

# Scenes from metropolis

Literature



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## Scenes from Metropolis

Fritz Lang's Metropolis has remained one of the most controversial movies in history. The movie has several underlying meanings, which implies that a viewer has to be particularly keen to avoid missing its essence. Although the movie is difficult to follow, Andreas Huyssen's analytical work "The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang's Metropolis" provides many useful brainstorming ideas that aid in better comprehension of the movie. Even though some of Huyssen's suggestions seem extreme, passages in it are informative and insightful. This paper seeks to analyze language, tone, and mood evoked by passages in Huyssen's article.

The first passage of interest is that which examines the background of Fritz Lang's famous but controversial film. This passage examines the stylistic aspects of Metropolis, drawing one's attention to the phrase *Neue Sachlichkeit*. On further research, I discovered that it is a German phrase meaning New Objectivity, which characterizes the public state of Weimar Germany in the early 19th century including music, literature, architecture and art in general. From the onset, this passage makes one think of Metropolis as a film that depicts otherworldly features, not conventional to the prevailing societal conditions. The author also indicates that the film embraced elements of expressionism (Huyssen 201). As a result, one cannot help but think of images that take on a life of their own and exaggerate reality with which we are all familiar. These stylistic techniques seem to contradict each other since *Neue Sachlichkeit* embraces emerging technology, however radical it might seem, whereas expressionism places emphasis on the distinctive spirit of human culture. This instigates a feeling of curiosity and confusion, at the same time, because it is hard to imagine

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how one can reconcile both sides of the film. The theme emerging from this passage is that, of the potent impact of unregulated technology on humans. The other passage that draws one's interest is the one titled virgin and vamp: displacing the double threat. The author uses the term "otherness" of woman, to describe the distinctive images associated with females in society. Apparently, Metropolis adopts the images of a woman as a virgin and a vamp. The latter refers to a seductive woman, who uses her appeal to exploit men. These images that Metropolis associates with women are clearly based on sexuality. This immediately prompts one to think about the theme of sexual portrayal of women in film. The author connotes that even though the images are ideological, they can be connected to real "sociological, physiological and psychological" (210) perceptions of men about domination over nature. This further implies that Metropolis seeks to show that it is only when men overcome or manipulate their visual pleasures or desires that they achieve productive technological advances. There is also an implication that alluring elements of technology must be examined keenly before being adopted for mainstream use. Even though the passage has significant hidden meanings on technology, the aspect that stands out is the sexual objectification of women. This brings out a mood of annoyance and irritation to some point, since it feels wrong to view women in such a state, and also deal with the implication that men cannot think rationally in presence of women. The portrayal of women as a threat is also evident from the author's statement that "the mob scenes thus take on connotations of a raging femininity which represents the major threat not only to great machines, but to male domination in general" (210). Why would women be portrayed as a sexual objects and a threat, yet they make significant

contributions to society? This is just one among many concerns that emerge from Fritz Lang's Metropolis.

#### Work Cited

Huysen, Andreas. "The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang's Metropolis" In Fritz Lang's Metropolis: Cinematic Visions of Technology and Fear (Studies in German Literature Linguistics and Culture) by Michael Minden and Holger Bachmann.