

# NON-NARRATIVE TYPOLOGIES: THE HERMETIC-METAPHORICAL MODE AND THE CINEMA OF ATTRACTIONS UNITED BY AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE<sup>1</sup>

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## TYPES OF (NON-)NARRATION

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Cinema, now widely recognised as the most popular art form of the 20th century (López Iglesias, 2016), underwent major changes in the first years of its history (Gubern, 2016). The new medium introduced a language of moving images, which for some filmmakers was also the language of modernity, in the sense that it established a cosmopolitan means of communication (Lang, 1995) with a universal quality (Aumont *et al.*, 1985: 176; Truffaut, 2010: 39). It is necessary to return to this early period of cinema in order to investigate the origins of certain narrative techniques characteristic of those first years that have continued to be used in subsequent eras. Because many of these techniques were basically tests and experiments with the camera with none of the narrative logic of contemporary filmmaking, they warrant attention in the interests of analysing and assessing their influence on the present.

This early period covers the span of time from the birth of the medium (1895) to 1915, when the application of a narrative system became a common feature (Gaudreault, 2007). Noël Burch (1987) refers to these years as the period of primitive cinema, establishing a distinction between the non-narrative and narrative eras of filmmaking, reflected above all in the use of editing and the language of images. Various terms have traditionally been used to describe more or less the same period: what Burch calls primitive cinema, Gaudreault (2007) refers to as early cinema, avoiding the potentially negative connotations of Burch's term, although both terms refer to the same time range, from the creation of the medium in 1895 to the release of *The Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915). However, the evolution towards narrative film in these years was not simple or direct, nor did non-narrative elements merely disappear after 1915. Both this period and (especially) the decades that followed it are characterised by an

extraordinary degree of complexity, with an intermingling of the elements associated with each period, giving rise to movements and ideas that strongly influenced films produced in later years.

During this period, experimentation played a key role, especially in avant-garde cinema. And although the distinction between narrative and non-narrative cinema is quite clear, there are cases where the two approaches often converge (Aumont *et al.*, 1985), resulting in hybrids that combine continuity editing with experimental elements traditionally associated with those early years. We thus find that features of non-narrative cinema may sometimes appear in institutional productions (Gaudreault, 2007) and that rather than defining the two approaches as operating independently, they need to be understood as systems that converge and complement one another. This is probably the case because cinema by its very nature combines features of the visual arts with those of the narrative arts (Gubern, 2005), thereby establishing a constant dialogue between the two.

Burch's theory of modes of representation (1987) sheds substantial light on the distinctions between the two categories. However, as will be discussed here, Burch's model has also been criticised for ignoring the points of convergence mentioned above. The debate stems from the fact that the two different modes defined by Burch often overlap, and although the narrative mode predominates, it is always mixed with non-narrative elements that enrich the film's style.

The above reflects the fact that different cinematic modes are used today, irrespective of the historical periods they are normally associated with. This is equally true in the specific case of narrative: while Burch speaks of cinematic modes of representation, which he divides into the Primitive Mode of Representation (PMR) and the Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR), Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault identify an opposition between the cinema of attractions and the cinema of narrative integration. However, the pa-

rallels between these concepts need to be analysed closely, as while the IMR is associated almost exclusively with narrative integration (both concepts refer to the classical narrative model consolidated during Hollywood's Golden Age, which adheres to the narrative logic that most viewers today are still used to), the PMR is not exactly synonymous with the cinema of attractions (Gunning, 2006), because the two models are often used to refer to different aspects of cinema. While modes of representation allude to the language of images, i.e., the formal and visual dimensions of the shot, the cinema of attractions is also associated with the transition from silent film to sound cinema and from black and white to colour, as well as the popularization of 3D cinema and the use of special effects.

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**ALTHOUGH THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN NARRATIVE AND NON-NARRATIVE CINEMA IS QUITE CLEAR, THERE ARE CASES WHERE THE TWO APPROACHES OFTEN CONVERGE [...]**

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It is therefore important to bear in mind that although the different modes are associated with a particular time and context, some of the phenomena characteristic of early cinema have also re-emerged in later years. For example, movements with experimental tendencies (such as the French New Wave or Dogma 95 in Denmark) invariably make use of non-narrative elements, as formal experimentation and the adoption of certain techniques constitute a kind of nostalgia for their use in primitive or avant-garde cinema. This is also the case more specifically of the cinema of attractions and its sporadic re-emergence in the form of new innovations, especially in relation to special effects (Marzal Felici, 1999).

This article explores certain elements that offer viewers an experience of narrative sus-

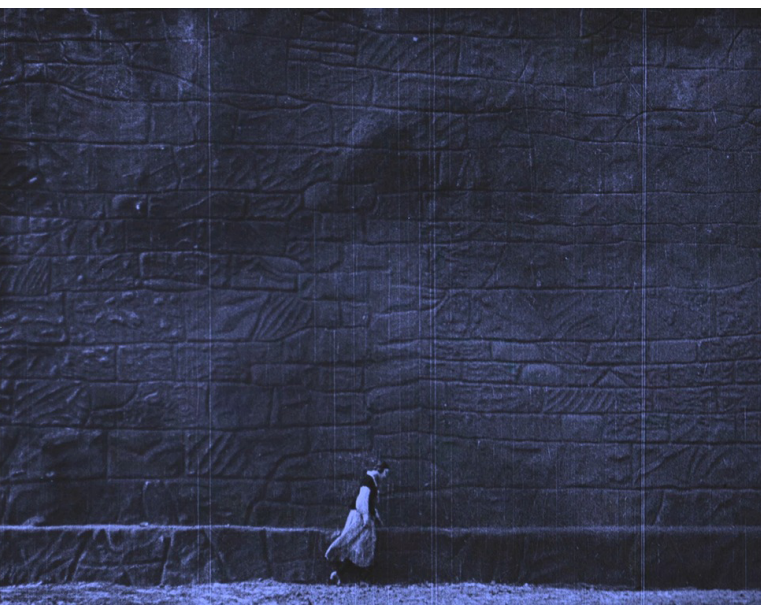
pension, which, although they involve different cinematographic techniques, may be similar in terms of their aesthetic effect or the fascination they elicit.<sup>2</sup> To this end, the article analyses the points of convergence between the cinema of attractions and modes of representation notable for their non-narrative features, in order to evaluate the possibility that the inclusion of non-narrative elements in a film may have a similar effect in the two cases. This analysis must necessarily begin with a description of the modes of representation themselves.

## MODES OF REPRESENTATION

A good starting point for this analysis is Vicente Sánchez-Biosca's study of the avant-garde films made in Germany during the Weimar Republic. Based on his research, Sánchez-Biosca concluded that these films are marked by a complexity that effectively dissolves the barriers between what until then had been understood as two opposing modes of narration. This author thus identifies the existence of what he calls "fracture points" (Sánchez-Biosca, 1990: 33), where, as I have suggested above, the different modes converge.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the conclusions of other authors (Eisner, 1988; Kurtz, 2016), Sánchez-Biosca sees something positive in this ambiguity that makes the avant-garde cinema of the Weimar Republic one of the richest movements in film history (Sánchez-Biosca, 1985a). In addition to acknowledging the many different styles that were created in this context, notably including filmed theatre (*Kammerspielfilm*), the New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), the culture film (*Kulturfilm*) and the mountain film (*Bergfilm*), he also posits three additional modes of representation that can be identified in the avant-garde cinema of this period, all of which are located in this intermediate position between the PMR and the IMR: hermetic-metaphorical mode, the narrative-transparent mode and the analytical-constructive mode.

The hermetic-metaphorical mode covers films whose plot and storyline are overshadowed by the setting, architecture or *mise-en-scène*, as the set design and other visual elements are given central importance at the expense of the narrative or story. This category includes films that took their inspiration from Expressionism or from the landmark film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, Robert Wiene, 1920). In such films, the set and props are the main features, along with a few striking characters, which eclipse everything else (narration, editing, and story). One of the characteristic qualities of this mode is that each frame can be viewed metaphorically like a painting, i.e., it is meaningful on its own and takes attention away from the film's continuity. The narrative-transparent mode has much in common with the classical narrative model (the IMR) that ultimately came to dominate cinematographic language. Its essential features are cinematographic continuity, immersion in the story and other elements common to contemporary films that can be located within the parameters of the visual language familiar to most viewers. The analytical-constructive mode is another rarity in contemporary contexts, as it is characteristic of abstract or pure cinema and is based on the representation of fragmented shots, images and objects that come together to construct the composition. Both the hermetic-metaphorical and analytical-constructive modes are notable for their strictly non-narrative nature, although they are inevitably brought into dialogue with the narrative-transparent mode both in the films of the Weimar avant-garde and in contemporary films.

It is important to stress at this point that these distinctions between modes are theoretical categorisations being applied to practical phenomena, which means that while the categories established (including the PMR, the IMR and Sánchez-Biosca's alternative modes) may be described in "pure" terms, they will never be found on their own in real examples of films. Rather, there will always be



Above. Image 1. Still-frame from *Destiny* (*Der müde Tod*, Fritz Lang, 1921)

Below. Image 2. Painting: *The Monk by the Sea* (Caspar David Friedrich, 1808-1810)

a degree of the overlapping mentioned above, as even films representative of the golden age of the IMR contain features characteristic of the PMR.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore more appropriate to speak of dominant modes, those that predominate in a given film, even when there are hints of other modes present. It is here that Sánchez-Biosca identifies the aforementioned “fracture points”, as although *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is one of the archetypal examples of the hermetic-metaphorical mode (Sánchez-Biosca,

1990), it tells a story that is coherent enough to be understood by viewers as a narrative. This film is particularly useful for explaining certain aspects of early cinema that would reappear from time to time in later years. Its importance can hardly be understated, as it came to be considered the first work of art on the big screen due to its extensive use of artistic elements, ranging from a script inspired by 19th-century Romantic literature to sets evocative of Expressionist painting. It is the striking set designs that constitute the film’s truly distinguishing feature, with bizarre shapes that fall somewhere between abstract and figurative art. These are unquestionably the heart of the film, as they offer metaphorical connotations that reflect the psychological processes of the characters. These kinds of sets are essential elements of the hermetic-metaphorical mode, as are the details in each shot, which Sánchez-Biosca (1990) describes as “minimal signifiers”, the use of self-contained shots and direct references to famous paintings. And although it was considered an Expressionist mode,<sup>5</sup> largely due to the fact that Expressionism was a common feature of German cinema in the 1920s, such elements are in fact still observable in contemporary films.

Examples of self-contained shots and references to paintings that suspend the narrative dimension can be found in numerous films made during the Weimar period (Sánchez-Biosca, 1990), and in many films being made today. The best-known cases are in the films *Destiny* (*Der müde Tod*, Fritz Lang, 1921) and *Faust – A German Folktale* (*Faust: Eine deutsche Volkssage*, F. W. Murnau, 1926), both of which are filled with references to the Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. Similar albeit less obvious allusions can also be found in *Die Nibelungen* (Fritz Lang, 1924).

*Destiny* includes a direct visual reference to *The Monk by the Sea* (Caspar David Friedrich, 1808-1810) [Images 1 and 2], while *Faust – A German Folktale* contains one to *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (Caspar David Friedrich, 1819-1820)

[Images 3 and 4]. The key aspect of shots of this kind is their self-contained nature as they reference a painting, and therefore the viewer's comprehension of them does not depend on the next or previous shot but solely and exclusively on the image shown at that moment. The metaphorical hermeticism described by Sánchez-Biosca is clearly evident in the Weimar period, but evidence of it can be identified in later eras, whenever the reference being made is clear and intentional.

Although it is an avant-garde approach associated with the early years of cinema, hermetic-metaphorical references would continue to form part of filmmaking practices and would have a big influence on the development of the medium. In the specific case of pictorial allusions and self-contained shots, one highly representative example can be found in a scene from *Viridiana* (Luis Buñuel, 1961) where the beggars are sitting at the dinner table in a faithful recreation of the painting *The Last Supper* (Leonardo da Vinci, 1495–1498) [Images 5 and 6]. The reference in this case is so obvious that the narrative continuity is inevitably suspended for two quite different reasons: first, through the explicit recreation of one of the most famous paintings in the history of art, resulting in an automatic break in the continuity similar to those described above; and second, through the introduction a break in the story itself because in the shot the characters are posing for a photograph. In other words, the image is not only a reference to a painting, but also a picture being taken in the story. The visual suspension is thus the result of both the pictorial reference and the narrative, as the characters stop the action to pose. The hermetic nature of this image is therefore iconic *and* narrative, as both the shot and the story refer to media whose codes for framing, construction and orientation of space are different from those of cinema.<sup>6</sup>

A similar case can be found in *The House That Jack Built* (Lars von Trier, 2018), where metaphorical hermeticism is used more extensively, and is



Above. Image 3. Still-frame from *Faust – A German Folktale* (*Faust: Eine deutsche Volkssage*, F.W. Murnau, 1926)

Below. Image 4. Painting: *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (Caspar David Friedrich, 1819–1820)

perhaps also more surprising because it is a recent film, yet one that displays repeated narrative suspensions for the purpose of making metaphorical references to paintings mainly from the 19th century. Throughout the film, the traditional narrative mode is constantly interwoven with the hermetic-metaphorical mode. What makes this even



more anomalous is the fact that in contemporary films the most common way of suspending the narrative is through the use of special effects. The convergence of the two modes is evident in the dialogue between Jack and Virgil, in a direct reference to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, when they describe the murders committed by the protagonist, while static shots are alternated with images of recognisable paintings. Many of the works shown are by William Blake, such as *Nebuchadnezzar* (1795-1805) and some of the illustrations from *The Book of Urizen* (1794); others are *The Birth of Venus* (Sandro Botticelli, 1485-1486), *Head of a Woman* (Juan Gris, 1912) and *The Kiss* (Gustav Klimt, 1907-1908). The difference here from the image in *Viridiana* is that von Trier shows us the paintings themselves rather than depicting a recreation of them. However, the most powerful moment in terms of narrative suspension comes at the end of the film, when the director recreates *The Barque of Dante* (Eugène Delacroix, 1822), but this time using the protagonists with the same method as that of the other images (Images 7 and 8). This time it is not an image of the painting itself but a recreation of it, independent of the rest of the shots, lasting for just over thirty seconds and accompanied by music that begins and ends with the shot. This is an explicit representation in the hermetic-metaphorical mode because it not only refers to a painting but also extends over time and is totally independent of the rest of the narrative: a perfect example of the self-contained shot. In this sense, the constituent elements of the hermetic-metaphorical

mode are those that break with the transparent mode of narration (continuity editing), because their most inherent features are those shared with other art forms, such as painting in the case of the examples discussed here.

In addition to references to paintings, there are other strategies characteristic of avant-garde cinema that are still used in contemporary films. These are also worth highlighting for their capacity to convey ideas by means of the expressive force of images, offering extraordinary moments for the aesthetic experience by eliciting a particular response or sensation. These include the experimentation with shapes and lighting characteristic of Impressionist and Expressionist avant-garde

Above. Image 5. Still-frame from *Viridiana* (Luis Buñuel, 1961)  
Below. Image 6. Painting: *The Last Supper* (Leonardo da Vinci, 1495-1498)



cinema,<sup>7</sup> which is an important feature of much contemporary film production.

Although many examples could be cited, the point of reference here will continue to be the innovations introduced in Germany during the period of the Weimar Republic, which, as reflected in the aesthetics of the set design for *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* discussed above, sought to elicit a disturbing sensation resembling something like a hallucination or a nightmare. In addition to gloomy settings, certain camera techniques were also used to trigger this psychological effect. The types of shots employed also undermine the spectator's immersion in the story and distance the style from classical narration, as they introduce unusual iconic elements at given moments to produce a particular effect. This approach would give rise to the "flicker film" (see note 4 ) because although the shots have narrative connotations, they disrupt the spectator's experience of the images shown. These shots can be described as dynamic-distorted shots, as they are based on constant, convulsive movement of the distorted, superimposed figures displayed (Jiménez González, 2022). They are generally POV shots (Mitry, 1986) that depict a character's traumatic experience, and they can be found in numerous Weimar films, such as *Raskolnikow* (Robert Wiene, 1923), *The Last Laugh* (Der letzte Mann, F.W. Murnau, 1924), *Secrets of a Soul* (Geheimnisse einer Seele, Georg Wilhelm Pabst, 1926) and *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927). These types of shots are worth analysing because while they emerged out of the experimental period, as features of the "fracture points" that characterised the avant-garde era, they can still be found in contemporary cinema, albeit only in certain techniques and genres.

Throughout film history, shots like these have been used as a strategy to underscore a character's anguish or despair; in other words, they are still used to convey the same idea, but only at particular moments, much less often than in avant-garde films.<sup>8</sup> In the case of the horror gen-



Above. Image 7. Still-frame from *The House That Jack Built* (Lars von Trier, 2018)

Below. Image 8. Painting: *The Barque of Dante* (Eugène Delacroix, 1822)

re, this strategy is still widely used and often in ways comparable to certain shots in avant-garde films. In the final scene of *Carrie* (Brian De Palma, 1976), for example, it is used in a similar way to its use in *Metropolis*, to depict hallucinations and nightmares. In both genres, it is used to reflect the anguish of characters who are haunted by faces in constant movement, superimposed over the scene [Images 9 and 10].

## POINTS OF CONVERGENCE WITH THE CINEMA OF ATTRACTIONS

Like the narrative modes of the early years of cinema, elements of the cinema of attractions have re-emerged repeatedly in different periods of film history, for the purposes of narrative suspension.





Above. Image 9. Still-frame from *Carrie* (Brian De Palma, 1976)  
Below. Image 10. Still-frame from *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927)

A concept developed by Tom Gunning inspired by Einstein's notion of the montage of attractions (2004), the cinema of attractions refers to an essentially spectacular type of cinematic experience based on the astonishment that can be elicited by certain effects or images. It is a mode of cinematic experience that characterised the early years of cinema, the period that Gaudreault labels "early cinema" and that effectively coincides with Burch's "primitive" period, which can therefore be associated with the PMR. This mode of cinema depends on captivating the spectator, and its exhibitionist quality means that the elements displayed are not linked together by continuity editing. Gunning (2006) argues that this mode dominated the cinematic experience until at least 1907, at which point it began being combined with the first attempts at narrative cinema. Subsequently,

it would come to be associated with underground or avant-garde approaches. Nevertheless, although the cinema of attractions was certainly characteristic of the first years of the medium, it is a recurring phenomenon with multiple examples identifiable in different periods of film history (Elsaesser, 2011: 7), much like the convergence of different modes of representation.

It is fair to say that in those first years all film production could have been described as "cinema of attractions", as it was a new medium and the mere idea of watching moving images itself constituted a spectacle. This was enough in those early days because cinema had not yet been institutionalised and the spectator was still easily impressed, making any film a potential attraction.<sup>9</sup> But the classification can be extended to include innovations that were similarly considered attractions at other particular points in time. In the transition from silent films to talkies, for example, the possibility of listening to dialogue in a film would have been viewed by spectators as an attraction, and the same would have been true of the first colour films and the introduction of 3D cinema. New film technologies have all enjoyed an initial period when the focus is on the use of the innovation itself rather than on questions related to immersion in the story being told. It is thus possible to speak of a period of attraction associated with each new innovation. An example of this is the relationship of action films with the cinema of attractions in relation to innovative special effects that have astonished and captivated viewers. *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) is one such case (Gaudreault, 2007: 25); another is *The Matrix* (Lana and Lilly Wachowski, 1999), whose special effects marked a turning point for productions of this kind, turning it into a clear benchmark for the action films of the new millennium (Strauven, 2006). From this perspective, the introduction of a new technology already constitutes a "cinema of attractions" period. Consider, for example, the use of 3D after the release of *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009), when



many filmmakers began embracing this technology, which was not new (Barnier, Kitsopanidou, 2015) but has experienced a resurgence and evolution since 2009 (Quiñones Triana, 2013).

The use of 3D is another phenomenon unrelated to narrative elements that temporarily dominated productions when it became popular, relegating other important features, such as continuity editing and storyline, to the background. In other words, certain innovations reintroduce a “cinema of attractions” period that lasts a few years before the innovation is abandoned or ceases to be predominate, as has already happened in the case of 3D. This also points to a connection with the non-narrative modes of representation analysed here, insofar as they offer viewers a similar experience. One of the characteristics that Sánchez-Biosca associates with the hermetic-metaphorical mode is that in addition to giving extraordinary prominence to individual images, it portrays characters who are so aesthetically absorbing that they undermine narrative continuity and immersion in the story (Sánchez-Biosca, 1985b). Sánchez-Biosca also refers to this phenomenon of attraction based on Eisenstein’s montage of attractions, which is associated with the circus spectacle (Sánchez-Biosca, 1991), although he makes no explicit reference to cinema of attractions as this is a new concept introduced more recently by other authors.

There are various elements that Eisenstein’s montage of attractions—or what is now referred to as the cinema of attractions in a broad sense (in terms of style and context)—shares with the avant-garde hermetic-metaphorical mode of re-

presentation discussed here. The most salient commonality is the effect of narrative suspension produced in both cases, based on the emphasis placed on minimum units, to paraphrase Sánchez-Biosca, who discusses the importance of these units in relation to both the hermetic-metaphorical mode (1990) and the montage of attractions (1991). These units are the minute, isolated signifiers that make up the shot. In the hermetic-metaphorical mode, they include set design, lighting, superimposed dynamic-distorted images, references to paintings, etc. In the cinema of attractions, they will also include visual and special effects. And although all these elements are very different, their composition as minimum units is similar: an outlandish set design is as much of an isolated element in the shot as a specific visual or digital effect.

Another important element that the two modes share is the use of self-contained shots. Directors working in both the cinema of attractions (Méliès) and the avant-garde (Wiene) used a type of static wide shot in which the important elements were not positioned in the middle of the shot but spread all around it. Sánchez-Biosca identifies this feature as essential for the hermetic-metaphorical mode and some theorists also attribute it to the cinema of attractions (Lacasa, 2010), suggesting that the avant-garde mode described by Sánchez-Biosca shares features with cinema of attractions. This means that the period associated with this mode, which has also been referred to as the avant-garde or Expressionist mode, was in a sense a cinema of attractions period.<sup>10</sup> An illustration of this can be found in the

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popularity of the outlandish set designs first used in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, which after 1920 were used again in several films, giving rise to a *Caligarist* style. In these films, the sets appeared to take on the same meanings as in Wiene’s film but with a different effect. Wiene him-

self attempted to do something similar in his next film, *Genuine* (1920), which was a commercial failure due its extremely poor execution (Eisner, 1988). Rudolf Kurtz, a critic in Weimar Germany, suggested that Wiene had adopted an Expressionist<sup>11</sup> approach in *Genuine* due to the success of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, but that the sets, instead of constituting a compositional element, ended up becoming the content (Kurtz, 2016), thus turning the appeal of the set design into the film's central feature. Kurtz also argued that the film's failure signalled that the popularity of this set design aesthetic began and ended with *Caligari*. Nevertheless, the style would continue to be used until 1924, suggesting that the films that adopted it were capitalising on a success that gradually faded over time.

The intention behind studying this phenomenon is to assess the possibility that a stylistic feature that is essentially hermetic-metaphorical and therefore non-narrative may have constituted a moment of resurgence of the cinema of attractions, in the sense that the shock effect caused by the set designs initiated a period in film history characterised precisely by astonishing sets, contrasts of light and shadow, etc. Because they were so visually striking, these stylistic features were able to attract the viewer and elicit a response similar to that provoked by the cinema of attractions. In this way, the term "cinema of attractions" is assigned a broader meaning, to refer to cases when a new medium or a new cinematographic technology can produce an experience similar to that of watching sensational visual effects, given that both are characterised by the absence of narrative and the dramatic effect of the images. In this sense, the *Caligarist* period (1920-1924) constituted a resurgence of the cinema of attractions phase of primitive cinema (1895-1907), although this was only one of many occasions when this phenomenon has manifested itself over the course of film history in the 20th and early 21st century.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of this comparative analysis has been to identify the presence of some non-narrative elements and to consider their similarities and differences in an effort to show that various features of the early or avant-garde period of cinema have continued down to the present day, re-emerging from time to time over the course of film history. This is an idea that is also suggested by Gómez Tarín (2004) in his discussion of the crises of the institutional mode.

This article thus highlights the idea that the categories discussed here, although normally placed in opposition to one another (narrative cinema/non-narrative cinema, hermetic-metaphorical mode/narrative-transparent mode, cinema of attractions/cinema of narrative integration), are not mutually exclusive but interconnected by what is described here as points of convergence. The films described in this article will thus always oscillate between one mode and the other, and contemporary cases identified as "cinema of attractions" will in fact exhibit isolated moments of this phenomenon, always with a basic narrative approach.

The cyclical nature of the cinema of attractions has been considered in a number of previous studies (Marzal Felici, 1999), mainly in relation to action films that feature innovative and captivating special effects whose impact on viewers is so powerful that they undermine their ability to keep their attention focused on the narrative continuity. Much less common are studies that explore the features of the hermetic-metaphorical mode posited by Sánchez-Biosca, who identifies this mode with the narrative films of the Weimar Republic. However, as shown in this article, certain features of this mode—such as its use of pictorial references and its centripetal dynamics—can also be found in more recent and even contemporary experimental films, such as *The House that Jack Built*. These features can be found by obser-

ving specific non-narrative moments that create an experience in which aesthetic sensations (like the sublime) take the foreground at the expense of the storyline.<sup>12</sup> To paraphrase Kant, this produces a confusion between reason and imagination, where reason refers to the film's narrative continuity and confusion to the isolated elements that suspend that narrative continuity and elicit an aesthetic response that is far from common in the institutional narrative system. This is precisely the connection that this analysis has sought to establish between the hermetic-metaphorical mode and the cinema of attractions: the presence of non-narrative elements in both these cinematic modes and the similar experience of spectators when they are confronted with something captivating on the screen, whether it is a special effect or a stunning set design. ■

## NOTES

- 1 This research has been funded by the Spanish Ministry of Universities and the European Union (Next Generation EU) within the framework of the Margarita Salas Grants for the training of young PhD graduates in the Spanish university system's refresher training program. The article also forms part of the findings of the *Theoria Praxi* (TcP) Research Group at the Spanish National Research Council's Institute of Philosophy (IFS), in the R+D+I project PID2020-117219GB-I00 (INconRES), funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and in *Schematismus*. Schematism, Category Theory and Mereology in Kantian Philosophy: A Phenomenological-Hermeneutic Perspective (PID2020-115142GA-I00).
- 2 This assertion is founded on the fact that the different parts that comprise a film can elicit similar aesthetic responses in the viewer, who can experience the sublime or the beautiful due to a special (technological) effect or an element of the shot related more directly to the style.
- 3 This is one of the criticisms that Sánchez-Biosca makes of Burch, as he understands Burch's definition of the two modes (the PMR and the IMR) as antithetical, when in reality they are in constant dialogue, especially in an avant-garde era such as the 1920s.
- 4 An example of this is the so-called "flicker film", which can be defined as an essentially narrative film with occasional moments of narrative suspension (Aumont *et al.*, 1985).
- 5 André Bazin (1967: 31) refers to silent films based on "the plastics of the image and the artifices of montage" as "expressionistic" or "symbolistic" films. Along the same lines, he uses the term "expressionism of montage" for films that gave special importance to images and effects, before the full development of the narrative transparency that sound films would achieve and that would reach its peak during the 1940s in the United States and France (1967: 26).
- 6 In relation to the difference between these art forms, it is worth recalling André Bazin's (1967: 166) assertion that "the picture frame polarizes space inwards. On the contrary, what the screen shows us seems to be part of something prolonged indefinitely into the universe. A frame is centripetal, the screen centrifugal." Similarly, Sánchez-Biosca attributes a "centripetal" tendency to the hermetic-metaphorical system (1990: 62), suggesting that the essence of this mode leans away from cinema and towards painting.
- 7 Some camera effects, such as the superimposition of images to create fantasy atmospheres, for example, were used equally in both types of filmmaking (what was referred to as "subjective cinema"). As was the case in painting, the difference may lie in the sensations elicited. In French Impressionist cinema, superimposition was used to inspire a sensation of illusion and fantasy, while in German Expressionist cinema it was employed to enhance depictions of hallucinations and nightmares.
- 8 Although this article examines avant-garde techniques still being used in contemporary cinema, it is important to note that these represent only a very small proportion of the techniques used in the avant-garde era; what remains of the avant-garde are minimal vestiges, because cinematic techniques are very different in our era.



- 9 This was a period of crisis, when cinema underwent multiple transformations over the course of just a few years. Altman (1996), whose analysis of the period characterises these changes as substantial, posits crisis models (the nickelodeon crisis and the sound crisis) as starting points for an analysis of the concept of cinema, arguing that these models can effectively explain film history. He draws analogies with a river (in constant crisis) and a pond (stable), to stress that film history is better understood if we begin with the idea of cinema as a river, i.e., if its full breadth and capacity for constant transformation are taken into account.
- 10 In the blog *Historia del cine*, García (2013) mentions that a characteristic of the hermetic-metaphorical mode is that “as was the case with Meliès, the aim is to have an impact on the spectator.”
- 11 In Kurtz’s use of the terms, Expressionist is synonymous with *Caligari*st.
- 12 It is important to consider this aesthetic category because it is typical of many of the moments of action in films that could be placed in the category of the cinema of attractions. The sensation of the sublime would be the predominant response to most of the images of explosions found in this type of cinema, as well as in other special effects, if we define the sublime as a feeling that undermines the instantaneous experience, shocking the individual who experiences it and producing what Kant called “a feeling of displeasure that arises from the imagination’s inadequacy, in an aesthetic estimation of magnitude, for an estimation by reason” (Kant, 1987: 114-115).

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## NON-NARRATIVE TYPOLOGIES: THE HERMETIC-METAPHORICAL MODE AND THE CINEMA OF ATTRACTIONS UNITED BY AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

### Abstract

Since its inception, cinema has clearly had a language of its own, which has changed with the development of new technologies and artistic movements. It is thus a medium in constant evolution, both in terms of its narrative pacing and the meaning inherent in its images. From this perspective, this article attempts to identify the main differences between cinematic modes of representation, beginning with the classical distinction between narrative and non-narrative cinema, to highlight the elements shared by certain filmmaking techniques involving the suspension of the narration. Specifically, an analysis is offered of the hermetic-metaphorical mode developed by Sánchez-Biosca to describe the Expressionist-Caligari mode, relating it to the concept of the cinema of attractions proposed by Tom Gunning. While taking into account that these concepts are different in form and context, the analysis reveals certain points of convergence between them, suggesting a potential commonality between hermetic-metaphorical shot compositions and the cinema of attractions in terms of the aesthetic experience they provide, where the shock caused by a new technological special effect is similar to that caused by a visual stylistic element, such as repeated references to famous paintings or the use of eerie set designs.

### Key words

Film theory; Cinema aesthetics; History of cinema; cinematographic language; representation models; Cinema of attractions; Hermetic-metaphorical model.

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## TIPOLOGÍAS NO NARRATIVAS: EL MODELO HERMÉTICO-METAFÓRICO Y LA CINEMATOGRAFÍA DE ATRACCIONES UNIDOS POR LA EXPERIENCIA ESTÉTICA

### Resumen

Desde su nacimiento, el medio cinematográfico ha demostrado tener un lenguaje propio que ha cambiado mediante el desarrollo de nuevas técnicas y corrientes artísticas. Está, por eso, en constante evolución, tanto en el ritmo narrativo como en el propio significado de las imágenes. Bajo esta perspectiva, el presente artículo pretende vislumbrar las principales diferencias entre los modos de representación, partiendo de la clásica distinción entre cine narrativo y no narrativo, para subrayar los elementos compartidos por algunos fenómenos audiovisuales que suspenden la narración. Así, se analiza el modelo hermético-metafórico, desarrollado por Sánchez-Biosca para describir el modelo expresionista-caligari, relacionándolo con el considerado cine de atracciones, término acuñado por Tom Gunning. Teniendo en cuenta que se trata de fenómenos diferentes en forma y contexto, se observan algunas confluencias entre ellos, llegando a la conclusión de que los planos hermético-metafóricos pueden confluir con la atracción en la experiencia estética, donde el shock causado por un nuevo efecto técnico y especial coincide con el que provoca un elemento visual y estilístico, como pueden ser las referencias continuas a la pintura o la muestra de decorados siniestros.

### Palabras clave

Teoría del cine; estética del cine; historia del cine; lenguaje cinematográfico; modelos de representación; cinematografía de atracciones; modelo hermético-metafórico.

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