

**1.To what extent does the experimental style of 'Fallen Angels' reflect the work of an auteur or the circumstances of a specific production and social/political context? Explore ideas within auteur theory, the work of Wong and the relevant contexts of Asian New Wave [20]**

'Fallen Angels' to a large extent is reflective of the experimental autership of Wong.

For example, his unique use of sound. Such as, how he uses pop songs non-diegetically. These songs are used not ironically, but to evoke specific emotions from the spectator. One example from 'Fallen Angels' when he uses a pop song is during the assasination sequence, and was possibly used to for cool connotations which the spectator can associate with the character. Moreover, in terms of experimental film form, the movie is filled with tiny/phasing diegetic sounds, but this is less to do with auteur, and more so to do with experimental cinema.

Experimentally, Wong also uses colour in a unique way, like his frequent use of green (for example, the tunnel at the end). His colours are likely used to convey emotion, but his colour scheme does not comply with colour rules. Furthermore, perhaps the most noticeable experimental film form from this movie is Wong's manipulation of time, most frequently his use of step printing. Such as, during the assasination scene and the during the opening (train). This break of regular narrative and editing is a way of creating real human emotion, in the same way that the disjointed narrative with no real plot and lack of explanation is used to create, convey and explore emotion, rather than to be a typical narrative with typical narrative structure.

'Fallen Angels' is also reflective of an experimental auteur in terms of its narrative.

Such as, the way that all the characters seem to weave between one another in an

intertwined narrative. This is shown through narrative repetition, such as the repeated performance of two characters in the train station (both edited dynamically). This intertwining of characters adds to the theme of connection and loneliness which is a theme Wong often explores. One way that he explores the theme of loneliness and desire for human closeness in 'Fallen Angels' is with the deep depth of field (often paired with a wide angle shot), which shows the physical separation of the characters in the foreground and background but is also metaphorical for their disconnection emotionally. The ending of the movie includes a close up of two characters on a motorbike, in which the two characters are physically close. This concludes this theme, but it is also left on an open ending, as audiences know that these characters will go their separate ways and don't know what their future will bring. This is also experimental, and typical of Wong. This theme and use of film form can be easily compared to Wong's other film 'Chungking Express', which features a repeated actor, the same themes and even some of the same mise en scene (like the cafe). This makes sense as 'Fallen Angels' was originally the third part to Chungking Express, but because of the running time, was made into a separate film.

**2. Explore how the unconventional narrative of 'Fallen Angels' justifies its consideration as an 'Experimental film'. Consider the absence or presence of narrative devices, the deployment of binary opposition, positioning and structure [20]**

One way that the unconventional narrative of 'Fallen Angels' (Wong) justifies its consideration as an experimental film is its focus on intertwining lives and characters

rather than plot. The narrative has no plot drive, instead an emotional drive, as Wong chooses to focus on themes like loneliness and human connection, rather than plot. As an audience, we don't know why any characters are where they are or, or why, and the closing equilibrium gives us just as little information. Instead, the narrative focuses on intertwining lives of the characters and through this exploring themes, therefore creating an unconventional narrative. For example, during the opening, the first shot is a wide angle, close up of characters that we do not know in black and white (indicating it is from a different moment in time). This segment is fully focused on characters and their emotions, rather than plot, which continues throughout the rest of the movie. Furthermore, the opening consists of narrative repetition, which instead of being used to further the plot/plot development, is used to convey themes (therefore being experimental). This is when two characters make their way through the train station but at different times, with the experimental dynamic editing emphasizing the repetition of these performances. This character performance repetition is continued as both characters enter the same house at different times. This construction of narrative through intertwining lives and people is a way of exploring the theme of human connection and loneliness, as the characters are not together (which is emphasised) and are experiencing loneliness.

'Fallen Angels' may use narrative devices, but they are experimental and far from ordinary. Such as, the use of manipulation of time like the step printing - this is a key part of Wong's auteurship and work, and is used in his other films like 'The Grandmaster' and 'Chungking Express'. This time manipulation, such as during the assassination sequence and during the opening (train) is used to convey emotions, like loneliness, or the sense of a character being cool. It furthers the narrative of

emotion and themes, but not the plot as there essentially isn't one. Moreover, the film uses a classic narrative device of non-diegetic voice over from the protagonist, but this is used experimentally, as it's a way to understand how the character is feeling, never to further the plot or provide information, and unusually created a way for the protagonist (played by a big star) to never speak diegetically. This, to some extent, could further the theme of loneliness. Much like the deep depth of field, which is used to separate characters. This flouting of classic narrative structure and use of narrative devices creates an aesthetic experience full of emotion that the spectator can relate to. It also links in with Wong's other film, 'Chungking Express', which makes sense, as 'Fallen Angels' was originally supposed to be the third part of that film, but couldn't be due to the running time.

#### **Silent film:**

**1. 'Strike' as an example of 'soviet montage' can easily be considered as an example of 'expressive cinema'. How secure is this consideration? Consider the later film criticism of Bazin and outline his thinking in your response [20]**

'Strike', the communist propaganda silent film made 7 years after the Bolshevik revolution, to some extent can be considered as an example of expressive cinema. For example, during the opening the editing is expressive rather than realistic due to the use of a cross fade from the workers to the rich owner; this is also an example of the Kuleshov effect. This editing has been done to help convey the communist message that this capitalistic work setting where the workers are beneath the very wealthy owner is a bad way for industries to run. Moreover, the mise-en-scene in the

opening is also a way that the film is expressionistic rather than realist. Such as, how the busy corridor was a set made for the film, rather than an actual building in real life. The film continues to have expressionistic qualities, largely in terms of editing. Such as, during the middle sequence, the use of action reaction shots between the police and the workers to build fear and tension in the audience. Moreover, the jump cuts between the people being massacred and the cow being slaughtered, another example of the Kuleshov effect, is an expressionist way of using editing to convey meaning. In this case, the film is creating anger and fear in the audience while critiquing capitalistic views as a way to raise and strengthen communist opinions. Despite the amount of information formalist/expressionist techniques can convey, like expressive camera work and editing, Bazin was against expressionism, saying that it lacked the authenticity of realism.

On the other hand, 'Strike' can be considered more realistic than expressionistic. Such as, the use of long duration shots (a realist technique). For example, the ending includes a very difficult to watch death of a small child. This death is emphasized by the long duration shot of them on the ground. This was used to emphasize the cruel actions of those trying to bring harm to the communist workers. The very nature of it being a silent film makes it lean into being a realist film, as no non-diegetic sound or music can be added to sway audience opinion or make them feel a certain way. Moreover, despite some sets there was use of a naturalistic setting, which would be considered realistic. Such as, the field that the workers are chased on, and the factory during the opening of the film. Despite this, Strike is more of a formalist film due to expressive film form elements, especially editing and

camera work, such as the tracking shot of the factory during the opening, or the silhouette moment again during the opening.

## **2. How did filmmakers in the Silent Era overcome the limitations in meaning making that silent film presents? Consider the specific circumstances and limitations faced by Eisenstein and his contemporaries [20]**

To overcome the limitations in meaning making during the silent era, filmmakers like Eisenstein had to rely on other film form elements like camera work, editing and performance in expressive ways to convey meaning. Such as, over exaggerated performances to help convey tone and feelings to the audience. This can be seen throughout the film, like when characters are talking to one another or reacting to something. Moreover, leaning into expressionism (instead of realism) helped to convey meaning in other ways. Such as, the use of expressive editing. The Kuleshov effect is how two shots put together create meaning, which is used throughout Strike. Such as, during the opening, there is a cross fade between the factory workers and a close up of the rich factory worker. This use of the Kuleshov effect was to show the bad nature of the rich owner, and the unfair way that the workers are being treated; in other words, it was used to convey the communist message (it's a propaganda film, made clear by the opening Lenin quote). Editing is further used to create meaning partially due to the absence of all sound during the ending of the movie, when the Kuleshov Effect is again used to compare the death of the people to the death of the cow, again this is being used to criticize the capitalistic treatment of the workers, and promote the communist message instead. The ending showed the cruelty of the rich and powerful in many ways during the ending, that being one of

them, as well as the long duration shot of the killed child after being killed by one of the officer's. This being on screen for longer emphasises the horrid feeling, and furthers the communist message against right wing politics.

Cinematography is also used to create meaning making up for the absence of sound, again making the film an expressionism film rather than realist. Such as, the use of close ups. The close up of the rich man's face during the opening (during the Kuleshov effect) emphasises his performance, and therefore his greediness; again linking in with the propaganda message. Furthermore, a high angle tracking shot was used to show the setting of the factory. Text was also placed onto screen in place of dialogue, as a way of conveying information to the audience given the lack of sound. This is just another way that Eisenstein and his contemporaries tackled the limitations of no sound. As expressive film form elements can convey so much meaning, it's interesting that people like Bazin are so against it, and only support realist cinema. However, the idea that cinema should be interpreted by the viewer rather than told to them directly is not uncommon and still an idea held by some today.