

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.

Post-war experimentation

This period was dominated by feelings of dissatisfaction and disillusion. Many felt anger towards the older generation who, after causing two world wars, still thought that they knew better and that young people should do as they are told.

From the Italian New Realist post-WW2 movement came the idea that the cinematic experience doesn't have to be about the upper classes and that it doesn't need a star system or to be shot in a studio. The everyday lives of working-class people are in fact just as cinematic and considerably more interesting and refreshing than the formulaic Hollywood-like melodramas that seemed to dominate Western European cinema or the social realist state-sponsored ones from the other side of the Iron Curtain.

The 1960s' European Avant-Garde movements, known as the cinematic new waves of Europe, were an anti-establishment answer to the tired, derivative cinema still in production during the 40s and 50s. Their boundless experimentation went on to transform cinema worldwide.

Film movement: the French New Wave (*la Nouvelle Vague*)

This was the most influential post-WW2 avant-garde film movement; characteristically, it was a break from classic narrative and filmmaking techniques. Jump-cuts, on location shooting, improvised acting, filming chronologically and loose narratives are some of its many features.

Cleo from 5 to 7 (Varda, 1962)

In 1955, director **Agnes Varda** made what is now considered the French New Wave's first feature, *La Pointe Courte*. Its documentary-style realism, mix of professional and amateur actors and the way the city of Paris is presented as almost a character would become trademarks of her auteur style. Her follow-up, *Cleo from 5 to 7*, experimented with the documentary/fiction boundaries by portraying the story in almost real time.

Varda was one of the **Left Bank** filmmakers. This critical term refers to Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda and Jacques Demy, whose films were more political and feminist than those by other French New Wave directors. They were heavily influenced by documentary.

Cleo from 5 to 7 combines Left Bank concerns and French New Wave. It shows Varda's trademark concern with the construction of the female identity and the influence that her work as a photographer and documentary filmmaker bring to her films. Its **narrative** is experimental, with no ellipses, happening more or less in real time.