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| Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau’s *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens [A Symphony of Horror]* (1922) [link: <http://nosferatumovie.com/>] is a German Expressionist film [link: <http://www.greencine.com/static/primers/expressionism1.jsp> ]that remains one of the most popular adaptations of Bram Stoker’s novel *Dracula* (1897) [link: <http://www.litgothic.com/Authors/title.html>]. In the film, Thomas Hutter (Gustav von Wangenheim) visits Transylvania to meet Count Orlok (Max Schreck), seeking to purchase real estate in the fictitious town of Wisborg, Germany. Strange and terrible events occur at Orlok’s castle. Orlok becomes obsessed with Thomas’s wife Ellen (Greta Schröder) and travels to Wisborg to find her. During the sea voyage, the crew mysteriously die. When the villagers of Wisborg also begin to die, townspeople blame a plague carried by rats from the ship, not suspecting a bloodthirsty vampire. Ultimately, Ellen sacrifices herself to Orlok while he disintegrates in the morning sunlight. *Nosferatu’s* use of abstraction by elevating cinematic form over narrative development resembles similar approaches in Modernist art. Using Expressionist film techniques, Murnau [<http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/F._W._Murnau.html>] challenges perceptions of reality through distorted point-of-view shots creating nightmarish effects. Orlok’s cadaverous appearance — through stylistic gestures of the body and costume elements — initiates the prototypical horror film character as simultaneously terrifying and alluring. The film achieves this through a combination of long shots, chiaroscuro lighting (vivid contrasts and abstractions between light and dark), and the doppelgänger effect (Orlok and his shadow). *Nosferatu* [link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcyzubFvBsA>] demonstrates how the manipulation of time, space, and light (shadow) induces claustrophobia and psychic disorder in the modern horror film. |
| Further reading:  Ashbury, R. *Nosteratu*. New York: Pearson Education, 2001. Print.  Elsaesser, T. ‘No End to *Nosferatu* (1922).’ *An Essential Guide to Classic Films of the Era: Weimar Cinema.* ed. Noah Isenberg.New York: Columbia UP, 2009. 79-94. Print.  Guillermo, G. P. ‘Shadow and Substance: F. W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu.*’ *Sight and Sound* 36: 3 (1967): 150-159. Print.  Skal, D. J. Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen. New York: Faber and Faber, 1990. Print. |