

Experimental film – Film movements

Film movements

‘A film movement is constituted by a distinctive body of films, each directed by an auteur. It is often further constituted by a related body of critical or theoretical writing. A film movement will be of significance in film history because of thematic and formal/stylistic innovations which characterise the films and which are, most often, a response to wider political, social or cultural changes at a particular time and in a particular place.’

– Patrick Phillips

Film movements are a new and original style of filmmaking. The films within a movement form a body of films which may have a set of shared characteristics. A film movement emerges at a particular moment in time.

Film movements often develop within a particular country or region. However, as movements are often limited to a certain time period, they might not be reflective of an overall national cinema.

Some film movements developed as a reaction against the typical style of national films.

Film movements have a high status in film studies. They contribute to the artistic and academic status of film. Film movements have the status of art and directors the status of artists/auteurs.

Film movement: American postmodernism

The postmodernist movement started in the second half of the 20th century as a reaction to the prevalence of modernist ideals (an obsession with reason and homogenous ideas about human nature). Some of its elements are intertextuality, style over substance, homage, irony, self-reference and distortions of time.

Indiewood: This was the trend towards independent production companies making mid-budget films that combine indie and mainstream cinema, appealing to a cine-literate audience who also want to be entertained. *Memento* is an indie film starring Guy Pierce, with a glossy Hollywood feel created by high key lighting in the colour sections and a noir aesthetic in the black and white narrative.

Questioning the idea of objective reality: This was the trend towards psychological texts that reject the idea of objective reality and instead be concerned about subjective interpretations. This led to complex narratives that presented a challenge to the viewer and suggest that narratives are not trustworthy, and that protagonists are unreliable.

Memento (Nolan, 2000)

Nolan: A postmodernist auteur, his films are concerned with the nebulous idea of objective truth, and he experiments with chronology to expose the unstable nature of reality. Typical of intertextual postmodern films, *Memento* pays homage to **Film Noir**: a likeable protagonist struggling to understand a dangerous world with ideas of betrayal and uncertainty, particularly of a sexually attractive woman, the femme fatale Natalie.

Narrative: The film has a non-linear narrative, and a typical postmodernist approach is used, rejecting straightforward character types, which represent a chaotic and fragmented society. The narrative is very complex, and the viewer is asked to make connections between the two narratives, playing with expectations of the purpose of black and white and flashbacks, linking to themes of memory, delusion, death and the nature of time. This reflects the tendency for postmodern films to reward active spectatorship – the pleasure comes from combining the plot in the order of a story.

Intertextual references: The film is a neo-noir psychological thriller, which pays homage to the tradition of amnesia films in Hollywood.

Aesthetics: The film is set in a noirish hyperreal Los Angeles with no specific time setting. The locations are all temporary places and reflect a postmodern identity in crisis.