

German-Croatian Film Connections between Expressionism and Escapism

Lead researcher: full prof. Marijana Erstić (merstic@ffst.hr), Department of German Language and Literature

Project timeframe: January 2025. – December 2026.

Project goal:

German-Croatian film connections between expressionism and escapism begin with the lights of the metropolis in documentaries from the era of expressionism, or the era of the so-called new objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit). After the silent documentary film "Berlin – Symphony of the Metropolis" ("Berlin – Sinfonie der Großstadt", D 1927, directed by Walther Ruttmann), further documentaries were made in Germany in the 1920s, such as "People on Sunday" ("Menschen am Sonntag", D 1929, directed by Robert Siodmak and Edgar G. Ulmer), in Italy the film "Stramilano" (I 1929, directed by Corrado D'Errico) and in our region the film "Zagreb in the Light of the Metropolis" (YU 1934, directed by Oktavian Miletić). Oktavian Miletić then continued to make successful documentaries about Croatia for the German market in the 1930s and 1940s. At the same time, Germany is producing in Croatia the alleged spy film "The Coral Princess" ("Die Korallenprinzessin", D/YU 1937, directed by Victor Janson), as Alida Bremer believes in her crime novel "Träume und Kulissen" ("Dreams and Scenes" (2021)). Influenced by early and post-war realist currents, primarily within the framework of Italian neorealism, the Austrian director Helmut Käutner made the film "Die letzte Brücke" ("The Last Bridge") in our region in 1953, with Mario Schell, Bernhard Wicki and Till von Durieux in the main roles. The realistic, but above all latently escapist tendencies of the films of the 1930s continued during the Federal Republic of Germany - the most famous example of the primarily escapist style are the Federal German films "Winnetou I, II, III" (BRD 1963-1965, director: Harald Reinl), filmed largely in Dalmatia. However, even the current series about Split of the television station ARD ("Kroatien-Krimi", from 2016 to the present) occasionally contains, in addition to social criticism, escapist features. To this day, in addition, some impressive German directors and actors, who trace their origins from our area or lived here, are important - director Werner Herzog (Stipetić), actors such as the already mentioned Tilla Durieux, then Dunja Rajter, Mišel Matičević, Mimi Fiedler, Stipe Ercega, Miroslav Nemec, etc. The goal of the project is the systematization, classification and analysis of Croatian-German film connections and relations in documentary, feature and television films and in film and television series. Such a systematization and classification of the above-mentioned corpus has not been done to date, and this scientific deficiency is corrected and supplemented by this project. Based on the available material, the terms 'new objectivity', 'expressionism' and 'escapism' are questioned.

Members of the project team:

- full prof. Eldi Grubišić Pulišelić, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split; full prof. Miranda Jakiša, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Vienna; full prof. Maren Lickhardt, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Siegen