



M. Cowan, *Technology's Pulse. Essays on Rhythm in German Modernism*

mercredi 7 mars 2012

M. Cowan, *Technology's Pulse. Essays on Rhythm in German Modernism*, London, IGRS Books, 2012, 252 p.

- Modernity, as has often been observed, was fundamentally concerned with questions of temporality. The period around 1900, in particular, witnessed numerous efforts – from the methods of time management to the meditations of Bergsonian philosophy – to define, discipline or “liberate” temporal experience. Within this broader framework of thinking about time, rhythm came to form the object of an intense and widespread preoccupation. Rhythmical research played a central role not only to the reconceptualization of human physiology and labour in the late 19th century, but also to the emergence of a new leisure culture in the early 20th century. In *Technology's Pulse*, I interpret modernity's fixation on rhythm as part of an effort to work through the changing relations between the body and technology within a context marked by acceleration, rationalization and new forms of temporal ordering. Examining the discourse on rhythm in thinkers from Georg Simmel to Ludwig Klages, the book traces the ways in which notions of “rhythm” were mobilized both to conceptualize modernity (narrate its origins and prescribe its directions) and, in particular, to forge a new understanding of temporal media that came to mark the mass-mediated experience of the 1920s : a conception of artistic media as mediators between the organic and the rational, the time of the body and that of the machine. Through four case studies, the book shows how this notion of rhythmical mediation informed lyric poetry, film, advertising and jazz music in Germany in the early 20th century.
- **Michael Cowan** is Associate Professor of German and World Cinema at McGill University. He is the author of *Cult of the Will : Nervousness and German Modernity* (2008), as well as several articles and collections on German literature, film, media and cultural history.

- **Table of Contents**

Acknowledgments

List of Illustrations

1. Introduction : [Rhythm and the Mediation of Modern Experience](#)
2. Poetry for Restless Times : Rhythm and Urban Experience in the Work of Gerrit Engelke
3. Cinema as 'Heart Machine' : Rhythm and the Ordering of Nature in Weimar Film
4. The Compulsory Power of Resonance : Rhythm, Attention and Advertising
5. Surviving the Rhythms of America : Jazz and the Fantasy of Technological Mastery
6. Epilogue. Rhythm and Moving Image Media : Some Afterthoughts

Bibliography

Index