As a noir film, *The Third Man* employs many of the tactics that have been long-since codified as hallmarks of the genre, including an alienated main character with an American man acting like a fish out of water in post-war urban Vienna, a story that focuses on overcoming the transgressions of Holly Martins’ friend Harry Lime, and the unraveling of a complex plot that centers around suspicions on Lime’s supposed death before the start of the film. The way that the director, Carol Reed, ties these three things all together forms a movie that exemplifies a lot of the expectations of the noir genre in a wonderful way, even if some critics may bemoan the plot as not making the most sense in spots.

One of the best ways that the movie goes about showcasing the alienation that Holly Martins feels is through a camera technique known as the Dutch Angle or Dutch Tilt, in which the camera is slightly off-skew from the ground, framing the entire world as tilted. It is one of the most common camera techniques in the film, actually, combined with frequent closeups during dialogue scenes, that serves to not only add onto the fact that the urban setting of Vienna is as unnerving as it may be scheming – the closeups almost serve as letting us see through Holly Martins’ own investigative eyes, scrutinizing details to try to uncover the plot.

In fact, the main plot of trying to find out the truth of Lime’s supposed racketeering is just as much a way to look at Martins’ own attempt to overcome his disbelief and grief as it is a look at the complex plotting that occurs within the film. Though the usage of closeups and Dutch Angles allow for us to see things as though we were Martins and feel Martins’ struggle to communicate and, really, even just exist in Vienna, the infrequent usage of heavy shadows – a hallmark of noir films – is often used in key scenes, such as when Martins meets Dr. Winkel, finds out about the porter’s death, and other similar moments throughout the film – and even though these moments are the ones with the heaviest shadows within the film, there are many moments that seem to have a darker lighting that casts more shadows across the faces of characters, such as when the porter tells Martins about seeing the third man carrying Lime across the street.

These techniques, at the time, were revolutionary – they’re techniques that now, as viewers and as directors, we often take for granted. The techniques at the time are, of course, limited by the technology of the time, but that does not leave the cinematography found within *The Third Man* as anything less than exceptional.s