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GIF-Based Shot By Shot Analysis

Sunka Simon

Swarthmore College, ssimon1@swarthmore.edu

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FMST1: Introduction to Film and Media Studies
Paper 1: Shot by Shot Film Analysis

Essay on Wordpress (Moodle) with creation and embedding of Gifs
Equivalent of 12 pages – Double-Spaced, 1-Inch Margins

A sequence serves as the matrix of a film's narrative, style, and themes – its generic and medium-specific codes. It is made up of single shots (from one edit to another). It is your objective for this paper to show and analyze how these shots produce meaning through formal codes that establish specific patterns for a given sequence.

Part I: Equivalent of 6 pages

a) select **one** type of sequence

- *Two people talking in a car*
- *People at a table (in public or private)*
- *One character watching the other without his/her knowledge*

b) select **two** films (readily available from our McCabe reserves or the stacks) that each feature **a different cinematic approach to your chosen type of sequence** as a comparative basis for your analysis.

c) **from each film, choose one 2 minute sequence of the type you selected!**

d) describe the sequences briefly (indicating why you defined their frames and parameters where you did) and construct a shot by shot table/list (if there are 15 cuts, you will have 15 units in the list) for each film sequence.

e) identify at least **three cinematic codes** (see below) that are relevant to the work of the sequence. In your shot by shot table/list, specify where and how each code occurs. Compose one GIF for each sequence to help you trace the three codes across the shots (consult Bellour's "The Obvious and the Code" and *Looking at Movies*). Explain any notation/abbreviation of terms you use in your table.

Remember: A code, in information theory, is a "system of differences and correspondences which remain constant across a series of messages," hence the sender and receiver of the message share the code. More generally, a code can be understood as any systematized set of conventions, any set of prescriptions for the selection and combination of elements/units. For your sequence, codes may consist of lighting/color designations, blocking in the frame (who appears where in the frame, how often and when), speech (who says what when), camera movement (static or tracking), camera distance/depth of field (close-up, medium, long shot, deep/shallow focus), camera angle (low, eye-line, high), duration (short, long take – frequency of cuts), looking relations (who looks when at whom or doesn't), spatial arrangement (interior/exterior), any element of mise en scène: costume/make-up, open/closed frame etc.

Part II: Equivalent of 6 pages

Synthesize the results of your formal shot by shot analysis and your GIFs into an interpretation of the sequences. How do these formal codes construct meaning in each case? Indicate why you chose to analyze the sequences through these particular codes (how do they help to define the story, the themes, or visual design of the film), trace and interpret patterns that emerge from your analysis, and suggest how the sequences work to set up the films' narratives and why they produce similar/different meanings in your two examples. Consult the glossaries and our readings to integrate film terminology as precisely as you can at this point in the semester (e.g. cut, dissolve, fade, tracking, panning etc.)

Suggested Films

Note: If we already have them in digitized form, you will be able to skip that step, if not, you will need to use Handbreak (or another tool) to digitize your sequences from DVDs first.

Two people talking in a car:

Thelma and Louise – American Graffiti – Lola (Fassbinder) - Night on Earth – Taxi Driver – Say Anything – Pulp Fiction – Breathless (Godard) – On the Waterfront – The Big Lebowski – Rocky Horror Picture Show

People at a Table:

Avalon – Babette's Feast - Thor – When Harry met Sally – Silver Linings Playbook – Reservoir Dogs – Diner – American Beauty – Citizen Kane – Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country – Saturday Night Fever – The Godfather - Back to the Future – Peggy Sue got Married – Pulp Fiction

Watching Sequence:

The Piano – Pacific Rim - Wall-E – Rear Window – American Beauty – Psycho – Peeping Tom