

English 197: Writing Link with Comp. Lit. 270

Compiled *Rear Window* Scene Discussions

Cinema Studies Lecture Arguments

- The main story is the relationship story between the two main characters in Jefferies' apartment rather than the murder mystery.
- Lisa represents the "mise-en-scene" in the film, turning on the lights, becoming the center of attention in the apartment with her over-the-top costuming.
- Each of the windows of the other apartments displays a different type of film or story that is somehow related to the story in Jefferies' apartment. The main character is a photographer, and everything he sees is "framed" by windows.
- Everything is shown from the inside, our perspective is highly restricted, the lens is masked occasionally, and the viewer is clued into the setting of the entire film in the very opening take. The film features extended use of point of view shots.

Opening Scene

How do the arguments made in the cinema studies lecture apply to your clip?

- Each apartment is its own setting with its own story and different characters. The opening provides an introduction to all the secondary characters and setting before introducing the main character. Opening blinds to reveal windows mimics the curtain opening in a theater.
- It was also significant that the other characters were shown before our protagonist because it shows how his entire character is centered around others. His focus on others is revealed in his intense involvement with the other characters and his occupation: a photographer.
- Professor Bean noted that the opening of the scene pans around the setting. Before we are introduced to Jefferies, the point of view is not clarified. It's only revealed at the end when the camera focuses on Jefferies' apartment. We are introduced to Jefferies before we take on his point of view. Professor Bean compared this point of view to the horror film, *Halloween*, observing that the audience was seeing through the child's point of view before he was introduced. As an audience viewing this type of opening we are more alert, and the film is more suspenseful.
- The very first shot the viewer sees is set up from the inside of the apartment and is also an extended use of point of view. Also, the viewer is clued into the background of the movie, including L.B. Jefferies' occupation and current condition, in the very first scene. He is trapped and he isn't used to it.

What is distinct about the mise-en-scene and cinematography of your selected scene? How do these elements work to develop characters and the relationships between them, organize plot, convey themes or communicate implicit meanings?

- Lots of animals appear in the neighborhood (black cat, caged bird, etc.) and lead the camera (and viewer's eye) around the setting.
- The camera's panning across Jefferies' apartment tells us about his profession and interests. The writing on his cast reflects his cynicism. Panning and mise-en-scene draw a connection between his broken leg, the broken camera, and pictures of dangerous shots. Negative and positive of a fashion photo contradict his later claim that he doesn't do fashion work.
- Each apartment outside the window is different. Panning the neighborhood twice gives us deeper insight into the lives of the neighbors.
- Two characters that we see most in the beginning are the musician and Miss Torso, who directly reflect Jefferies and Lisa.
- Cause and effect: Heat is a cause for why everyone's window is open, which leads to all the events that follow. The opening emphasizes the quality of life in the city (everyone close together leads to knowing what's going on in other people's lives).
- The camera pans the neighborhood from his point of view while Jefferies is asleep and facing away from window (this is surprising because we rarely know anything he doesn't know, with exception of one moment when he's asleep).
- When we are finally introduced to Jefferies he is sweating and uncomfortable. We are introduced to his lifestyle (and his character) by the zooming in on the artifacts in his room. The panning cinematography in combination with the extended, continuous take that looks into all the character's rooms gives us a sense of the audience peeking into the lives of these characters. The extended take sets the scene and uses that shot to connect the characters and plots together. We are implied the outsider looking in; this creates a voyeuristic theme.
- The viewer is shown in this first clip, Jefferies' cast, which is a major part of the story, as it immobilizes him throughout the film. Also, the use of the extended point of view, and extremely long take is a mirror of the rest of the film, especially the fact that almost the entire movie is shot from and takes place in the apartment. This scene conveys a theme of helplessness on Jefferies' part.
- This particular cinematography also organizes the plot in the way that we are shown a certain action from the other apartment building, and then we are shown Jefferies, a pattern that is developed over the entire film.

Lisa and Jefferies' Dinner Scene

How do the arguments made in the cinema studies lecture apply to your clip?

- In the dinner scene, there are parallels drawn between what is happening in Jefferies' apartment and in the other windows. Each of the windows show a different type of romantic relationship, which makes Jefferies think about the future of his own relationship with Lisa.
- The actions in the opposite windows reflect Lisa and Jefferies' relationship. For example, Lisa says that she can relate to Miss Lonelyhearts; she also notes she has to juggle men at her house like Miss Torso. The scene sets up the Thorwalds and their situation.
- The lobster and fancy dinner represents how Lisa wants to live, in a more glamorous and rich lifestyle, but Jefferies feels differently, opposing the "perfect" dinner he sees as something he does not want.
- The scene shows how Jefferies and Lisa feel about marriage. Lisa wants to be married to Jefferies, and the scene shows the troubled Thorwald marriage in the opposite apartment. However, there is the newlywed couple who has the shade drawn. Jefferies looks at this and makes a disappointed face.

What is distinct about the mise-en-scene and cinematography of your selected scene? How does these elements work to develop characters and the relationships between them, organize plot, convey themes or communicate implicit meanings?

- Jefferies is always interested in what is going on outside the window. Yet inside the window, there is an equal amount of drama. Lisa's always in the background and Jefferies is always looking out the window. Their positioning signifies how he feels about her and how he takes for granted what he has with Lisa.
- There is a cut where Miss Lonelyhearts raises her glass and the scene cuts to Jefferies and he smiles and raises his glass as well. The smile shows his contentment with being alone. On the other hand, she is obviously sad about her situation, which parallels how Lisa feels.
- The windows frame stories that could be a parallel to Lisa's feelings. Lisa feels as Miss Lonelyhearts does but appears how the ballet dancer looks; it is a case of appearance versus reality.
- The clip of Miss Lonelyhearts shows her isolated by the excess space and emptiness, but the clip of the ballet dancer shows a smaller area with more activity, including people walking in the alley below. Mise-en-scene represents two opposing environments and the feelings connected with both.
- Placement of certain objects, such as candles and windows, create frames within frames. Miss Lonelyhearts is framed by both candles and a window at dinner. The candles in the main apartment separate Lisa from the rest of the room. This conveys how she feels separated from Jefferies. The mise-en-scene in this scene is portraying Lisa's feelings of rejection.
- The man playing the piano is framed by the window panes. The frames give a feeling of a jail cell and suggest that he is stuck inside in the life he lives. Jefferies relates to him because he also is stuck inside.

- The windows act as frames, as if Jefferies is watching many different shows or video screens. Each of the apartment windows that he watches are well lit, compared to the darkness outside, so that the characters' actions are visible. In the window of the Thorwald's apartment, the wife and her husband are in separate frames (they are separated by a wall). He must cross in to her frame to bring her dinner. This represents a sense of separation in this relationship that foreshadows what is to come.