The German Aesthetics: from the Expressionist Context to the Gothic Canon

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Abstract

Based on the historical, cultural and artistic context, the German aesthetics created the richest grounds for Expressionism to become a starting point for further artistic productions. The Expressionist ideology, narrative and iconography stood for new artistic genres and styles, representing the German contribution to the development of art. In the case of science-fiction and fantasy, not only as literary but also as cinematographic genres, the German model represented one of the most important legacies. The study intends to explore the influences of the Expressionist context upon the horror and thriller films in order to identify the specific Gothic elements able to function as an aesthetic canon.

Keywords: *aesthetics, Expressionism, early German cinematography, canon.*

A Historical Overview upon the German Cinematography

From the historical point of view, the German cinematography began in 1895 with the first public representation of the short films created by the Skladanowsky brothers in Berlin. For almost twenty years, film was not seriously considered a form of art but of entertainment for the average people. Nevertheless, starting with the period 1910-1919, the German film was continuously under a process of innovation and experiment. Most of the films created during this period, such as *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari (The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari)*, made use of the Expressionist artistic means and techniques.[1] According to the meaning of the term, the expressionist masterpieces used to put under the spotlight different psychological and emotional states such as fear, passion, dreams and terror, turning the *expression* into a completely subjective means of artistic representation. Thus, the expressionist painting was

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[1] The Expressionist art has its origins in the German painting, sculpture, literature and theatre.

characterized by unnatural and vibrant colours as well as daring perspectives while, in its turn, theatre's prevalent feature was given by the scenes created deliberately artificial, full of rough speeches and an exaggerated manner of acting. Most of these means of artistic expressions were also used in cinematography together with extreme angles of shooting and deep differences between light and dark.

Although, after the First World War, Germany had to face great economic, political and social problems, the German cultural production reached an important climax. In the field of cinematography, films such as *Caligari, Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau, 1922) and *Dr. Mabuse* (Fritz Lang, 1922) proved to be not only real cinematographic masterpieces but also artistic expressions of the Freudian *psychological abnormal* transposed into the impossibility to distinguish between dream and reality, between truth and lie. In fact, this state of facts was based on the general sensation of uncertainty among the German people confronting with the consequences of war. Things changed with the second half of the 1920s. This period brought economic stability by introducing the monetary reform and cutting out the inflation. A more optimistic state animated the whole nation and this fact could also be noticed in the artistic productions of that time. That was the moment when German cinematography experienced a new aesthetic style: *Neue Sachlichkeit* (*The New Objectivity*).

Regarded as a new realistic perspective upon fiction, the new style was used by the German directors for dealing with social and psychological problems in their films. Far from any allegorical or fantastic aspect, the themes and plots of these movies pointed out average stories and characters. Till the talkie movies, the German silent movies could be characterized mainly by a powerful realist aspect. This tendency lasted until 1931 when Fritz Lang's film *M,* an early talkie movie, was launched. Unfortunately, this prolific period of so many important cultural productions from Weimar Republic was interrupted by the Third Reich, when many personalities of German cinematography started to immigrate to the United States. Ernst Lubitsch, Billy Wilder, Fritz Lang, Robert Siodmak, Josef von Sternberg, Peter lore, Detlev Sieck and Marlene Dietrich started their new careers in Hollywood while those who remained in the country had to work for the Nazi regime[2] or to try an individual career without too many compromises, which proved to be very hard.

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[2] At that time, one of the most controversial film producers was Leni Riefenstahl with her two major films *Triumph des Willens* from 1934 and *Olympiad* from 1938.

After the Second World War, Germany was divided into Western Germany, also known as the Federal Republic of Germany, and Eastern Germany, known as the Democratic Republic of Germany. In a few years, the two ideologies generated two different countries not only from the economic and political point of view but also from social and cultural one.

In Western Germany, the film production decreased. During the 1950s, there were only few important films produced, among which comedies, musicals and *Heimat*[3], the most specific gender of German cinematography. The artistic standard of these productions lacked its importance as they continued the Third Reich type of films and their purpose was now only for entertainment. As a consequence of this fact, twenty-six young German directors and producers signed an artistic manifesto during the Short Films Festival in Oberhausen 1962. Declaring death to the old cinematography, their approach intended to be totally different in terms of style and narrative. However, the representatives of the Young German Cinematography of the 1960s did not build up a true cinematographic movement as only Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff and Edgar Reitz remained true to their artistic principles which, during the 1970s, were followed by a new generation, known as *der Neue Deutche Film*, the New German Film. Among the most important representatives were Werner Herzog, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Wim Wenders and Margarethe von Trotta.

The development of film industry in the Democratic Republic of Germany could be characterized as being antifascist. In this respect, the main company of film production, D.E.F.A.[4] (Deutsche Film Aktiengescllschaft) launched one of the most representative movie *Die Mörder Sind unter uns* (Wolfgang Staudte, 1946). Besides its antifascist aspect, the production of films in the Eastern

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[3] *Heimat* is definitely related to all the attempts that have been made in order to rewrite the history of Germany, mostly to fit the atrocities of the Nazi period into a more tolerable master narrative. This explains the huge number of books and articles, the academic conferences, the exhibitions, the TV programmes that focused on the discontinuities in German history that triggered the lack of national identity. No other country had more academics, politicians, journalists, artists, writers that tried to fill what was perceived as a vacuum and to redefine the identity of their homeland, meaning the *Heimat.* Filmmakers also played an important part in this undertaking since film reached a much larger audience than speeches, books or conference papers. Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), x.

[4] Almost completely destroyed during the Second World War, the Babelsberg Studios in Potsdam-Babelsberg, formerly known as U.F.A (Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft), were rebuilt and renamed as D.E.F.A and functioned under the communist regime in the Democratic Republic of Germany. After the German reunification, D.E.F.A. became again Babelsberg Studios and nowadays is one of the most prolific company of film production

Germany was attentively watched by the communist regime.[5] This fact does not mean that the films produced at that time were of poor quality, on the contrary, important directors and producers such as Kurt Maetzig, Heiner Carow, Konrad Wolf and Frank Beyer developed a real tradition of documentaries, antifascist films and movies for children.

The economic and political reunification of Germany was finished, at least the organizational work, in 1990, after the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989. From the cinematographic point of view this event represented a great opportunity for both Eastern and Western German film directors and producers. Since the psychological effects over the cinematographic culture were not so much different from those at the end of the Nazi regime, the political and social changes needed to be assimilated by the film directors and producers. The films of the 1990s introduced new themes and plots such as the darkness, the night, the frontier, the city of Berlin or the blurred and foggy past.[6] A new revival of the German film production started with *Lola rennt* (Tom Tykwer, 1998), later followed by other successful movies: *Gegen die Wand* (Fatih Akin, 2004), a Turkish-German coproduction, *Der Untergang* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2005) and *Das Leben der Anderen* (Florian Henckel-Donnersmarck, 2006).

At present, the German cinematography is well illustrated internationally, with mainstream productions that present the German history from new perspectives such as Bernard Eichinger's *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* or low-budget productions such as the films of the Berlin Cinema School, whose main representatives are Thomas Arslan, Christian Petzold, Valeska Griesebach and others.

A General Perspective upon the German Cinematographic Aesthetics

It is commonly known that the cultural and artistic expressions tend to reflect the social, historical and political situations which makes easier to understand their connections. In the case of German cinematography, the experience of war, including the revolutionary acts as well as the enthusiasm of a

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[5] After the fall of the communist regime, there were discovered plenty of films forbidden by the authorities. Most of them were kept in inaccessible places which caused some technical damages. It is the case of *Spur der Steine* (Frank Beyer, 1966), a film against the regime, forbidden after its premiere.

[6] After 2000, a new tendency of nostalgia for the East, called *Ostalgie,* spread among the German directors as well as the German audience. Besides launching lots of movies, this nostalgia led to the revival of the old traditions only found in the Democratic Republic of Germany.

young democracy together with the technical progress led to a cultural change[7] at the beginning of the Weimar[8] period. Coming after a military defeat and a failed socialist revolution, the emergence of a national cinema in Germany was totally unexpected as it later proved to be exceptional. Unique among film movements, Weimar cinema found itself in the situation of epitomising a country: twentieth-century Germany, already uneasy with itself and troubled by modernity through its artistic movement, the Expressionism.[9] When analysing such an important film movement as Weimer cinema it is needed to describe the Expressionist context but this does not mean that Weimer cinema identifies itself completely with Expressionism nor it developed singularly. There were certain connections between context and film movement.

The very beginnings of the Expressionist art are related to the activities of *Die Brücke* (*The Bridge*), a group of painters settled in Dresden in 1905. The new form of art,[10] different from the Impressionist one, which was considered too illustrative and superficial, expanded from painting to other arts including literature, theatre and cinematography. The Expressionist art is based on visions, in fact nothing exists in itself neither the houses the streets nor the screams and the hunger but the interior vision which was provoked by all these only exists. It is the artist who shows what is behind the facts and objects and reveals their real form, freed from a false reality. The artist seeks, instead of an accidental form, the permanent meaning of these facts and objects.[11] The tendency was to isolate the most expressive expression of an object, a fact, a concept, a feeling or a state and this may stand not only for further abstraction but also for subjectivism. As far as it is already known, abstraction stems from the anxiety that man experienced when scared by the phenomena perceived around, determining him

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[7] At the same time, the German culture was enriched by the American cultural influences.

[8] At the end of the First World War, the new state of Germany, recently unified in 1871, had to face an economic and political collapse due to the war. The monarchy was abolished and a new political system – the republic – was set up in 1919. The Republic of Weimar took its name from the German city where the constitution was written.

[9] Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and after: Germany's Historical Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2000), 3.

[10] The Expressionist painting inhabits the possibility for the artist to project the most profound emotions as well as the extreme mental states into the work of art in the most subjective manner, replacing the conventional shapes and colours with the ones much more abstract. The same tendency was found in the field of Expressionist literature dominated by narratives full of nervous and rebel characters standing for typologies instead of individuals. The most predominant themes of the Expressionist literature were: the revolt against any form of authority as well as the generation gap that led to different sorts of conflicts.

[11] Lotte Eisner, *The Haunted Screen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 11.

to detached the objects, the facts, the feelings or the states from their natural context and to appropriate all these elements to their absolute form.

Most of the Expressionist elements from paintings, such as light, violent contrasts, shadow, basic geometric figures, linear setting, and literary texts, such as the plot, the types of characters, the development of the conflict, the use of staccato sentences, were easily found on stage and then on film. Related either to form or to content, these elements are meant to reveal, in the most expressionist manner, the extreme, individual, emotional and mental states and situations. Being influenced by theatrical means, the German Expressionist cinematography was mainly based on *mise-en-scene* and not on special shootings or editing. That is why this new cinematography is by far one of the most visual ones.

Characterised by artificial and geometrical settings as well as by strong contrasting lighting, the purpose of this cinematography was to emphasise and sometimes to exaggerate the expression of the most intense states and the extreme situations. In doing so, all the Expressionist elements proved to be useful. The use of light is usually related to the effects that are needed in order to explore different types of emotions and states. In the Expressionist aesthetics, the contrast between the light and shadow is extreme and highlighted by the technique of *chiaroscuro*. The whole scenery was cut down to the most important basic figures and dominant oblique lines. The depth of the scene comes from deliberately distorted perspective and from narrow and slanting streets that cut across each other at an unexpected angle. At the same time, oblique, rectilinear or curving lines converge across an expanse towards the background. The meaning of using such visual elements is to induce anxiety. Having the same aim, the animated objects[12] also seem to haunt the characters by their dynamic force.

Besides the contrast between light and shade, the distorted space and objects, there is also abstraction as a means of representing the complexity of the psyche. The physical element is linked to an optical representation which is revealed in the distorted images of someone's mind. The sets also dictated the stylization of the acting. The actor became part of the setting while the act of performing was reduced to the most essential movements, gestures and exclamations but, at the same time, exaggerating them in order to explore the inner states of the characters. By reducing the gestures, the movements of the actors could become almost linear and brusque as the geometrical plane of the

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[12] The animated objects represent a constant interest not only in the German culture but also in the German language. In the German syntax, objects are spoken of with the same adjectives and verbs used to speak of human beings endowing them with the same qualities as people.

set. Most of the Expressionist characters are detached from everyday life, deprived of individuality, resembling more and more the abstract creatures.

Making use of the Expressionist context, the German Cinema employs the new aesthetics for further cinematic development, turning the art of cinematography into the perfect art to deal with an unnatural, dangerous world. There was no wander why cinema became the proper medium for exhibiting the visions nourished by moods of vague and troubled yearning. More than that, in this mysterious world, the German cinema found its true nature.

The Gothic Canon of the German Cinematographic Aesthetics

The most Expressionist German film was *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919), followed by *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922), a cinematographic adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* from 1879 and by *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1926). In all these examples most of the Expressionist elements represent a basic for the unusual and frightening world transposed into film, but in a specific shaping of fictional reality. The sets are very similar to the theatrical settings but they are meant to reshape all of the film's components in order to create a unique cinematic composition, full of labyrinths in white and black whose function is to imitate the human mind. In *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, the sets are meant to reveal Caligari's nightmare and madness in his desperate attempt to control his world, behaving as the master of all the creatures. The evolution of such a character is an Expressionist narrative technique used here in a specific cinematographic manner not only for doctor Caligari but also for Graf Orlok, the vampire of *Nosferatu*[13] and for the main characters of *Metropolis*, Joh Fredersen who controls the city as well the scholar who, in his turn, controls his scientific creation. Furthermore, the slanting lines and the curves, specific to these examples, also have a metaphysic meaning, offering a terrifying plunge into the character's mind and also into an abyss of bizarre perceptions. In *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, the medieval town is full of twisting back alleys, crumbling houses with wedged-shaped doors and oblique windows almost gnawing into the walls, totally distorting the image.[14]

The tendency to represent images on the slant, viewed from above at an acute angle, closely reveals the images in the mind or *imagined images*.[15] There

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[13] The meaning of the title *Nosferatu* refers literally to the un-dead.
[14] Rudolf Kurtz, *Expressionsim and Film*, trans. Brenda Benthien (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 133.
[15] Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, 24.

is no continuity among the lines; they are just interrupted by other lines. The same effect is obtained by the contrast between black and white. The most extreme setting could be found in the vision of the prison cell full of verticals that tend to narrow as they rise, extending along the floor, trying to obtain an oppressive effect as they lead to the spot where the prisoner squats, as it may be noticed in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari

In the case of Murnau's *Nosferatu*, the images are credited not with the conventional perspective for the picturesque but with a mystical vision of the landscape, architecture and animals as the essential elements of this supernatural approach.[16] Unlike *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari, Nosferatu* contains a number of scenes that were shot in natural exteriors.

The camera is now used for highlighting the essential nature the landscape, stylizing the whole reality for better expressing the wind blow or the old castle the high mountain or the human fear. Many *angle shots* are continued with *reversed angle shots* so that different perspectives may be combined for suggesting a more complex vision. More than that, a rapid succession of very short scenes could contribute to the creation of suspense.[17] Each scene has its precise function with deliberately selected mise-en-scene so that the distorted perspectives and angles were no longer needed but, in this case, the editing takes the place of the shooting, suggesting the suspense through a frame cut that transports the character Nosferatu from the distant end of a hall directly to Hutter's house door. Nosferatu's movement towards the camera gives also the impression of speed and horror. The supernatural vision over the landscapes[18] is related to the protagonist's state of mind.

The stylization of the sets influences the art of acting. The gestures are reduced in order to attain linear movements which, like the broken angles of the sets, remain brusque in spite of the few curves that slip in. Some actors'

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[16] Kevin Jackson, *Nosferatu – A Symphony of Horror* (London: Palgrave, 2013), 11.

[17] One of the best examples is the scene showing the police chasing Hyde through the streets or the one the same character is trying to hide himself. Lotte Eisner, *Murnau* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 31.

[18] At this point, it may be important to specify the influences that come from the Romantic period, mainly from the painter Caspar David Friedrich on Murnau's cinematic landscapes. The same immensity, containing one or two human figures, can characterize both artistic representations.

movements from one point to another never go beyond the limits of an established geometrical plane. On the other hand, there are actors who prefer a more naturalistic style, determining their outline to achieve an element of fantastic.[19] From the narrative point of view, the actors, through their particular manner of performing, bring to life characters that could be recognized more as anti-heroes. It is definitely the case of all the protagonists whose specific features are more negative than positive and whose evolution reveal their incapability to adapt to the world. In *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, the main character gets mad and Freder, from *Metropolis*, experiencing hallucinations and fever, becomes incapable to control his actions while Hutter, in *Nosferatu*, brings the plague into his native town
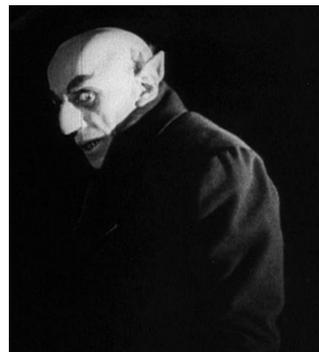

Figure 2 – Nosferatu

causing the death of lots of people including his wife. As anti-hero, count Orlok[20] owes the impact of his presence to his unnatural appearance: a bold head, a very white face, huge ears, long teeth, hooked nose, fingers similar to claws. The contrast between the uncommon white face and the *chiaroscuro* from the back is meant to highlight his terrifying status, as it could be observed in Figure 2, where the spot of light focuses on the side of count's head and, then gradually diminishes into the background. The un-dead state of the protagonist is emphasized by his association with night and death through elements such as the coffin, the bites, the blood, the rats and the plague. All these elements intensify the horror aspect of the whole movie.

The same anti-hero is also found in *Metropolis*, but this time, there are two characters with this status. On one hand, it is Freder, Joh Fredersen's son, who is against the social order that his father created and introduced in the city of Metropolis for better controlling the workers; on the other hand, it is Rotwang, the scholar who lives in the dark world of his laboratory, who, in his turn, created another type of monster, a robot.[21] Technology, in fact, seems to dominate the

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[19] Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, 25.

[20] The character of count Orlok as well as his story inspired many other films of the same type such as *Vampyr* (Carl Theodore Dreyer, 1932) and *Dracula* (Ted Browning, 1931). In 1979, Werner Herzog produced his *Nosferatu*, maintaining a high interest for the Gothic film whose tradition was continued by Tim Burton with his *Edward Scissorhands* from 1990 and *Sweeney Todd* from 2008.

[21] Maria, the robot is created having as model another Maria, the character. The process of transforming the real heroine, Maria, into an evil robot was possible using new editing techniques, such as *dissolve*. Being also named *lap dissolve*, this cinematographic technique represents a

whole city and may lead to destruction unless governed by a wise and humane mind. Although the end of the film is a happy one, somehow a naïve one, the threat of losing direction when the focus is only on the development of technology remains possible. The apocalyptic visions of such a world are sustained by specific elements: the class system which does not hold determining the workers' rebellion to break out, the tyranny of time and regimentation.[22] The vision is also sustained by the tower that is intended to be built in the center of Metropolis, where all the slaves gather, coming from five different directions, as the hand's fingers, intensifying the image. Unfortunately, this tower becomes a machine devised to eat men. The city itself is designed in such a way as to maintain the tension of the whole movie. The architecture is based on the graphic

Figure 3 – Metropolis

interaction between the vertical lines of tall, futuristic buildings and the horizontal lines suggested by the movements of the machines' pistons. The image itself is framed by buildings in the shade while the perspective is fading in the distance, as it appears in Figure 3. The same interaction could be identified in the graphic relation between the crowds of workmen that climb and descend behind the gates of a lift and the insertion of the inter-titles that correspond to their geometrical arrangements. In order to increase the impact of visual effects, Fritz Lang used complex lights arrangements: the spots of light were placed in such a way that the buildings may seem enormous and the pattern of their windows can reflect the light back as pouring on the streets and other buildings. Thus, all the elements seem much more exaggerated. At the same time, the animated sequences were shot frame by frame and then edited with slight discrepancy for obtaining the effect of a continuous movement.[23]

In order to create the effect of hallucination and obscuring visions, the characters, Maria, the robot, and Joh Frederson, Freder's father, were encircled by prismatic montage of hazy and distorted, clock like images rotating around

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transitional editing technique between two sequences, shots or scenes, in which the visible image of one shot or scene is gradually replaced, superimposed or blended (by an overlapping *fade out* or *fade in* and *dissolve*) with the image from another shot or scene, often used to suggest the passage of time and to transform one scene to the next. *Lap dissolve* is shorthand for *over'lap dissolve*, also known as a *soft transition* or *dissolve to*, contrast to *cross-fade*. (Film Term Glossary – Index, letter D)

[22] Thomas Elsaesser, *Metropolis* (London: BFI Publishing, 2000), 54.

[23] Such a sequence contains almost 1,500 single frames.

them. Observed by Freder, these two characters are pictured staring directly into the camera while Freder is passing his hand before his eyes as if his vision is completely blurred and he is trying to wipe away the coating obscuring what he is watching. As Freder is falling down, losing his consciousness, graphics of explosions and starbursts are superimposed upon his image in the frame that is followed by a subjective shot from Freder's perspective with a rapid editing of multiple successive images depicting Maria, the robot, Freder's father and Rotwang.[24] This type of editing generated indeed the effect of hallucinations but, at the same time, it creates the effect of destabilization that may lead to uncertainty and instability.[25] In fact, this destabilization could be regarded as a result of the radical structural aesthetic drawn from the anti-representational manner developed by German Expressionism and related more generally to the Modernist movement's literary response to modernity.

The imagery proposed by the film *Metropolis* develops an apocalyptic vision over the future, setting the path for a new cinematic gender, the science fiction movie. Moreover, the thrillers and the adventure movies of the 1980s were mainly influenced by the iconography, the message and particular sequences depicted from *Metropolis*. It is the case of *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1984) or the *Indiana Jones* series (Steven Spielberg, starting with 1981) or *Star Wars* series (George Lucas, starting with 1977) or even *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1984).

All the three films analysed from the perspective of the Expressionist context represent a starting point for further development of the cinematic canon set on the grounds provided by these artistic works of art. Either it is the story or the characters, or the manner of shooting and the editing, these movies created the basic pattern for the next films *noir.* Generally speaking, the German Expressionist influence may be identified in a lot of films that explore extreme psychological states; but, in this case, it definitely must be made an important difference between expressionism as an artistic tendency and the German Expressionism as a cultural current and context. The German aesthetics was highly influenced by the Expressionist context but, the beginning of the German cinematography and its particular aesthetics mainly developed the expressionist orientation that introduced not only specific themes under literary influences,

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[24] Richard Murphy, "Modernism and the Cinema: Metropolis and the Expressionist Aesthetic," in *Comparative Critical Studies*, vol 4 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 105.

[25] In the case of *Metropolis* as well as in other Weimar movies there are scenes depicting dreams, hallucinations and fantastic events supported by discontinuities and graphs in the plot and regular switches of narrator that may create a sense of destabilization and narrative ambiguity. Murphy, "Modernism and the Cinema," 106.

such as death and nightmare, anti-heroic characters, as the un-dead and the scholar, apocalyptic worlds, as *Metropolis*, but also specific manners of cinematic representation in terms of shooting, such as the stylized sets, the distorted space and objects, the *chiaroscuro* effect, the reduced acts of performing, and in terms of editing, such as the distorted images, the rapid succession of short scenes, the frame cuts, the dissolve technique, all generating a possible aesthetic canon. This expressionist cinematic canon[26] was meant to thrillers, horror movies and *noir* movies that were to come. It may also be identified in numerous visual styles and narratives, other than those defined as such by the German Expressionism. In fact, the genuine form and content provided by the German Expressionism could be found in very few movies,[27] such as *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari,* and in all the cases, only partially. The expressionist style was generated and influenced by the Expressionist context but it could not be entirely identified with the Expressionist artistic current. It developed on a different path, as a particular artistic, mostly cinematographic style. The analysis of style may be sometimes subsumed to the analysis of content but this does not lead to miss the recognition of the historic achievement which the films analyzed had for the development of film styles within the German cinema and later on international scale. None of these films could be labelled as Expressionist, but they experienced and proposed a specific cinematographic style in the early years of Weimar cinema.

Conclusion

It is important to state that the major German contribution to cinema was chosen with a view to achieving effects in film which are based on the specific technology of this artistic medium and is impossible to be obtained through other artistic means; because, in the end, the genuine author of the film has to be the camera and through its use, a film may become an equal to other art form.[28] The technology of film is meant to sustain the status of cinematography as an art form and it also may determine the selection of the content. The attraction that cinema held in its first years, that of making the images be seen, was replaced by the

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[26] The cinematographic style proposed by these films was later developed, mainly by Hollywood productions, and transposed into a canon.

[27] Although in these films it could be found the uncanny and its various embodiments in the form of doubles, vampires and artificial creatures, none of them are motifs of the Expressionist artistic movement. To be more precisely they belong to the Romantic period.

[28] Dietrich Scheunemann, "Activating the Differences: Expressionist Film and Early Weimar Cinema," in *Expressionist Film – New Perspectives*, ed. Dietrich Scheunemann (New York: Camden House, 2003), 12.

attraction of presenting the invisible. The manner in which the directors could realize such a trend together with their individual style differed, but their works of art introduced a particular style that could be identified within the history of cinematography. Furthermore, concerning the specific style of these films, they may be described as a certain attempt to free the Romantic themes from their embrace by Expressionist art design. The photographic and editorial experiments developed in these films may be considered the overture to the exploration of other innovative effects in cinematography that later could generate a new canon. As Béla Balázs stated, the point is that the stylization of nature, whether in impressionist or expressionist manner, is the condition for a film to become a work of art.[29] All the films analysed emphasized the stylization as opposed to the photographic principle of imitation as the basic condition for film to become a form of art.

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Figure 2 – Nosferatu. Source: *Pinterest*. https://ro.pinterest.com/pin/12701565 1968305043/?lp=true.

Figure 3 – Metropolis. Source: *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Metropolis_(1927_film).