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## **The passions of the vampire in film. An example of affectivity and cultural representation in German and Mexican cinema.**

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Dolores Cabrera

Bremen

## The passions of the vampire in film

### An example of affectivity and cultural representation in German and Mexican cinema

**Abstract:** In this article, I will focus on the analysis of the passions which are associated with the figure of the vampire and how they are constructed in some Mexican and German films. To do this, I will describe some elements of the narrative structure and the construction of narrativity in film. The aim of this description is to show how narrative sequences are related with specific passions and what verbal, visual, and auditory features are linked to the emergence of passion effects. Then, I will explain the function and structure of the passion element in the narrative structure of film from a semiotic perspective by referring to the theory of passions by Algirdas J. Greimas and the analysis of discourse according to Jacques Fontanille as well as the study of the cinematographic elements in relation to some cultural and aesthetic aspects. Finally, I will analyze the concept of the passion dimension by using excerpts of *El ataúd del vampiro* (*The Vampire's Coffin*) by Fernando Méndez, comparing some elements with other vampire films. This will allow us to see the construction of similar passions and narrative structures in relation to the vampire figure giving rise to the representation of different cultural fears through multimodal and filmic resources.

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## 1. Introduction

In this article, I show some of the results of a research dedicated to the analysis of the narrative structure and discursive resources which are involved in the construction of the figure of the vampire and its actions and emotions.<sup>1</sup> In this research, I was looking for the narrative elements and filmic features which contribute to such a construction in *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* by F. W. Murnau, *M: eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* by Fritz Lang, *El vampiro* and *El ataúd del vampiro* (*The Vampire's Coffin*) by Fernando Méndez through an explorative analysis considering Greimasian theories such as the actantial model and the theory of passions, all of which remain in an early stage in relation to their application to film studies. The films proposed correspond to the first and classical image of the vampire in German and Mexican cinema. This is the case of *Nosferatu* and *El vampiro* as well as *El ataúd del vampiro*. The vampire figures of these films are largely based on the figure of the novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, but in the early years of cinema there were some variations which were less canonical. This is the case of *M* by Fritz Lang which includes the figure of a criminal who kills children, Hans Beckert. This character was based on the figure of the serial murderer Peter Kürten, "the vampire of Düsseldorf".

These films influenced most of the vampire films and TV series that were made during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Based on a revision of these films and a series of German and Mexican fantasy and horror films I proposed this hypothesis: the vampire figure and, i.e., the figure of the criminal are constructed as physical and/or psychological destructive and monstrous beings, but also as victims of uncontrollable desires and needs, that is, of similar passion motivations. In order to analyze these aspects, I recovered the following definition of the vampire myth based on different anthropological, cultural and literary studies<sup>2</sup>: a dead body and a perverse being which threatens the life of a community and, at the same time, depends on the blood and energy of human beings and has to take their life in order to exist. Likewise, the vampire is the representation of fear in the face of death. But how is the vampire figure constructed in film and what fears are embodied in this figure in relation to German and Mexican cinema? I decided to focus on the narrative structure constructed in film from the action of the vampire or the criminal, as occurs in *M*, to answer these questions.

## 2. Some elements of narrativity in film: the actantial model and the thymic dimension

The construction of the vampire figure is achieved through a combination of narrative, visual, and auditory elements and filmic resources. The first part of the analysis

<sup>1</sup> The title of this research is *The filmic Construction of the Figure of the Vampire in Murnau, Lang and Méndez: an Explorative Analysis with Greimasian Semiotics*. See Cabrera 2017.

<sup>2</sup> See Mircea Eliade (1957, 1975, 1976, 1987), Jean Delumeau (1978), and especially Raymond T. McNally/Radu Florescu (1972).

requires the identification of the narrative structure. For this purpose, the actant model proposed by Greimas allows us to describe the different narrative roles of the characters and their actions aimed to the achievement of different objects of value. This identification allows us to recognize a syntagmatical chain of actions motivated by specific passions and goals which correspond to narrative programs (semiotics of the action). This corresponds to a superficial structure of narrativity in which the character plays – simultaneously and sometimes, alternatively – different roles: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper or opponent. We can explain the actantial roles as follows by using *Nosferatu* as example: (1) The subject (Orlok) is what wants or does not want to be joined to (2) an object (Ellen or Ellen's blood). (3) The sender (Orlok's desire for blood) is what instigates the action, while (4) the receiver (Orlok himself) is what or the one that benefits from it. Lastly, (5) a helper (Orlok's supernatural abilities) supports to accomplish the action, while (6) an opponent (Orlok's impatience/lack of prudence) hinders it.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the story, we can see that the overcoming of different tests by the vampire and the criminal and their actions are interrelated with the search or loss of specific objects of value (blood, a young woman, and so on). The identification and comparison of these elements give us resources to understand how these anti-heroic characters are configured in cinema as stereotypes with specific and reiterative motivations related to the search of similar objects of value. In relation to the passion motivation, Greimas proposed that there is a deep structure of narrativity which triggers the narrative mechanism of the discourse. This structure corresponds to the "thymic" or passion dimension.

However, the construction of narrativity of the fictional or non-fictional discourse depends on the competence of the subject to achieve the object of value. Hereby the question is to know how the components of the thymic dimension are combined to construct the motivation and competence of the subject to achieve different objects of value and how these components are identifiable through filmic features.

Greimas and Fontanille define the thymic aspect as a semiotic dispositive which emerges as a "perfume" which, in turn, emanates from passions and is difficult to perceive. According to these authors, such perfume comes from the discursive organization of the modal structures, whose analysis guides the study of the thymic dimension. In this regard, passions are not an exclusive property of subjects, but a property of a whole discourse. Thus, passions emerge from discursive structures as a result of a "semiotic style" which is projected on the subject, the object of value or the junction established between subjects and objects of value.<sup>4</sup> However, the thymic dimension is not only related to the motivation of the subject which performs an

<sup>3</sup> See Greimas 1973, 1986 and Hébert 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Greimas/Fontanille 1994: 21. Greimas explains that an object can be a thing, a person, or an idea. The subject gives a value to the objects of the world. Thus, objects become objects of value that can be rejected or desirable for the subject. Also, an object can be obtained and later lost. These relations between subjects and objects establish two basic junctions: the achievement of the object by the subject (a conjunction) and the lack or loss of the object that the subject experiences (a disjunction); Greimas 1973, 1986.

action (subject of doing), but also to the configuration of the subject of being, that is, the subject as the projection of an anthropomorphic being with emotions, sensations, desires and sentiments and in general all manifestations of the affective area of the psychic state of a subject. As a consequence, passions lead continuously to the generation of narrative actions which, in turn, generate new affective effects or passions which drive to new subject's actions. In film, both passions and actions which compose narrativity can be recognized through verbal, visual and auditory resources. In this regard, there is a simultaneity at the level of expression of the elements which make the "narrativization" of the filmic discourse possible.

## 2.1 Elements of the thymic dimension

In *Du Sens II*, Greimas considers modalization as the main element of the thymic dimension. Later, in *Semiotics of discourse*, Fontanille articulates some additional elements which reveal the presence of passion effects and which help to analyze the thymic dimension, such as modulation (aspect and rhythm), perspective, somatic expressions and typical scenes.<sup>5</sup> Each element corresponds to specific aspects of the discourse that will be explained in more detail below.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 Modalization

Modalization indicates the presence of a passion. It is conceived in linguistics as a predicate which modifies another predicate and is related to the following verbal constructions: *wanting-to*, *being-able-to*, *having to* and *knowing-how-to* which modify the meaning of a sentence when they are combined with other verbs.<sup>7</sup> For example, the sentence "The child plays" indicates the realization of the action, but in the sentence "The child wants to play", the introduction of the *wanting to* is a sort of suspension of the realization of the action or a moment prior to its realization. Likewise, in the sentence "The child must not play" the realization of the action seems canceled or conditioned. Thus, the main feature of modalization is the suspension of the action, the establishment of a narrative distance and the opening of a space where subjectivity emerges because the action depends on the desire, obligation or capacity of the subject and the value that the subject places on the object.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, modalization is a condition for the emergence of the thymic dimension and specific passions.<sup>9</sup>

However, the combination of two modalities is necessary to produce a tension of forces which, in turn, is denominated as a passion. For example, inhibition would be a combination of *wanting to do* + *not being able to do*, as could occur if a person wants

<sup>5</sup> Components of the thymic dimension according to Greimas and Fontanille. Greimas 1983; Greimas/Fontanille 1994; Fontanille 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Fontanille 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Greimas 1983: 67.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.: 100–101; Greimas/Fontanille 1994: 25.

<sup>9</sup> Fontanille 1994; Parret 1995; Bertrand 2000; Rallo 2005 and Filinich 2003, 2012.

to be a rock star, but he or she cannot sing or play an instrument, so that he or she is inhibited in doing or achieving his/her desire. In this case, as in any passion, the subject experiences a conflict due to the opposition of two forces represented by two actions that are modalized by *wanting* and *not being able*. In addition, the emergence of a passion depends also on how modalities affect the subject.<sup>10</sup> In sum, modalities allow the subject to obtain different abilities (competence) in order to perform an action and this allows the subject to construct or modify its identity while it tries to appropriate objects of value.

### 2.2.1 Modulation

Modulation is composed of aspect and rhythm and is conceived by Greimas and Fontanille as the form in which modalities are combined.<sup>11</sup> These features are variations which modify the continuity of the modalities. These variations are related to acceleration or decrease of movement, repetition, inchoativity, durability, etc. Fontanille explains, for example, how types of fear can be recognized through aspectual variations, thus apprehension would be characterized by a previous event; dread by inchoativity and terror by durability.<sup>12</sup>

In turn, the tensive semiotics constructed by Claude Zilberberg and Fontanille considers that modulation is formed by features of aspectualization and tension. Within linguistics, aspectualization implies the temporal, spatial and actorial coordinates established by the utterance which reveal the presence of an observer or point of observation.<sup>13</sup> Tension is "the imaginary place in which intensity, that is, the states of mind, sensitivity, and extension, that is the states of affairs, the intelligible, are an ensemble".<sup>14</sup> Intensity can be measured through the major or lower grade of the presence of a modality and extension through the longer or shorter temporal and spatial distance between the subject (center of reference) and the object in the field of presence of the subject, as well as quantity (rhythm, frequency, etc.), that is, the number of times that a modality appears and its duration. Considering these elements, modulation reveals the existence of a distance or suspension between the development of the modalities and the realization of the action which makes the emergence of the thymic dimension of the subject possible.

Based on the theoretical concepts of Fontanille and Zilberberg, Desiderio Blanco explains that in film there are accents and modulations which represent intensity and extension, respectively.<sup>15</sup> Extension corresponds to "quantity, variety, and the spatial or temporal range of phenomena."<sup>16</sup> In turn, intensity is a scale of value which is

<sup>10</sup> Fontanille 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Greimas/Fontanille 1994: 33.

<sup>12</sup> Fontanille 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Martin/Ringham 2000: 27.

<sup>14</sup> Zilberberg 2006: 55.

<sup>15</sup> Blanco 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Hébert 2011.

applied to the extension. In film analysis, Blanco focuses on the level of intensity and considers that the different components of the *mise en scène* destined to highlight a specific element correspond precisely to accents or points of intensity. By contrast, modulation can be shown through the alternation of shot distances (full shot, three-quarter shot, mid-shot, etc.), its duration, movements of the camera (tracking, zooming, traveling, etc.) and the modulation of lighting and color, aspects linked to extension.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.2.2 Perspective

Perspective is the perception of the subject in relation to an object or another subject in terms of distance and approach. These elements can be considered as a form of loss or appropriation, respectively, and they influence the state of mind of the subject creating the emergence of a passion (desire, anger, avarice, etc.). Through perspective, an action is transformed into a passion. The point of view reveals the center of reference (the subject) from which the process of perception is displayed (the proprioceptive experience) and the system of values which is projected on the object.<sup>18</sup> For example, in *Nosferatu*, Hutter leaves Wisborg to go to the castle of Count Orlok and Ellen – Hutter’s wife – stays at home. Both Hutter and Ellen suffer because they miss each other. This suffering and its intensity is emphasized by the camera, among other resources, which focuses on elements which reveal the big distance between Transylvania and Wisborg (alternate montage of Ellen missing Hutter in Wisborg, Hutter writing a letter during his stay at the castle, shots of the sea and the different landscapes denoting Transylvania and Wisborg, shots of the obstacles of Hutter to return to Wisborg, etc.).

### 2.2.3 Somatic expressions

Somatic expressions are defined as the manifestation of affective transformations. In this case, there is a large series of verbal and non-verbal signs: facial expressions, body language, a laugh, a glance, etc., which reveal affectivity and give way to “strategies of production and interpretation of signification, such as hiding, concealing, revealing on the part of the subject which expresses; and guessing, calculating, inferring on the part of who observes.”<sup>19</sup>

### 2.2.4 Typical scenes

Typical scenes are related to culture and show how a passion is developed in a more or less regular and recognizable form. Most of the time, only some features of such scenes are enough to reveal affectivity and can be established as prototypical scenes. In this case, the sensations that the body experiences in the natural world are often shown or depicted, so that the presence of a forest, the sea, a sound, a color, etc.,

<sup>17</sup> Blanco 2003: 54–55.

<sup>18</sup> Fontanille 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Filinich 2003: 95.



serves as a receptacle of values linked to a passion as effect of a cultural tradition and discursive marks which indicate such a presence.

Now, I will show the construction of the thymic dimension of the subject in *El ataúd del vampiro* regarding some examples, but without including the perspective whose analysis would exceed the scope of this article.

### 2.3 The passion dimension of Count Lavud in *El ataúd del vampiro*

Throughout the story of *El ataúd del vampiro*, the narrative trajectory of Count Lavud – the vampire – is formed by narrative programs which, in turn, are established by the search of the subject for objects of value. Each narrative program is composed of three modes of the subject (virtualization, actualization and realization) which reveal the beginning, process and accomplishment of the junction (conjunction or disjunction: achievement or loss of the object of value) through the motivation and acquisition of competences.

However, within the narrative program the subject also performs a series of actions (subsequences or micro-actions) corresponding to the motivation and the acquisition of competences which are related to modalities. Initially, the review of narrative subsequences gives us an overview or a map of the modalities involved in the narrative program and its frequency through the narrative trajectory. Later, it is necessary to consider how some of these modalities are combined forming a confluence of forces which give rise to passions.

In this regard, passion appears as a micro-sequence which is included in a macro-sequence, that is, a syntagmatic succession of modal structures, a combination. Thus, the organization of modalities can be considered as a subprogram because it represents the presupposed condition for the realization of the action.<sup>20</sup>

In order to identify the modalities involved in the narrative trajectory of the vampire in *El ataúd del vampiro* and, then, identify which of them produce thymic effects or passions, I organized in a schema the narrative subsequences and their pertinence to the mode of virtualization or actualization of the subject from the narrative programs of the character.<sup>21</sup> Here, I include an example of this schema through the organization of the modalities which appear in the narrative program 4b (NP4b) which corresponds to the search of the blood of a young girl (Fig. 1).

<sup>20</sup> Fontanille 2001: 172.

<sup>21</sup> For a more extended analysis and description of modalities of other narrative programs of the films of this study see Cabrera 2017.



This schema confirms that a passion emerges from a modal state, that is, the result of the junction between the subject and the modal object, which can be formed by various modalities at the same time.<sup>22</sup>

NP	Actant subject	M	Proposition	V	A
4b	Count Lavud	w/ h	to obtain blood (1)	x	
		h/ a	to search for a victim (2)	x	x
		h/ a	to stalk a young girl (3)	x	x
		h/ a	to follow her (4)	x	x
		h/ a	to transform into a bat (5)	x	x
		h/ a	to fly to her (6)	x	x
		h/ a	to attack her (7)	x	x

**List of symbols**  
 NP: narrative program  
 M: modality (w: *wanting to*, h: *having to*, a: *being able to*, k: *knowing how to*)  
 V: mode of virtualization  
 A: mode of actualization

**Fig. 1: Modalities of the narrative program 4b — search for a young girl's blood — of Count Lavud in *El ataúd del vampiro***

In *El ataúd del vampiro*, the vampire's figure experiences different passions linked to the *wanting to* and the *having to*. On the one hand, the subject is guided by desire and need for blood and it is able to suck the blood of a little girl and a young woman (NP4a/b). In this case, the modalization of the subject corresponds to a combination of (*wanting to* + *being able to*) *have/do* + (*having to*) *have/be* – as also occurs in *El vampiro*. In addition, Count Lavud experiences an impotence to control an internal need which corresponds to losing control of his instincts and an obsession for the object of value. Thus, the less he can achieve something, the more he wants to obtain it.

The search for dominating and the impotence of the subject are revealed through the number of modalities involved in each narrative program throughout the film. In most of them, desire and need drive the subject's motivations and the *being able to* leads to the achievement of some objects of value (return to life, creation of a servant through hypnosis, blood, and revenge against an enemy of the past). Conversely, a constant combination of *having to*, *being able to* and *not being able to* form part of other narrative programs (to maintain the existence, a failed revenge against an enemy, the failed obtaining and appropriation of a woman, Martha). The most frequent modalities linked to desire, need, impotence and frustration in the narrative trajectory of the subject are concentrated in narrative programs related to the obtaining of blood of young and pretty women (NP4b/c and NP5). In addition, two of these narrative programs correspond to the last actions performed by the vampire which also reveal the concentration of modalities and, in turn, affective effects at the end of the story. This implies a major affective intensity which is related to the climax of the

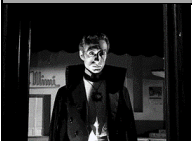



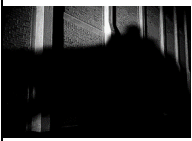

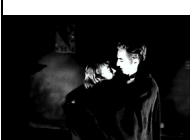
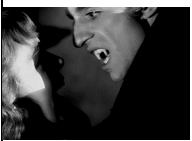

<sup>22</sup> Blanco 2003: 169.

film. Also during the narrative trajectory of Count Lavud the frequency of the modalities *having to* and *not being able to* increases due to the major number of obstacles confronted by the vampire.

Now, I will describe the verbal, visual and auditory features related to the construction of the passions of Count Lavud with focus on somatic expressions and typical scenes as well as on the narrative program 4b described above. Thus, we have to note that vampire films use a filmic resource to address the meaning of the resurrection of the vampire in the story, that is, a scene of the vampire's hand coming out from the coffin which serves to alert the viewer of the association of the presence of the vampire with the sucking of blood and the damage to a community. This scene also appears in *El vampiro* and *El ataúd del vampiro* and becomes a reiterative resource which serves to link the focus of the camera on Count Lavud's hand coming out from his coffin with greed and domination (00:19:35). This reiteration is also present in *Nosferatu*.

In the narrative sequence corresponding to the search for a young girl's blood (00:56:05 – 00:59:13), Count Lavud is outside the theater and is watching a poster with Martha's photographs. This action is a mark of greed, lust and domination. The modal structure of greed corresponds to [(*wanting to + being able to*) *do/have* + (*wanting to + having to*) *have*]; lust is constructed by [(*wanting to + having to*) *do* + (*not being able to not*) *do*] and domination is constructed by [(*wanting to + being able to*) *do*]. Subsequently, these passions motivate the search for another victim, the young girl of the café in front of the theater. In this case, Count Lavud stares at the young girl and a low-angle lighting emphasizes his facial features: raised eyebrows and eyes wide open (00:56:05; Fig. 2).

Thus, the emergence or permanence of these passions is shown through the vampire's shadow, its transformation into a bat, its cape embracing the young girl, its fangs on her neck during the attack and the fang marks on her neck after the attack. However, unlike *El vampiro*, in *El ataúd*, Count Lavud has considerable control of his impulsivity, his somatic expressions and his body language. Thereby shadows, lighting from below, low-angle shots, visual tricks to perform the supernatural powers of the vampire, and dialogue are used with more frequency in order to replace the vampire's expressivity.

NP4b	Action	Passion	Visual Mark	Auditory mark	Filmic resource
	Count Lavud searches for a victim	Greed Lust Domination	Count Lavud stares at a young woman. His facial expression: raised eyebrows and eyes wide open	No sound	Low-angle lighting
	Count Lavud looks at his next victim	Lust	Count Lavud's look at the young woman's back. His somatic expression: fixed gaze, arched eyebrows and head leaned forward	Soft violin music	Side light from right illuminating the focus of the vampire's attention
	Count Lavud pursues the young girl	Domination	Count Lavud opens his cape and runs	No sound	Full shot of the vampire
	The young girl tries to escape	Domination	Big shadow of the vampire's cape projected on the wall covering the figure of the young woman	Musical change: violins play faster	Lighting from below and full shot covering the totally of the image of the shadow
	He pursues her				
	Count Lavud turns into a bat, pursues the young girl and attacks her	Greed Lust Domination	Vampire's shadow, transformation into a bat	Violins play faster	Close up of the bat
			Cape embracing the young girl		Low-angle lighting focused on the vampire's attack
			Fangs on her neck attacking Tense face of the vampire		Close up of the fangs and the vampire's face
	People find the young girl's corpse	Domination Satisfaction	Fang marks on her neck	Sound of a trumpet	Close up of the fang marks on the young girl's neck

**Fig. 2: Combination of passions and multimodal marks in NP4b: search for the young girl's blood (TC 00:56:05–00:59:13).**

Likewise, within this narrative program, we can find five typical scenes associated with the vampire films of this study and most of vampire films in general. These typical scenes are the stalking of the vampire (TS1), the moment in which the vampire pursues its victims (TS2), the transformation of the vampire into a bat (TS3), the sucking of blood (TS4) and the fang marks on the victim's neck (TS5). This last typical scene commonly reveals the presence of the vampire when it is not visualized — a frequent narrative strategy in vampire films. In turn, each typical scene is related to the continuous emergence of specific passions, as for example greed, lust, domination or deceit, among others, which are constructed with specific combinations of verbal, visual and auditory elements. For example, in TS1 Count Lavud feels lust for the young woman of the café and the combination of elements of such a passion is:

Count Lavud's look at the young woman's back

+

Count Lavud's somatic expression: fixed gaze, arched eyebrows and head leaned forward

+

Side light from right illuminating the focus of Count Lavud's attention

+

Soft violin music

+

Repetition of a similar scene of a previous man watching the back of an unknown woman

Thus, typical scenes corresponding to the stalking of the vampire and the pursuit of the victim are composed of a series of passions which, in turn, are composed of a series of features which can be visual, auditory and verbal if, for example, a narrator, the vampire or some characters say what Count Lavud searches for. A balance of these marks shows that the passions of the figure of the vampire are mainly exposed through visual elements which correspond to the form in which the image of the vampire is constructed (clothes, facial expressions, body language and movements in space) in combination with elements of filmic montage and *mise-en-scène* (shot distances, music, lighting and set composition).

In relation to the somatic expressions and the thymic effects of Count Lavud, we can note that in *El ataúd del vampiro* the vampire's facial expressions and body language are increased according to the numerous action scenes and typical scenes of the vampire included in the film. This means that unlike the other films considered in my study, the different passions of the vampire lead in most cases to action scenes (to pursue victims, to flee transformed into a bat or to begin a fight) or to changes of scene and set in which the vampiric figure has a more active role.

Likewise, in *El ataúd del vampiro* there is an attempt to introduce the vampire in different urban settings such as a hospital, a wax museum, a street and a theater. This also leads to the constant change of scene giving a major rhythm to the film and the figure of the vampire. An example of this continuous movement is the scene of the vampire pursuing the young woman. In this case, the lighting from below helps to project Count Lavud's cape on the wall when he runs creating a large shadow and

the idea that his cape functions as wings before his transformation into a bat. Besides lighting, alternate montage focuses constantly on the different somatic expressions of the vampire and its movements creating the impression that there is a constant change of passion states. Thus, filmic features are again combined with the increasing number of verbal, visual and auditory features revealing the vampire's passions.

### **3. Conclusions: Similar vampires and different cultural meanings: the vampire as a source of fear**

In the films considered for my study,<sup>23</sup> there are similar passions and similar multi-modal and filmic features which are used to construct the narrative trajectory and the figure of the vampire or the criminal. However, from a cultural perspective, each character represents different fears within the imaginary constructed in German and Mexican cinema. In *El ataúd del vampiro*, the scene of the attack of a young girl can be interpreted as an alert aimed at female audiences in order to warn women of wandering alone at night and flirting with unknown men in the streets of Mexico City – a warning also present in other Mexican films in which women that are alone, visit cabarets or fall in love with the villain are punished for not following the social or moral rules of the time. This scene also transmits the message that women who are not honorable – a frequent idea associated with actresses, dancers and singers of the time – and flirt with unknown men are punished.

In turn, *El vampiro* presents a vampiric character linked to the rich owner of land who sucks the life of peasants. Unlike the other films analyzed in my study in which the vampire or the criminal represents an external threat, the vampire of this film, Mr. Duval, represents an internal threat because he is a villain who appears characterized as a cruel, vengeful, invincible and ambitious man and wants to take control of properties of other people and of the village. In this regard, he is a part of the community and, at the same time, wants to dominate it. Thus, the combination of physical prowess and psychological strength of the villain become a representation not only of evil, but also of the feudal power of the figure of the Mexican landowner.

In *M*, the criminal Beckert searches for victims mainly at night and solitary and dark streets too, as Count Lavud, but in this case this man is described as a monster for being a child abuser. As I wrote at the beginning of this article, this character is based on the serial murderer Peter Kürten who raped, murdered and drank the blood of children between 1913 and 1930 in Düsseldorf. For this reason, he was named "the vampire of Düsseldorf" and so was associated with the features of a vampire figure. At this time, there was also an increasing of violence, especially sexual abuses and murders perpetrated against women.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cabrera 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Elder 2010.

In contrast, *Nosferatu* — the first vampire film known — presents a vampire whose nature is a combination of animalistic and human features in comparison with other vampiric figures of the films here studied which are more human.<sup>25</sup> This animalistic relation is shown through the rats which count Orlok brings with him and also the plague which invades Wisborg and kills its inhabitants after the arrival of the vampire, which actually sucks their blood and kills them. In this regard, the vampire is the embodiment of evil which represents death and destruction. However, this image of the plague is a metaphor frequently used by Murnau in his films, that is, the vampire of *Nosferatu* served as a figure which projected an image of social and economic instability (the lost war, the new political system and exacerbated war reparations for the allies) through its monstrosity.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, the vampire condenses chaos and destruction and becomes the figure of the enemy, of the other who has caused harm.

Regarding all these aspects, this article gives an overlook of an interdisciplinary and empirical study which can be relevant for film studies, applied linguistics and semiotics in order to understand the narrative structure and the construction of an affective dimension in film and other media surrounding the character.

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<sup>25</sup> According to Gary A. Rhodes (2010), the first film version based on Stoker's novel was the Hungarian film *Drakula Halála* (1921, *The Death of Dracula*) by Károly Lajthay. Unfortunately, today only some shots of this film have been preserved.

<sup>26</sup> Dorn 1994: 79.



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## Mediography

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- El ataúd del vampiro*. MEX 1958, Fernando Méndez, 95 min.
- El vampiro*. MEX 1957, Fernando Méndez, 83 min.
- M: eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder*. D 1931, Fritz Lang, 111 min.
- Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens*. D 1922, F. W. Murnau, 91 min.

## Figures

- Fig. 1: Modalities of the narrative program 4b — search for a young girl's blood — of Count Lavud in *El ataúd del vampiro*; Cabrera 2017: 355.
- Fig. 2: Combination of passions and multimodal marks in NP4b: search for the young girl's blood. Screenshots from *El ataúd del vampiro*. Mexico 1958, Fernando Méndez, 95 min, (TC 00:56:05–00:59:13).