

### Chosen Movement; German Expressionism

Unquestionably, German Expressionism is to be considered as one of the most important film movements within the history of film and cinema. The linear alignment of universal time does not speak to the legitimacy of the short-lived movement. Rather, the movement and its influential legacy within film's timeline speaks for its authentic, undeniable legitimacy. Although the legitimacy of German Expressionism and its length has been discussed lengthily amongst critics, one is to be reminded that film's history is not of linear progress but rather a form of evolutionary expression as the development of film and cinema takes place over centuries whereby countless intersections intertwine amongst multiple timeline's and realities which connote dynamic and fluid understanding and meaning within representation's and perceptions throughout film's diverse periodic movements.

German Expressionism as a periodic movement of film began within the early 1920's, prior to such films were considered to fall into the category of the 'cinema of attractions' which in itself had its own authentic stylistic expression within the fantastica of early cinema. German Expressionism as a film movement came about post World War 1 and further, throughout the rise of Nazi Germany, whereby German politics and world history came together to create an undoubtedly unique cosmos in which expression can be seen to thrive. In such, German Expressionism arose from the harrowing pits of universal pain, paranoia, calamity and chaos. Thus, within its works German Expressionism as a formalized medium represented an authentic reality which is to be seen as a master symphony of horror and terror through the distorted lens of reality itself.

German Expressionism as a movement emphasized the expression of the internal, opposing the 'cinema of attractions' which emphasized the expression of the external. Emphasizing the internal, German Expressionism examined intricate focus on the psychological make-up of the human autonomy whereby stylistically, the movement focused on the emotional reality of internal turmoil and conflict which was often grotesque in its making. The intersection between expressionism and psychology within the expressionistic movement cannot be separated as German Expressionism juxtaposed the fragility of the human body and mind through its evolutionist theory. The movement and its stylistic elements placed specific focus on the unique nature of individual perception, the subconscious and the psyche of the self-developed individual. In such, German Expressionism immersed itself within the notion's individualism and subjectivity. Correlating directly to a distorted emotional reality in which we ourselves get lost within, within such darkness and mite. Further, expressionism focused itself upon the panes of tension between the frame and narrative structure of the films which further highlighted the ambiguity of the subject matter within expressionist film. Such tension between knowledge and perception would thus leave the audience encapsulated in uncertainty and questionable doubt within reality itself.

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Film Scene - Young child approaches a stranger in the street;

The following scene explores and examines an interaction between a young boy whom by is seen to be approaching a stranger on the street outside of the Das Wald Sanatorium, Germany 1922.

The stranger can be seen standing outside of the sanatorium in the late hours of the morning, often considered to be the 'graveyard' shift. The young boy can be seen following the calling of his lost cats 'meow'. Upon the young boy's search, he deviates through an ally way which in-fact leads him to the Das Wald Sanatorium, a mental asylum in which folk lore expresses an unspeakable tales of horrific and unimaginable occurrences. As the young boy reaches the end of the ally way, he sees a stranger standing at the gates of the sanatorium, dressed in black drapes, with the young boy's vision being distorted by eerie fog and mist. The young boy approaches the stranger.

Camerawork –

As the young boy approaches the stranger, the camera utilises the technique of the medium shot with further aid from the camera's angle of a 'over the shoulder shot' whereby such a shot is framed from behind the subject (the boy). Such a shot would thus emphasize the young boy's movement in confrontation with the stranger outside of the sanatorium. The young boy is seen from behind, walking in distorted discomfort as his body stiffens and shakes as he proceeds to walk closer towards the stranger. The camera's movement is relatively unstable and rather shaky as this further represents an authentic and realistic movement with the young boy's shivering shakes. In such, incorporating elements of realism within the scene. The use of the medium shot allows for the boy to be seen from behind, from the waist up. The use of a medium shot further allows for a second subject, which is the old man to be seen within the frame, the old man is distorted and blurred within the background of the frame as his elongated, slender shadow becomes the only visible distinct feature, this allows for the audience to see the old man from the perspective of the young boy as he walks toward the old man before confrontation. The notion of existentialism alludes the old man in the background as he can be seen encapsulated within his own shadow. As the boy walks closer, the camera utilises the technique of a 'rack focus' which indicates a change of the point of focus from one subject to the other, in such guiding our attention to a new clearly focus point while blurring the previous subject within the frame as the young boy, whom is seen from behind becomes blurred as the camera focuses in on the old man's slender shadowed embodiment. Juxtaposing toward German Expressionist notions whereby central themes explore the 'fear of the other'.

Lighting Key –

The expressionistic lighting key of the scene can be seen starkly low key, with prominent dark, highly contrasted and distorted buildings as the young boy walks through the ally way in dead end of the night. The use of low key lighting is of importance to the way the scene is set as this highly influences the way in which the audience is to perceive the scene, low key lighting allows for the setting of the scene to be expressive as a nightmarish, sadistic and masochistic tale within its representation. Opposing the three-point lighting system, the scene can be seen to incorporate a single source of light which illuminates from a backlight placed on one of the first buildings within the ally way, in such when the young boy walks past the backlight, his shadow is illuminated behind himself as he walks toward the old man.

The constant use of low key lighting within the scene allows for dark shadows, highly contrasted tones of black and grey in aid of the shadows, this lighting technique in such produces mysterious and anxiety provoking emotion within the scene.

#### Performance –

German Expressionistic performance entitles a perceptive holistic performance in which the characters immerse themselves within the environment in order to create a balanced performance in which the characters can be seen immersed within the set, in such the characters themselves compliment the bizarre, distorted reality of expressionistic set designs. As the young boy is walking through the mystical ally way, his body movement portrays tension within his rhythm as he walks through the ally way. As the young boy approaches the old man, the young boy threads lightly as he creeps slowly towards this unknown figure of the old man. The old man and his arched slender body stand at a standstill until the old man extends his hand forward and clinches his fist, he points a finger out toward the young boy and arches his second finger in the motion signalling ‘come closer’ as the young boy hesitantly walks closer and closer. The young boy’s body is rather restricted within his movement which further indicates tension, fear and paranoia as the young boy comes closer to the strange old man.

#### Costume –

German Expressionistic costume designs are symbolically representative of the stylistic elements in which German Expressionism incorporates, the old man can be seen dressed in white a white straight jacket, it seems as if his hands have been freed from the straight jacket but his feet remain constrained in chains, his movement too is restricted. The young boy is not wearing any shoes, his shorts are ragged and torn while his t-shirt is white and oversized and has many holes in it, indicating that the young boy indefinitely comes from the streets. The young boy’s make up is extremely pale, with further undertones of black eyeshadow around his eyes, his pale face is complimented by dirt and facial scars which can be seen to be bleeding. The old man has dark black lipstick on his lips, with his eyes too painted in black eyeshadow. His face too is extremely pale, almost lifelessly.

#### Editing –

The editing incorporated within German Expressionistic films were kept rather simple due to low budgets which meant that the accessibility to high end editing means were scares and directors would need to use innovatory means with what they already knew within the realm of editing. The scenes is colour scheme is starkly black and white which illuminates the low-key lighting and highly contrasted buildings and backgrounds. Black and white editing too emphasizes the density of shadow usage as the young boy walks through the ally way and further, as we perceive the slender figure of the old man standing in the dark outside of the sanatorium. In shooting this scene in a German Expressionistic film style, one needs to be aware of the timeline in which German Expressionism was formulated and conceptualized within and to also take account an appropriate and accurate level of representation in paying homage to such an authentic film style and movement.

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Set/Location –

The setting of the scene is of severity within German Expressionistic film, the set plays as much, if not more importance than the character's themselves as the nature of distorted realities/set designs invokes the viewer to become immersed within such set design. The scene's set design is envisioned as overwhelming whereby the ally way is painted in a dark and bold colour screen in emphasis of the black and white filter which emits the highly contrasted blacks and grey for the eerie shadow effect. The buildings are distorted in box shaped geometry, disassembling conventional styled film panes.

The old man is situated outside of a sanatorium, there is a large painted black gate behind him, with an absurdly large silver chain shackled around the gates entrance. The gate can too be seen to have rusted. Expressionistic set designs were physically complex within its distorted synthetic designs.

The strange old man leans in toward the boy's ear and whisper's the words "I want to kill you like they do in the movies" as the boy walks toward him in dialect confrontation.