

# Mise en scene in nosferatu



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F. W. Murnau's "Nosferatu" is a traditional visual tale of Bram Stoker's "Dracula". The quiet film is filled with obsession and lust, surrealism as well as the prosaic style of good versus wicked. The movie states the tale of Hutter, a property representative hungry for money, and his journey to vampire Count Orlok's mansion, as well as the weaves found heavily within the scenes. Nosferatu (Count Orlok's alter ego) falls for Hutter's spouse and moves in to the house next door to the couple, where a series of occasions happen that would eventually lead to the fanged beast's demise.

Mise en scene is a critical component throughout the film, specifically for expressionist director Murnau, whose natural take on frightening the audience with the usage of lighting, camera angles and framing supersedes that of directors who highlight the huge props or costumes. The director's extreme usage of shadows is a tool utilized in order to make the events happening throughout the film become more realistic, as well as represents the evil situated in the character of Nosferatu.

Cast shadows can be seen throughout the movie and all is because of the lighting Murnau chose to offer.

For example, in among the last scenes of the motion picture, we see Ellen lying in bed with Nosferatu's shadow casting above her. This take on camera angle and lighting is particularly important as it sums up among the main themes, desire. Ellen does not battle under the supremacy of the Count, nor does she fear for her life, rather on the contrary she is using herself to him and she likes it. This sensual analysis can be splintered to the method the

director played with the setting. Ellen's body is plainly brighter than her surroundings, which also reinforces the eroticism of her motions.

Also, Nosferatu's shadow is bigger than it is in any other scene, which allows the audience to feel that at that moment evil is the strongest, and the most powerful. Setting is a very crucial and profound constituent in the cinema, even more important than actors at times. Nature plays the role of symbolizing all that we cannot see through the character's actions and through the plots words and scripting. Here, nature expresses the hardships and obstacles that reflect upon the emotions of Hutter, Ellen and Nosferatu. During Hutter's first journey, it is calm and beautiful. However, during his travel back home, it becomes chaotic and disturbing.

The instances when the nature prevents Hutter from moving further arguably begin to show the paranormal side nature is supporting, for example, the river is filled with rocks, which makes it difficult for him to pass; the trees seem very chaotic, the wind is always coming towards him. The scene where Ellen is by the seashore, the sea seems wild and angry. The viewer also knows that it will bring Nosferatu to her too. The environment is helpful only when Nosferatu is around. The sea always seems calm while he is sailing the ship. Other scenes, where elements of nature such as creatures and plants are shown as ghosts or blood-suckers expose the alliance between the vampire and the elements of the Earth.

This shows not only the power Nosferatu harbors within him, but that nature is well and truly an antagonist in this depiction of a vampire's tale. Probably one of the biggest and most important quotes in the movie has been

dropped near the beginning, as Hutter runs to his workplace and is stopped by the professor exclaiming “ Wait, young man. You can’t escape your destiny by running away...” This line allowed the audience to begin thinking and to start connecting the limited amount of dots that have been given to us so early in the movie. We know that Nosferatu exists, and that something bad is going to happen to the protagonist, or the character the audience most identifies with.

Such a saying would infer that no matter what Hutter did, destiny has already scripted his actions and what is yet to come. The mis en scene parallels the saying in a very subtle way as during the scenes in which Hutter is on his journey to the count, he always seems to be entering the picture, rather than the camera following him. This shows that no matter where he went, it was always predestined for him. Another tell was the clock that kept appearing, not only to give the viewer an idea of the setting but also to show that time is running out and destiny is knocking at the door. Alternatively, a redundant word that was used throughout the film was “ Hurry!” which gave away two aspects in the film.

The first that no matter how much you hurry, destiny will always be on the corner, and second it pinpoints at Hutter’s hyper actions and the way he is always in a rush. This can also be boiled down to the editing that slightly speeded up the movie in order to give an eerie vibe to the already paranormal state of the world the characters live in. The film’s camera angles also capture the audiences’ attention without them even knowing. Throughout the movie, Murnau’s choice of camera angles had not only

connected the viewer with the characters, but also connected the characters to one another.

In many of the scenes where Hutter encounters the great Nosferatu, the camera angle shows the events occurring in the scene from the protagonist's point of view, that way the audiences become one with the character, allowing them to see exactly as he does, thus realistically flowing the fear through them and connecting them with him. In other acts, Ellen would be at the seashore awaiting her beloved (but who?) and she would be pointing to the horizon, at the very same moment camera cuts to the ship Nosferatu is sailing and we can see the bow of the ship is pointing "towards" Ellen.

This technique found in movies sanctions the spectators to see the small influences the characters have on each other, no matter where they may be.

The movie's total ambiance and mis en scene are vastly superior to that of the plot and acting, to such a level as to allow the cinema world to dissect the film piece by and study from the inspiring and largely accredited director Murnau, whose expressionist views and interpretations made the classic "A Symphony of Horrors" is today. With mis en scene and camera angles, as well as lighting and setting, Murnau combined so delicately as to achieve this work of art that shall be studied for years to come.