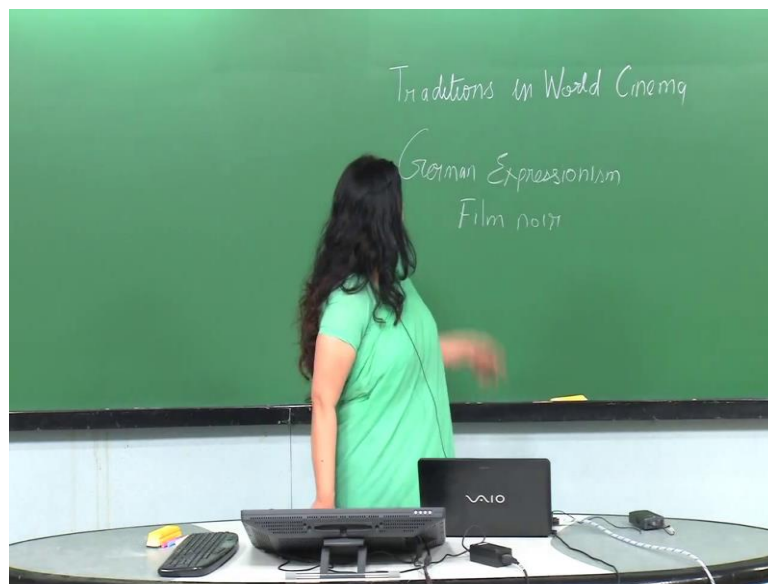


**Film Appreciation**  
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**Lecture - 06**  
**Traditions in World Cinema German Expressionism**

Good morning and welcome again.

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So, today's class is about traditions in world cinema. We are basically going to talk about German expressionism and film noir. And, during the course of this module, we will be discussing other movements – film movements across the world such as Italian neorealism, French New Wave, British New Wave and Iranian and Latin American cinema along with Indian parallel cinema movement. So, let us begin with expressionism and particularly German expressionism in cinema. Now, expressionism had been dominant feature of German arts since 1910 including theater, painting and music. Because of its rejection of realistic modes of representation and its pre-occupation with sexuality and emotional uncertainty, expressionism can be termed as a modernist movement.

One of the key names associated with expressionism was Max Reinhardt, who lived between 1873 to 1943. And, he was an Austrian theater film director, who rejected the realistic stage and search for new, expressive and emphatic of visual, scenic and musical

representation, which led him directly to experimentation with ways of mixing the arts a key element Reinhardt's work was the use of expressionistic devices. After Germany's defeat in the first world war that was between 1914 and 18, the artistic form captured the mood of the generation. Germany had lost land, people and also its pride in the treaty of Versille. So, this set back to the collective confidence gave way to general feeling of melancholy, paranoia and morbidity. Theater and other art forms became a vehicle to explore newer possibilities of expression of these feelings.

One of the earliest exponents of expressionism in cinema was Robert Wiene, who made a memorable seminal film called *The Cabinet of doctor Caligari* in 1919. So, the impact of expressionism was realized in cinematic art. *Caligari* is considered as one of the foremost expression of this aesthetics. It is a narrative of a mad doctor, who uses a sleep walker somnambulist to commit crimes for him. Wiene presents his actors in exaggerated make-up and places them in distorted sets and angular architecture. The film embodies all the stylistic features of expressionism such as chiaroscuro, that is, interplay of lights and shadows, oblique angles, spatial distortions. The feeling that danger lurks in the corner and city is a threatening site with morally ambiguous characters. It was also blamed for brain washing the Germans resulting in rise of Nazism. *Caligari* came to be so strongly associated with expressionism that their style became popularly known as caligorism.

Other land mark expressionistic films of this period are *Nosferatu*, *The Last Laugh* and *Metropolis* as well as classics, such as Paul Wegener's *Der Golem*, Fritz Lang's *doctor Mabuse*, *The Gambler*, Paul Leni's *Waxworks*, and Henrik Galeen's *The Student of Prague*. F. W. Murnau's *Faust* was also an important film released in 1926. Paul Leni's *Waxworks* was a portmanteau that is the story of – three parallel stories or it is almost like our what we today called the anthology cinema. So, it was a portmanteau about three historical figures all conceived in a writer's imagination. The architecture in *Waxworks* focuses on the Baghdad of the Arabian nights and the Moscow of Ivan the Terrible. The film describes an interior world as events occur within a wax museum within the palace of the Caliph of Baghdad or the small apartment of Assad the Baker and within the Dungeons of Kremlin or a wedding hall. So, all these are spaces that these morally ambiguous characters populate or inhabit. Characters are constantly bound by their surroundings and their bondages replicated throughout the film. For example, you have the use of low ceilings oblique lenses, constant shadows creating a sense that, the world is closing in on these characters and make their unnatural postures seem appropriate.

And, overall there is a clear sense of resemblance to the style of *Dr. Caligari*. So, the idea is that, the expressionist movement is a difficult phenomenon and it is hard to mark it with any ideological concern. Its subjects range from the fantastic to the naturalistic; it opens the way for an alternative non-realistic approach to film narrative along with a few, along with a new stylized addition to film ((Refer Time: 05:56)).

The major reason for the end of expressionism was the end of silent films because the invention of sound paved way for naturalism and realism. The rise of Nazism in Germany in 1933 led many talented film makers to flee the country and work in Hollywood. Directors such as Fritz Lang, Karl Freund and Billy Wilder – they took expressionism to America. The result of this transcontinental exodus was the hybrid of German expressionism, French poetic realism and American pulp. And, it all gave birth to a distinct American feature such as film noir. The expressionist style of film noir creates an alienating feeling along with realistic depiction. It distorts perspective, emphasizes gestures and articulates a language for the subconscious. The directors living in self-exile in Hollywood, used expressionism to express their present through the past. The brutality against Jews magnified the sense of a living nightmare for those who participated in the business of the escapist world of Hollywood.

For example, we had someone like F. W. Murnau, who lived between 1888 and 1931. He was considered a master expressionist along with Fritz Lang and G. W. Pabst. His films are full of dread and suggest a world between reality and fantasy. The themes of repression and sexuality recur which echo something Murnau's – something of Murnau's personal life since he was a closet homosexual during the period of Germany's homophobic laws. His films are known for creating a sense of an alternative universe. For example, one of the best horror films *Nosferatu, A symphony of Terror* released in 1922 is a classic example of German expressionism with Max Schreck playing Count Orlok, a Dracula-like character. Fritz Lang – the great Fritz Lang, who lived between 1890 and 1976. His films are characterized again by feelings of psychological terror, paranoia, morbidity and a sense of dread. He was born in Austria, where he made films such as *Dr. Mabuse*, *Destiny*, *Metropolis* and *M*; *M* is a story about a child murderer and it has several visually stunning images including one of the earliest scenes where the killer has played by Peter Lorre, his shadow looms large over a little girl. As the film comes to an end, image of the haunted and hunted criminal stays with us. Trapped by his sense of guilt and claustrophobia, the murderer leads us into a world of dread and urban

anxiety, where any lapse leads to an inevitable downfall. Though he is aware of his terrible crimes, we are made to see his point of view that he cannot prevent himself from committing those crime. So, a psychological study of morbidity and ((Refer Time: 09:13))

Fritz Lang's another great film is *Metropolis*, 1927, which is recognized as the first science-fiction film. And, it was one of the most expensive films of its times. The fairy tale plot focuses on Freder Frederson, the spoilt son of a rich father, who is also called the master of *Metropolis*. Freder learns the oppressive living condition of the working class and comes to understand them through a saintly young girl Maria, who also mediates in cases of disputes between the industrialist and the workers. In order to break this alliance, the master gets Maria kidnapped and collaborates with the mad scientist and creates a female robot. This evil double of Maria is unleashed on the city, where this robot tricks of *Femme Fatale* dances in a club and instigates a riot in the streets. Freder and the real Maria come together at the end and save the city from destruction initiated by the robot tricks. One last thing image in the film is that of the Tower of Babel as Maria addresses the workers. *Metropolis* is credited for blending imageries of religion with that of a science-fiction, which has been referred to in many later works as for example, a futuristic robot, a steel-handed mad scientist, burning at stake, workers walking into the jaw of a machine. All these are lasting images, which have been replicative in cinema down the period – down the ages.

Now, coming to the consequence of German expressionism was film noir. The literal meaning of film noir is a dark film; that term was coined by French film critic by particularly critic called Neno Franc in 1946 to refer to a particular type of American cinema. Film noir emerge from the collision of German expressionism, horror films and poetic realism. It parallels the emergence of the city as the character noir. Films were great influences on the French New Wave cinema and later on influences the new Hollywood films as well. So, we have already talked about Fritz Lang's and one of the first noir in Hollywood starring Peter Lorre. We also know that, Lang was of German expressionism. So, Lang has directed a series of anti-Nazi films in Hollywood particularly *Man Hunt*, *Hangmen Also Die* and *Ministry of Fear*. He was black listed in Hollywood because of supposed communist collaboration. His greatest noir in Hollywood include *The Big Heat*, *The Blue Gardenia* and *Human Desire*. Film noir evolved in the 1940s and it became prominent in the post-war era and lasted in a classic

golden age period until about 1960.

Classic film noir developed during – after the Second World War. It took advantage of the post-war ambience of anxiety, pessimism and suspicion, and possibly reflecting, male fears of female liberation and independence during the war years. The noir was characterized by a down-beat atmosphere and graphic violence. And, carry post-war American pessimism to the point of nihilism by assuming the absolute corruption of society. Now, there is also a literary side of noir and you would be surprised to know how many film noir were actually based on American pulp fiction. So, some of the major novelist of a crime and pulp fiction in America were Dashiell Hammett, who created the characters and speed, which was used in *The Maltese Falcon* starring Humphrey Bogart. Raymond Chandler – he created the character of the Philip Marlowe in *The Big Sleep*, *The Lady in the Lake*. Then, James Cain, who wrote *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Great film was adapted starring John Garfield and Lana Turner; and, later on, Jack Nicholson also.

James Cain also contributed to *Double Indemnity* and where Raymond Chandler also co-wrote the screen play with Billy Wilder. And, Cornell Woolrich who wrote *The Bride Wore Black*, a film was adapted into a film by The French New Wave Master Francois Truffaut. With Hammett, film noir spreads itself all over the family of crime films arguably. Film noir begins to come into focus in 1941 with the adaptation of Hammett's novel *The Maltese Falcon* directed by John Huston and Humphrey Bogart here embodies Sam Spade and the type of a so-called Hardboiled Detective hero. Raymond Chandler also wrote in *The Simple Art of Murder*. And famously, he writes; but, down those mean streets, a man must go who is not mean, who is neither tarnish nor afraid. So, that became typical description of a prototype noir hero, who goes down the mean streets. And, Martin Scorsese took the title of one of his earlier films from this *Mean Streets*.

Chandler also gives us the seedy, corrupt dark-city and a wisecracking hero. So, those are the contributions of the pulp writers. It is worth considering the Chandler's screenplays, such as *Double Indemnity*, *The Blue Dahlia*, and *Strangers on a Train* are much more central to the notion of film noir than the films based on his novels. So, noir is however, more style than a genre. Some of their stylistic features include interplay of shadow and light as we call it *chiaroscuro*, stylist narratives; sometimes use of a voice-over narration, exploring the psychology of the male protagonist, presence of a *femme fatale* and general attitude of pessimism, depression and anxiety. Film noir thus can broadly be

defined by a subject, a locale and a character. Its subject is crime; almost always a murder, but sometimes a theft also. Its locale is contemporary world usually a city at night. The character is a fallible or a tarnished man and sometimes woman. From this situation and investigation, almost always ensues which further involve the protagonist as it unravels the web of misadventures. And, whether it leads to punishment and do more redemption is not as important to the genre as there being an investigation. So, the process is more important; the journey is more important than the conclusion such then are the common components that constitute the genre: a crime, fraud protagonist, a femme fatale, contemporary settings and an investigation. It is all one of the characteristics of genre of film noir.

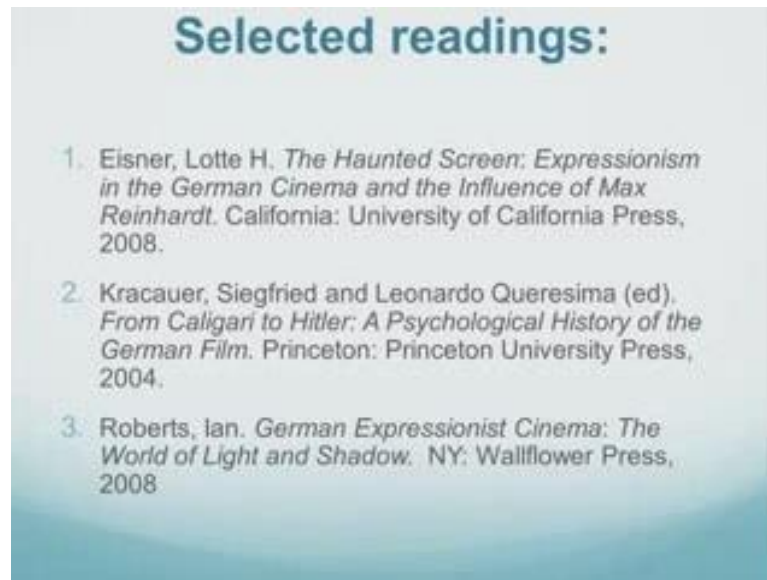
It also the haunted past of that protagonist when noir protagonists are always escaping some past burden, or a traumatic incident. Noir protagonists are often individuals who are haunted by the past and carry the burden of the past. For example, in Robert Siodmak's classic movie, *The Killers*, which is based on the short story by Ernest Hemingway, the main character Swede as played by Burt Lancaster waits resignedly for his end at the hands of two killers knowing that his past has finally caught up with him. In *The Fallen Sparrow*, John Garfield delivers a poignant performances of Spanish Civil War veteran who cannot escape the memory of his period of incarceration and torture at the hands of Franco's agents.

And then, in the Raymond Chandler's screenplay for the movie, *The Blue Dahlia*, it sees dedicated friends and decorated war veteran. Buzz has played by William Bendix experiencing blackouts and fits of murderous rage that make him the chief murder suspect. Even his tenderness towards his buddies cannot hide the violence, which is ready to erupt at any moment. In Fritz Lang's *The Big Heat*, Detective Dave Bannion has played by Glenn Ford. He goes on a personal vendetta against a gang of mobsters led by the great Lee Marvin, after the death of his wife in a car bombing. Like all traditional noir endings, even though the hero returns to the arms of the legitimate police force at the end of the movie, this is no way or in no way mitigates the violence he commits as well as instigates against those he believes guilty. Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly*, which was made in 1954 is based on Mickey Spillane's pulp thriller and is an apocalyptic tale of paranoia, revenge and betrayal. The film's sensational tag line was – blood-red kisses, white-hot thrills. So, these are some of the great film noir. And, all are the results of a German expressionism.

Another feature of film noir is Hideout with where the protagonist seek concealment in dimly-lit room and dark alleys. The bottom line remains, one cannot escape one's past no matter how much ones tries. Life is a fatalistic nightmare, there is no escape or exit and the past always catches up with you. Film experts mention the four archetype characters of the noir as the truth seeker, the detective, officer of the law, hard-boiled detective, that is, the hunted, an outsider could be the hero, corrupt cop, and the femme fatale. Seductive, mysterious, powerful, always in control; and, literally, it means the killer woman.

A great film maker of this style was Jacques Tourneur. And, Jacques Tourneur arrived in Hollywood in 1914 from Paris. He began his directing carrier in the French film industry in 1931 and then returned to Hollywood in 1935 on his own and worked as a second unit director at MGM film studio. He started making films from 1939 onwards. Later on he left MGM to join RKO studio, where he directed horror classics such as I walked with a Zombie and Cat People, which established his credentials as an experimental director of low budget films.

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So, these are some of the great films and great film makers of the film ((Refer Slide Time: 21:10)) And, I would like to draw your attention to the bibliography. So, we have Lotte H. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the influence of Max Reinhardt*. Siegfried Kracauer and Leonardo Queresima from *Caligari to Hitler as Psychological History of the German Film*; and, Ian Roberts, *German Expressionist Cinema: The World of Light and Shadow*.

So, thank you very much.

We will be meeting soon and discuss our other great cinematic moments.