composer in German-speaking countries: the Austrian citizen Arnold Schönberg. The twenties of the last century were decisive years for incorporating sound and music in the cinema. Consumers around the world were looking forward to the possibilities that this artistic language offered, and musicians were also interested to see how music acquired roles that led it to experiment between the emphasis of reality and the manifestation of emotions. Arnold Schönberg was no stranger to all this and composed *Begleitungsmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene op. 34* (1929–1930), an experimental work that confirms the evident influence of German expressionist cinema. *Begleitungsmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene op. 34* was a challenge to demonstrate that music contemplates by itself all the expressive possibilities and that it can awaken in us the same sensations that cinematographic images can create. Moreover, Schönberg intended to demonstrate the pre-eminence of music over other artistic languages – among them the cinematographic language – by containing in itself and in the compositional rules that governed it the possibility of expressing the inner world of the individual, of his pain, of his fear and his anguish. In this chapter, Polo analyses the score from a musicological point of view. She describes the score and the way Schönberg conveys the expressionist anguish and believes that it is pure music

(autonomous or abstract) that has emotional content that appears and refers to the same music. Indeed, it is music that follows the parameters of music resulting from the acceptance of artistic expressionism and, especially, the cinematographic one. The programmatic aspect, then, becomes pure.

For his part, Jesús Ferrer Cayón focuses his research on the opera *Die Teufel von Loudun*, impregnated with expressionist aesthetics, by Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki, that was filmed as a television movie one month after its premiere in June 1969 at the Hamburg State Opera, thanks to the vision of Rolf Liebermann and the talent of Joachim Hess, an expert director in television adaptations who German expressionist filmmakers heavily influenced. Ferrer entitles his paper “The expressionist impact of *Die Teufel von Loudun* (Krzysztof Penderecki, 1969) in the *film-opera* for TV, by Joachim Hess and Rolf Liebermann”. As the author puts it, Penderecki conceived atmospheric expressionism to give a dramatic effect to this allegory of violence and of neurotic societies and promoters of political and religious fanaticism. To achieve this impact in music, he played with the effect produced by the contrasts between different types of instrumental writing and antagonistic vocal styles. Thus, from the tragic event that took place in France in 1634 (the death at the stake of Urbain Grandier, a parish priest with whom the mother superior of the Ursuline convent in Loudun was in love), Penderecki freed himself of the oppression exerted on Poland by the Soviet communist regime and the Catholic Church, by reflecting the different mental states that the unstable psyche of the characters experience when operating in different oppressive social environments. Going deeper in this same line, Hess, through an imaginative use of the visual effects, managed to capture more dramatically the tension, terror and truculence contained in this singular opera.

The volume’s third section is the most extensive, as it deals with the central and most relevant aspect of the volume: the reception of ***German Expressionism in the Audiovisual Media***. Thus, this part comprises four chapters focusing on feature films and one chapter on television art. As mentioned above, the beginning of cinematic Expressionism is usually dated to the inaugural film *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (Wiene, 1920). Usually, it ends with the spectacular *Metropolis* (Lang, 1927), which shows clear traces of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement. However, as we will observe throughout this section, expressionist traces can be seen in the audiovisual media from 1929 to the present day.

Carmen Gómez Pérez starts this part of the book with his chapter entitled “Homage to German Expressionist Cinema: von Sternberg’s Proposal” and analyses the legacy of Expressionism in the first sound movie in German cinematography, *Der blaue Engel* released in 1929 after the UFA Studios’ proposal to The American film director Josef von Sternberg. To succeed in his creative

vision for this film, Von Sternberg had to overcome the challenges inherent in the switching of modes in communication. He made a film that would later be considered pioneering in many aspects, both technical and artistic, by scholars from different disciplines. In this chapter, Gómez-Pérez highlights Von Sternberg's ability to adapt to the new mode of communication in the transition from silent movies to talkies, basing his proposal on the inheritance of Expressionism handed down from the golden age of Weimar cinema.

After this first homage to Expressionism in cinema, the second chapter of this section, "The long shadow of German Expressionism in *Die Mörder sind unter uns*", by Celia Martínez García, examines the traces of this movement in Wolfgang Staudte's 1946 film. This production, the first one after the Second World War (1945) in Germany, and the paradigm of the so-called rubble films (*Trümmerfilme*) sets the beginning of a new film era born amid another postwar, another defeat and in an unprecedented context of emotional ruins. The film references Fritz Lang's *M*, the recurring use of shadows, and Italian Neorealism, which, by definition, can involve a contradiction concerning the Expressionist concept.

In the third chapter, Manuel Maldonado focuses on the analysis of the concept of the *city*, so characteristic of expressionist films such as *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang 1927), which influences the picture of the city in this science fiction film and examines the representation of urban dystopia in Australian film director Alex Proyas' *Dark City* (1998). Under the title of "Simulation, Überwachung und fremdbestimmte Identität. Die urbane Dystopie in *Dark City*", Maldonado starts his articles from the background of Georg Simmel's reflections on the devaluation of the personal idiosyncrasy of the individual in modern metropolises, which constitutes the metropolitan form of alienation. By staging a dystopian future world and its adverse effects on the individual, the film warns of social aberrations and their impending consequences. The mixing of simulation and reality or the externally controlled construction of identity raises questions about the blurred demarcation line between virtual and non-virtual worlds and the dissolution of the self in contemporary society. *Dark City* exemplifies how the simulation of society and the unreal perception of reality lead to the alienation and denaturalisation of the individual. As a result of the absolute hypertrophy of an environment dominated by machines and technological surveillance, the real disappears into the simulation, behind which the relations of domination, social reality and the dissolution of the self remain hidden. In its cinematic representation of the omnipotence of the city and the machine, Maldonado demonstrates how *Dark City* refers to films of German Expressionism, especially *Metropolis* (1927) by Fritz Lang, which provides models for the design and architecture of the dark city.

Carlo Avventi continues the analysis of expressionist traces in cinema, studying the work of American director David Lynch, in his chapter “Moderne Abgründe. Die dämonische Leinwand des David Lynch.” As explained by Avventi, from his first feature-length film *Eraserhead* (1977) to his more recent productions (*Twin Peaks. Season 3* (2017)), the influence of the visual arts in David Lynch’s filmography is unmistakable. Alongside Edward Hopper, Henri Rousseau and Francis Bacon, German Expressionism also proves to be a model and source of inspiration for the US-American director. The author refers to how the caricature-like, grimacing portrayal of many of his figures, the distortion of spaces, the breaking up of linear narrative structures, the autonomy of shadows, the heightened colour palette and the alienation of the sound backdrop bear witness to this. Lynch’s films tear down the boundaries of the visible in order to reveal the background or abyss of reality. Yet this expressionist gesture not only serves Lynch to deconstruct conventional modes of representation in the sign of a crisis-like experience of reality but also increasingly reveals itself as media iconoclasm throughout his artistic career. Lynch thus emerges as a modern expressionist.

In the following chapter, Luis N. Sanguinet analyses the cinematographic legacy of the film *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919) in current films and series. As the author states, in the many fantasy and horror films of the Expressionist time, camera tricks and special effects that were still in the experimental stage were used to depict miraculous events. In *Caligari*, the distortion of reality created a visual form for the protagonist’s delusions. The film reflected the distrust of authority and psychiatric methods of the time, which gained prominence in the Weimar Republic due to the psychological aftermath of the First World War. *Caligari* used cinematographic techniques to depict states of mind at a social moment when the concept of identity was in deep crisis. Nowadays, but already in the last decades, self-questioning and narrative instability have gained importance as elements of the plot core in popular films and series. Meta-discursive frames and the decline of identity are current themes that serve to structure mental situations narratively and cinematographically in the so-called psychological thrillers. Sanguinet’s essay examines one such series, *Mr. Robot* (Sam Esmail, 2014–2019), and considers its parallels and convergences with *Caligari*, delving into the protagonist’s mental state. *Mr. Robot* updates cinematographic devices that are over a hundred years old and whose origins lie in *Caligari*.

The fourth block, devoted to the study of myths, entitled *Expressionist Myths in the Audiovisual Culture*, begins with an analysis of the legacy of the first horror movie in the history of film: Friedrich Murnau’s *Nosferatu*, which focuses on **the myth of the vampire**.

Jorge Marugán Kraus begins this section with an essay that examines the psychological transcendence of the vampire myth comparing Murnau's *Nosferatu* of 1922 and Coppola's version of 1992 and is entitled "The Vampire, the Oral Fixation and its Connection with the Sexual through Two Cinematographic Works: *Nosferatu*: A Symphony of Horror by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (1922) and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* by Francis Ford Coppola (1992)". According to psychoanalyst Marugán Kraus, expert in Jacques Lacan, the myth of the vampire gives expression to two fundamental drives: the oral drive on which Murnau's version focuses and the sexual drive that manifests itself in Coppola's version. While in the oral drive the baby's anguish manifests itself in the possibility of the food provider remaining empty, Murnau's vampire reverses the roles and it is the subject himself who surrenders his vital essence, avoiding this anguish at the cost of himself. As Marugán Kraus explains, it is a monstrous vampire because it retains and imprisons the subject in the primitive time of the oral. Coppola, on the contrary, humanises the vampire who manifests himself as a seductive and desiring gentleman; he thus transcends the monstrosity and the oral fixation of *Nosferatu*, renouncing, like a romantic hero, his object of desire for love.

For his part, Francisco Javier Sánchez Verdejo, also examines the myth of the vampire in Coppola's film but focuses on the representation of the visual archetype of the vampire in "The femme fatale in Victorianism and the fin-de-siècle: feminine vampiric duality". As the author states, if an idea has terrified humankind, it is that of a being that has crossed the threshold of life but is able to return "from the other side" to suck the energy of those who stayed behind. Even worse than the fact that the vampire is dead is his responsibility for taking life to satisfy his insatiable thirst and fulfil his diabolical curse. Sánchez Verdejo examines also in his paper how, if there has been something that has been able to intimidate the patriarchal society it is the idea that death has been traditionally typified as a female being.

Finally, Ingrid Cáceres-Würsig ends this section with an essay entitled "Nosferatu als ästhetisches und kosmogenetisches Muster für Vampir-Serien in Streaming-Diensten", which examines the influence of Murnau's *Nosferatu* in present-day television series. As the author states, due to its novelty and originality, the expressionist-style image of Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) has become a collective imagotype, nurturing the popular imaginary of cinema. The proliferation of digital content platforms such as Netflix, HBO and Prime Video has transferred an important part of the audio-visual narrative to this new environment, where the vampire genre, in all its variants such as fantasy, horror or tragicomedy, plays a central role. Cáceres-Würsig analyses how Murnau's aesthetic-narrative model is still present in television series. On the one hand,

Cáceres-Würsig's article suggests that the visual stereotype of the character of Nosferatu continues to inspire the demonic vampires that fill the screens and, on the other hand, that the narrative refers to the archaic vision of cosmic regeneration present in many mythologies.

In the following, the **myth of the Golem** and the artificial intelligence is examined through two different lenses.

First, Roland Innerhofer, in his essay "Der künstliche Mensch im Expressionismus. Zur Faszination einer Filmfigur" examines how the cinematic figurations of the artificial human in Paul Wegener's *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam* (1920) and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) have a lasting appeal to this day. The artificial human as an alien, threatening and seductive life form awakens feelings and emotions, fantasies and imaginative potentials that are mobilised more directly and effectively in the medium of the expressionist silent film than in the novel genre, whose media and aesthetic prerequisites cannot erase distancing and reflexive effects.

For her part, María Jesús Fernández Gil, in her article "Conflicting Narratives. The Otherness within Expressionist Approaches to the Golem vs Cynthia Ozick's Affirmation of the Myth's Jewishness" studies the use of the golem myth in Cynthia Ozick's work. As is known, Gustav Meyrink's novel *Der Golem* (1915) and Paul Wegener's film (1920) garnered so much critical and audience attention for their treatment of the golem that they soon became a paradigm for future versions of the legendary Jewish clay man. Fernández Gil states that Cynthia Ozick can be counted among the group of writers that have participated in the recent cultural resurgence of this figure and it is possible to argue that the golemic creature fashioned by this Jewish-American writer offers a counter-narrative to works where the golem's clearly demarcated cultural and ethnic origins were subverted. As Fernández Gil refers, Ozick's goal is to restore the myth's Jewishness. The conclusion of the author's research is that the original myth is selectively transformed in all cases to make it fit a specific historical and sociocultural framework.

To conclude the section dedicated to Expressionist myths, Emilio Sierra examines **the Faust myth** in F.W. Murnau, with his film *Faust* (1926) and Sokurov's *Faust* (2011), in his chapter "Faust in Murnau and Sokurov. From cinema to the sense of myth." Sierra exposes the parallels and the differences between the myth of Faust in the German and Russian expressionist cinema. If Murnau's *Faust* has its roots in the personal version of the director, very marked by Goethe's version, highlighting disconcerting and innovative elements in silent cinema, it is, as the author states, light and chiaroscuro that leads us to meditate on the meaning and preponderance of "love and beauty before knowledge and immortality". In the case of Sokurov, the reflection is marked

by his characteristic photography that focuses on the Faustian myth around the role of power as apogee and absence. Emilio Siera reflects on how the myth of Faust in these films will lead the spectator to think about beauty, death, the value of the present, power and love as questions that clarify not only the artistic realization of the myth but also the meaning of existence itself.

The book ends with a section devoted to the reception of **German cinematic Expressionism outside Western borders**, dealing with two examples focused on Syria and Japan.

The first paper of this section, by Lorena Silos and Montserrat Bascoy, is an essay entitled “Expressionistic Trends in *Persepolis*: The Role of Fantasy in Narratives of Memory” which analyses the role of fantasy in the graphic novel *Persepolis* (2000) that was brought to life in Vincent Paronnaud’s acclaimed animated adaptation of the same name in 2007. Both novel and film narrate Satrapi’s childhood in Iran during the Islamic revolution as well as her experiences as a teenager and an adult woman in Europe, all the while exploring the struggles of a female individual to find her place in a hostile environment. The authors claim that, in order to convey the anxiety triggered by totalitarianism and displacement, but, at the same time, to grant her narrative a patina of unreality or fantasy to alleviate the harshness of her memories, Satrapi resorts to the aesthetic tools of Expressionist cinema. Thus, their paper examines the influence of Expressionism on *Persepolis* and shows how expressionist techniques remain appropriate tools for capturing the fear and alienation suffered by an individual.

Finally, Yamada Satoru offers an innovative insight into the reception of German Expressionism in Japan. As the author states, Robert Wiene’s *Caligari*, released in 1921, had a great impact on Japanese society. The metaphors contained in this film stimulated the minds of great cinematic personalities such as Tanizaki Junichirō (1886–1965), Kinugasa Tēnosuke (1896–1982) and Mizoguchi Kenji (1898–1956) to face the challenge of shooting an expressionist film. In this article, Satoru focus on *benshi*, the peculiar Japanese system of explaining the film with words to the audience.

The volume thus traces the reception of German Expressionism from its beginnings in the early 20th century to the present day in the 21st century and demonstrates how pictorial expressionism immediately caught up with the then nascent film industry and art. The tensions and relationships of film with other, much more established arts, such as literature and music, are shown. The prevalence of the cinematic element and its relevance today is also demonstrated. It shows how the influence of German Expressionism is not only widespread and observable in literature and music, but also how these two arts feed off each other. In addition, three myths are analysed which prove to be

characteristic in the study of the reception of German Expressionism in cinema: the myth of the vampire, the myth of the artificial man/woman and the myth of Faust. In addition, the book attempts to shed light on the differences between the concept of myth and the genres of fantasy, horror and science fiction, concerning the reception of German cinematic Expressionism in the world, from its appearance in 1920 to the present day. Finally, it is shown how German expressionist work has an impact on European or Western art, and even on Persian or Asian culture, as in the case of Japan.

1 Expressionism, Cinema, and Literature

The debate over cinema in expressionist literature

Carmen Gómez García

Es gibt kein anderes Mittel, als das Kino.
Was ist daneben das Buch?
Was ist daneben das Theater?
[...]
Sie [Die Welt] stünde still, nähme man das Kino heraus. [...]
Wer das Kino hat, wird die Welt aushebeln.¹

The origins

In 1920, when Carlo Mierendorff wrote these lines in his essay *Hätte ich das Kino!*, barely 25 years had passed since, according to the most accepted conventions, the history of cinema had begun (on 28 December, 1895).² Quite contrary to the fervour they express, the integration of the silent film into the first wave of expressionism would be marked by a debate that fluctuated between the rejection of its trivial content and a fascination with its visual appeal.

While that projection by the Lumiere brothers is generally considered to be the first in history, earlier, on 1 November 1895, the brothers Max and Emil Skladanowsky, the inventors of the bioscope, had exhibited their own moving images for the first time (and to a paying public) at Berlin's Wintergarten Theatre. Eight films (at the time referred to "living photographs"), each only a few seconds in duration, showed a series of acrobatic feats, circus stunts, displays of boxing and other technical wonders.³

1 Mierendorff, Carlo. *Hätte ich das Kino!*. In: Die Weißen Blätter 7 (1920), 86–92, here according to Anz, Thomas/Stark, Michael (eds.) (1982). *Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur (1910–1920)*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 488, 492.

2 As Béla Balázs well noted, cinema is the only form of artistic expression for which we have a date of birth (in: Paech, Joachim [1988]: *Literatur und Film*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1.)

3 The Skladanowsky brothers enjoyed little recognition for their invention, so little in fact that they would falsify the date of their first film (1892) so as to place it even before that of Edison. Even so, they would be consigned to oblivion until the Nazis attempted to revive their version of the events for obviously nationalistic ends.

It is true, however, that the early cinema cannot be disassociated, on the one hand, from other turn-of-the-century institutions of entertainment: cabaret, vaudeville, musicals, magic shows, circuses... those expressions of *Schaulust* and *Unterhaltungslust* that the public demanded and which were being shaped by the times. As Mierendorff would formulate it in the text already cited: “In einer Zeit, die alle in Beziehung setzt mit allen, konnte das starre Bild nicht mehr genügen”⁴. On the other hand, cinematography was a product of 19th-century industrialization, combining, accumulating and perfecting techniques that were already known and practiced in fairs, variety theatres and travelling cinemas, at the same time that it embodied the premises of 20th-century aesthetics. On this point, one might include Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity, Ernst Mach’s loss of rationality in human thought, or Georg Simmel’s “intensification of the nervous life”⁵, concepts in which, as in the cinema, there is a splitting apart of unitary images into diverse perspectives of varying duration and focus. To direct one’s attention rapidly for very brief instants to ever-different locations is to discover the principles of the *cinematographic being*, a term used by the “cine-sceptic” Henri Bergson in *L’évolution créatrice* (1907). This influence of the cinema on the viewer’s psyche was duly noted in what the journalist Hermann Keizl would refer to as “Großstadt-Psychologie”.⁶

The cinema, then, answered to the new emotional needs of a primarily urban public, the same that attended cabaret performances and on which the cinema depended economically. For this, in 1913 two extremely important *Lichtspiel-Paläste* were inaugurated: Berlin’s Marmorhaus and, in Leipzig, Europe’s first open-air cinema, with capacity for 1,000 spectators.⁷ Cinema spread in direct competition with conventional theatre, in 1909 sparking the inevitable debate over its value, and stimulating a fruitful aesthetic and sociological reflection on literature as well.

4 Anz (1982: 487).

5 In *Die Großstadt und das Geistesleben* (1903).

6 Kienzl, Hermann (1911). *Theater und Kinematograph*. Strom 1:7, 219–221, here according to Schweinitz, Jörg (ed.) (1992). *Prolog vor dem Film*. *Nachdenken über ein neues Medium*. 1909–1914. Leipzig: Reclam, 231.

7 Pinthus, Kurt (ed.) (1963). *Das Kinobuch*. Kinostücke von Berman, Hasenclever, Langer, Lasker-Schüler, Keller, Asenijeff, Brod, Pinthus, Jolowicz, Ehrenstein, Pick, Rubiner, Zech, Höllriegel, Lautensack, und ein Brief von Franz Blei. *Dokumentarische Neu-Ausgabe des Kinobuchs von 1912/1914*. Zürich: Verlag der Arche, 10.