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15 April 2019

### Reflective Essay

Lotte Reiniger crafted the first animated feature as an independent filmmaker in 1926, and she pioneered silhouette animation. As a role model whose significance to modern animation was not well documented, Reiniger piqued my interest. I started my first formal research project about Reiniger for the Honors Program's "Research and Exhibition" course in the fall of 2017, where I drafted the proposal that would win me a Summer Research Fellowship with the Honors Program. I recently finished editing the animated film that I used the Fellowship to create and will be submitting that film to the Hannon Library Research Award, and I am continuing my research with a second Honors Fellowship.

When I started exploring Reiniger, I knew that I wanted to expand the information known about her, but not how to do so. I initiated a mentorship with animation professor and Walter Lantz researcher Tom Klein who directed me towards animation journals and online articles to supplement the general background information I found about Reiniger in books from LMU's library. At first, I intended to study the "lost years" in Reiniger's career, tracking her travel when she fled her home country of Germany in the 1930s until she began making films again in the 1950s United Kingdom. But two sources from Tom shifted my research: an online article by Tashi Petter directed me to the film historian Siegfried Kracauer, and a research connection of Tom's—Dr. Caroline Ruddell in London—directed me to the work of Rachel Palfreyman.

Taking a modern feminist analysis of Reiniger, Petter cited Kracauer's minor reference to Reiniger's work in his book, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German*

*Film*, as evidence that she was disregarded due to her sex. In contrast, Rachel Palfreyman argued that Reiniger ought to have been analyzed as a German Expressionist but was forgotten due to the failure to categorize her style within a film movement. Having found Kracauer's book at the library, I was able to compare Petter's work with her citations and determine that though Petter fit the historic trend of gender inequalities damaging the success of female filmmakers, I found Palfreyman's argument more accurate to the specifics of Reiniger's work. I decided to use my talents as a filmmaker to explore Palfreyman's comparison of Reiniger to live-action German Expressionist films.

With the Summer Fellowship funding, I purchased rare Reiniger films not available in the United States and build an eight-foot multiplane camera rig that allowed me to animate my puppets, like Reiniger, on flat glass panes that the camera captured from above. Adopting Reiniger's animation techniques enriched my ability to compare her work with other filmmakers, who I had studied by viewing their films via the library access to Kanopy. If not for Kanopy, I would have not been able to view Expressionist films like *Nosferatu* and the *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* without exceeding my budget due to the costs associated with accessing these historic films from the United States.

I crafted a short animated film that tells a German Expressionist story—adopted from Paul Wegener's *The Golem: How He Came into the World* which I viewed on Kanopy—while using Reiniger's classic animation style. The finished film demonstrates characteristics of the two film genres that I compared, but I modified each genre to help them coexist in a single piece. By maintaining contact with historians like Dr. Ruddell and initiating new relationships, I have shared my film and been referred to rare and new publications about Lotte Reiniger that I accessed by requesting the books via LMU's interlibrary loan system. Those books and more

recent interviews with researchers like Professor Jorgelina Orfila from Texas Tech University pushed me to recognize that German Expressionism was not the only movement to influence Reiniger, explaining why I had to modify each genre in my process.

While independent scouring of the library's catalog helped me start my research, I needed to network with film historians in order to participate in the ongoing conversation about Reiniger's work because deeper evaluations of her are only just being written. I realized that groundbreaking research requires finding sources that have not yet been used.