

Metropolis by Fritz Lang

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Metropolis is a 1927 science fiction written and directed by Fritz Lang. It follows the general point of view of Freder, a young German man who is son of the ruler of a large futuristic city. Freder's father, Fredersen, operates in a building called the New Tower of Babel, a large tower with 5 points moving away from the center in a star shaped pattern. This building is inspired by the painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder in 1563 which was inspired by the story told in the Book of Genesis in the bible of the same name. Maria, Freder's love interest mentions in the movie "Between the mind that plans and the hands that build there must be a mediator". I believe this refers to the story of the Tower of Babel being constructed by the workers, who were angered of their poor treatment.

The buildings that the working class live in are tall, repetitive, grey skyscrapers and apartments, reminiscent of Russia's cheap apartment complexes during WWII. These predictable, bland buildings represent the repetitive and machine-like labor that every working man has to endure in this city. This is only slightly exaggerated as the working class in Germany and all other nations involved in the war dedicated the majority of their working class to factory labor machining war planes, tanks, arms, and the like. In the movie as the workers first walk into the electric power plant/factory where much of the story takes place, all the men are seen hanging their heads and walking in a perfect formation in and out of the factory, down several elevators, and finally into a giant machine room. This room has workers moving non stop to keep what I can assume is the power running throughout the city. During the beginning of the movie, one of the head workers has trouble maintaining the system and the entire plant overheats, then killing many workers. This room looks sort of like the front of a giant truck, or perhaps the front

of a steam locomotive. The latter is further supported by the fact that steam is constantly billowing from several parts of the large structure. Right after the factory finishes overheating, the front of the infernal contraption turns into a large, disturbing, mechanical face that the new workers walk into. This is clear symbolism for the expendability of the lower class workers. Like in actual wars at the time, the value of every unique individual is ignored and masses of people are looked at in terms of their absolute possible expenditure.

The workers seem to live underground or at least closer to the ground than the higher ups. For example, the head of the city, Fredersen, lives at the top of the tallest tower in the city. This building has tall doors and a long staircase to his office at the towers top, he's quite well off. While the workers on the other hand live in small confined quarters in large apartments right on the ground with unpaved roads. The worker's city has low ceilings and poor lighting, bringing about a dim and depressing atmosphere to anyone who is not too young to not be influenced completely by such environments. Near the workers city lives Rotwang, the scientist/machinist who fashions a robotic replica of Maria. He lives in a traditional looking cottage with a steep pitched roof.

Later in the movie is a fight scene on top of a steep gothic looking cathedral with many gargoyles lining the top about 4 meters apart each. Because the workers were originally listening to good Maria's preaching in a hidden underground christian church. I can assume that the gothic cathedral later in the movie is likely somewhere farther from the worker's city. Some of the brief shots of the upper/middle class city immediately reminded me of architect Michael Graves. Namely his works such as the Portland Public Service Building and the Humana Building in Louisville, KY. The worker's city has some elements from this upper class architecture but in a much more streamlined fashion.

The different locations in this city give you the typical feelings you would expect from each location. Fredersen's office gives a feeling of power to Fredersen of course though makes others, including Josephat, Fredersen's second son, fearful and feeling inferior. Other people visiting the higher city seem calm and nonchalant when visiting the gardens at the beginning. Above a certain altitude it seems that there isn't much movement in the city and that everything is quiet. Most of the scenes that take place lower in the city are always busy with people walking to work en masse, rioting (during later parts of the movie), or chasing someone (or something, [referring to robo-Maria]).

The message I get from this movie is that people work, and perhaps even behave, accordingly to their surroundings. If you lived in a slum or some other kind of low class environment, you probably wouldn't feel too compelled to do your best. After all, once you are in poverty you're probably thinking "what's the point? Im stuck here and I'll be here forever so why should I even try." As mentioned before during the after-movie, in class discussion; when the poorer people revolt, they destroy their own buildings, contrary to what you would think made any sense at all. Mob mentality is very primitive and will continue even if the target is ever destroyed, as we saw with the angry workers after they destroyed their factory/power plant, they still had energy afterward to find and chase robo-Maria. Rotwang, the Inventor is surrounded by his machines so he can work up new ideas and inventions whenever he wants. He lives separate from everyone else with little distractions. Fredersen works high up secluded from the rest of the city, giving orders and watching his beloved city. Though I wonder If he really loves his city. He was willing to get rid of the entire working class by commissioning robo-Maria by Rotwang. Maybe he was simply bored and wanted to see some action. After all, society is like a stew, it needs to be stirred up once and a while. Atmosphere can change really everything.