

Section A: Global film (two-film study)

Pan's Labyrinth and House of Flying Daggers

1a) With close reference to the two films you have studied, explore how either performance or mise-en-scène create meaning [40]

One way that mise-en-scène creates meaning in del Toro's 'Pan's Labyrinth' is through the prop/metonym of Vidal's watch. Aesthetically, it can be interpreted metaphorically by the audience in several ways. Such as, during the opening of the movie, the extreme close up of his watch is the first introduction to him. This, paired with the diegetic dialogue of him commenting on the lateness of the girls, denotes the fact that he is leaderlike and punctual. However, there is a deeper meaning behind the watch too. It was gifted to him by his father, and his father had smashed it at the time of his death. Therefore, when Vidal takes out his watch before he dies at the end of the movie, it's representative of this metaphor of death, and the toxic masculinity ideas that it also represents, that were passed down to Vidal by his father, like by convincing him that "he needs to die like a man". This continuation of toxic masculinity is put to a stop when Mercedes tells Vidal that his son 'won't even know' his name, suggesting that his son will not have toxic attitudes passed on to him. This in turn also means that Vidal's fascist ideas won't be passed on to him, and is a way that the film says the children are the hope and the future after the Spanish Civil War (which the film is set shortly after), as the effects lasted long after it ended.

Mise-en-scène is also used to create meaning during the Paleman sequence. Such as, the similarities to the aesthetic qualities of churches. For example, the pillars and the horrific paintings around the room (not the content of them, but the style of artwork). These religious links continue with the fire being metaphorical for hell, the stigmata on the Paleman's hands linking him to Jesus, and the fact that Ofelia escapes by climbing upwards which is again suggestive of hell. The links between the Paleman and his room to Jesus and churches is significant, as it's the film expressing the message of the lack of help that the church gave during the Spanish Civil War, and so it has been associated with negative things. This is emphasised by the colour of the set and props, as the majority of them are red, and red connotes the idea of danger and violence.

Moreover, the horrific images in the room also link to world war 2. The images are based off of Goya's painting of Saturn eating his son, he does this because he's afraid of his son growing up and overpowering him. This relates to how during WW2, Nazis targeted Jewish children, as they believed they were the root of Judaism. This is reinforced with the pile of shoes (mise-en-scène), which although can be interpreted as the shoes of the incorrect princesses, is also symbolic of the piles of clothes in the concentration camps.

The mise-en-scène in this scene also further explores the bildungsroman element to the film, and the coming of age genre. Throughout the film, fallopian tube imagery is used to explore this genre, including in this scene, as the Paleman's arms form that shape in the book that Ofelia opens. This paired with the action of the scene emphasises Ofelia as a growing child,

who is growing up during a difficult time. This makes sense, as del Toro tends to explore how war affects children, like in the sister film to 'Pan's Labyrinth', 'The Devil's Backbone'. In this scene, the mise-en-scene of the sharp dagger that Ofelia acquires, which has its danger emphasised by the Foley "sharp knife" sound, is a way of representing Ofelia as a strong child and female, as she copes with the dangerous situation and having a dangerous object. The parallel action of her running from the Paleman also does this, as the tension built only makes her escape more impressive. It's also key that she chooses to run, not fight with a knife. This representation of children and females is that they are strong, capable, and don't turn to violence. Unlike what the fascists are represented like in this movie, like Vidal, who beats a man to death with a glass bottle. Interestingly, this isn't the only time in this scene that Ofelia is shown as opposite to Vidal. She picks the left lock, despite being told to pick the middle one, which is symbolic of her disobeying and picking left wing politics, in contrast to the firm right wing Vidal who always favours his right, as shown by his performance during the opening.

One way that the film 'House of Flying Daggers' uses mise-en-scene to create meaning is through the set of the Bordello in the opening of the movie. As seen through long shots, the Bordello is highly decorated, patterned and colourful, such as the colourful and patterned floor. Director Zhang frequently uses elaborate sets that can be described as Baroque, it's part of his auteurship as a filmmaker. His sets are usually detailed, colourful, rich and indulgent. The mise-en-scene of the Bordello isn't any different, but although it seems stylized it does come from a place of reality. This links in with the aesthetics, it seems luxurious and stylized and is part of Zhang's recognisable auteurship. There is also more meaning to the mise-en-scene of the Bordello, as it links in with the Tang Dynasty, which is sometimes referred to as a "golden age" of Chinese civilization during which all areas of culture and civilization flourished. Such as, literature and poetry (famous poets Li Bai and Du Fu are from the Tang period), painting, commerce, as well as science and innovation. Bordellos, like the one depicted in the film, of the time were places of beauty and artistic expression. The headmistresses and courtesans of Bordellos had power and were intelligent. This links in with the representation of women during the opening of the film. The way they collectively pick up and play their instruments contrasts the narrative repetition and way that the men pick up their weapons, this connotes the idea that men are the powerful ones and the women the entertainers. However, the women protect Mai when attacked, and the film later goes on to show the power of women. Such as, the long shot of the House of Flying Daggers, shown by the mise-en-scene of them all standing in a line, and all female, connoting the idea of strength and power associated with these women.

Mise-en-scene is also used later in the film to create meaning. Such as, during the middle sequence, the two main characters become trapped in a bamboo cage, which we see through a long shot, and close ups of their stuck hands. This connotes the idea of claustrophobia, and oppression, and could be a metaphorical way of critiquing the idea of regime. This isn't the only part of the film that is political. Such as, how the only part of the big political fight we see is the mise-en-scene of the police-like people surrounding the House of Flying Daggers, but the film focuses on the personal fight instead, suggesting people and love are what really matter. It's interesting that Zhang was able to create a film

that explored politics that wasn't censored by the state, it's possible part of the reason why is because he set the film in the past to discuss a current issue in disguise. It makes sense that he explored politics though, as part of the "5th generation". The 5th generation had been through the hardships of the Cultural Revolution and in turn made "exploratory films" that examined far unexplored problems in Chinese cinema. The fight of the end uses mise-en-scene to create meaning in many ways. Such as, the use of the blood flying across the scene, the brutal way that the two men both stab each other in the back, and how there is no wire work in unlike the rest of the film, which stuck to the Wuxia genre, meaning the men are seen firmly on the ground when they fight. All of these elements make the fight more real and brutal, emphasising the realness of people's emotions, as they are fighting for personal causes. The dagger prop is metaphorical for deceit, as the man uses it to ultimately kill Mai, by deceiving her, as she removes her dagger to stop him from killing the other man, meaning she bleeds to death. The close up of the knife shows that she died for no reason, as the knife remained in his hand, not flying towards the man. This links in with the theme of deceit, which the film explored throughout. Such as, how Mai's blindness was fake.

Section B: Documentary Film

Amy

2a) Apply one filmmaker's theory of documentary film you have studied to your chosen documentary. How far does this increase your understanding of the film? [20]

Applying Michael Moore's theory to the documentary 'Amy' increases my understanding of the film in several ways. Such as, the film is clearly biased towards Amy. For example, the film opens with a video of her young self singing a song sung by Marilyn Monroe. This footage would have been chosen from hours of footage, and probably used to connote the sense of tragedy to her death. Furthermore, she is frequently shown as a victim, like the use of the drone footage from her house to up in the air, symbolising how she was forced out of her home and to the airport without wanting to go. This is also an example of digital technology being used, which couldn't have been made using film. Moreover, the voice over used of Amy saying that if she could give it all up to just walk down the street again, she would, is also showing her as a victim of circumstance (in this case, the oppression and obsession of the media). Representing Amy as a victim is the morally right thing to do, but the bias in a documentary can be criticised. Such as, Longinotto's documentary theory and attitude is to be as realistic as possible, and let the audience decide what to think and feel, while in 'Amy' the audience are being told to feel specific ways. However, using Michael Moore's theory helps to understand this bias, as like he does in his films, he has created a bias film to counteract preconceived ideas about Amy, and therefore making it a level playing field. However, Moore wouldn't have done this on just one individual, rather a group of people or an idea, contrasting to the director of Amy. The film frequently represents Amy in a good way, like, how during her singing in the booth, there is an edited lens flare due to its positive connotations, to add positiveness to her incredible singing ability.

Interestingly, this idea can also be interpreted completely differently. The park scene can be seen as representing Amy in a bad way. The use of the Ken Burns effect (digital technology) that focuses on a specifically chosen paparazzi photo that's a long shot of her in promiscuous clothing, while her boyfriend has a voice over discussing her promiscuity is representing Amy in a judgmental way. The director has manipulated found footage and photographs to present Amy in a bad way. This contrasts to Michael Moore, who wouldn't formulate footage to go against an innocent person, and understanding his theory helped me to understand the bias stand that 'Amy' sometimes took against Amy. This also happened earlier in the film, when out of millions of photo options the one picked was one of Amy doing an inappropriate gesture, which editing then focused on. Moreover, the footage from the funeral can be seen as invasive, rather than a comment on the invasiveness of the paparazzi. The film also took specific footage to make others look bad also, like the man outside of the club, who during the video comes off badly through diegetic dialogue, and the director chose this footage to introduce us to him in a bad light, out of hundreds of other options.

Section C: Film movements - Silent cinema Strike

3b) Discuss how far your chosen film or films reflect cultural contexts associated with a particular film movement.

'Strike' largely reflects the political context regarding communism. It's a propaganda film, using Socialist Realism to portray its message. Exploring the ideology of communism starts right at the opening with the mise-en-scene of the quote from Lenin, which sets up the ideology and point of view of the film. This ideology continues to be made very clear. Such as, the use of the Kuleshov effect, first used by Soviet Kuleshov in the 1910s and 20s. For example, this editing technique is used in the opening when it cuts between the workers of the factory and the factory owner. These two images paired together, with the performance of the factory owner connoting power and greediness, suggests to the audience the unfair way that the workers are treated by the owner, further supporting the communist message. The message that the workers are being disadvantaged by those higher up continues throughout the film. Such as, during the ending. The film uses the collision principle to cut between the people being massacred and a cow being slaughtered, the editing compares the two, and suggests the idea that the people are being treated like animals. While the collision principle is a more expressive technique, a realist technique is also used during the ending to connote the cruelty of those in power (against those below), with the long duration shot of the killed child on the floor. This lingering shot is disturbing, and helps fuel the hatred for those who caused this death. Realism was an attitude to cinema that some Soviet directors liked, like Bazin, and others who leaned more towards expressionism.

The middle sequence is also key to the explored ideology of communism, and the persistent message of workers' rights. Such as, the close up of the man squashing the fruit, cut to the

workers running away from the men on horses, is metaphorical for how those up high are hurting the ones below. Moreover, the performance of one man wiping his shoe with the workers rights note is an obvious metaphor for his dangerous and cruel attitude towards the workers, again linking in with the fact that 'Strike' is a communist film. During this scene, the communist message of everyone needing to work as a whole to succeed is also again brought up and told to the audience. However, despite working together, at the end they are all killed, as shown through the disturbing mise-en-scene of them all laying on the ground. This could be to make the audience angry, in the hope that it will make them rise up and fight for their rights.

Section D: Film movements - Experimental film (1960-2000)

Fallen Angels

4a) Explore how far your chosen film or films are experimental in challenging conventional approaches to narrative [20]

One of the main ways that 'Fallen Angels' is experimental in challenging conventional approaches to narrative is its focus on character, and the characters intertwining lives, rather than a clear central plot. For example, the opening of the film uses narrative repetition of the man and woman both walking through the train station (both shown through dynamic editing), but at different times. Furthermore, they both enter the same house, but at different times. Shown by the close up of them both grabbing the same key. This intertwining, but missing one another, is a way of exploring the theme of loneliness and isolation that all of the characters feel. It's the focus on emotions, and therefore themes, that makes the narrative experimental, but also the work of the auteur Wong, as themes of loneliness and love are often explored in his films, like in the film 'Chungking Express', which 'Fallen Angels' was supposed to be a part of, but due to running time became its own movie. This focus on emotion can be seen in the close up, wide angle lens shot of the woman eating in a restaurant. The deep depth of field separates her from the people around her, making her seem isolated and lonely. The loneliness brings people together, as they desire connection, which is frequently shown through rain, as Wong uses rain to bring people together.

Despite using narrative devices, none of them are used in traditional ways, making the narrative experimental. Such as, how the narrative repetition in the train station is used to create a feeling and explore themes, not narrative. Plus, the black and white opening shot can be considered a narrative device, as it suggests that this moment in time was not the present. But it's also used to convey a sense of loneliness, due to the lack of colour, and the use of wide angle close up invites us to try and understand how this woman is feeling, rather than trying to understand the plot.

Another way that the narrative is experimental is its lack of explanation, for example, we aren't told why this man assassinates people. The usual narrative structure of opening

equilibrium through closing equilibrium is abandoned, as it's experimental nature allows it to explore very real emotions that the audience can identify with. Such as, the open ending. The close up of the man and woman on the motorbike leaves us with no closure, as we don't know what will happen to either of them, or why anything that has happened, happened. But we understand the emotions of it, and while this close up brings no plot closure, it brings a momentary emotional closure, as the two lonely people are close and have connection, even if we assume it is a fleeting moment, which feels true to life.