

Part 5: Advanced Aesthetics: Film Art – The theory behind aesthetics.

A film offers two principle pleasures, the pleasure of the ‘story’ and the pleasure of the spectacle. In this section we will be examining how a director develops meaning throughout the length of the film by manipulating aesthetic techniques, to create the ‘spectacle’ or look/style of the film. These elements of construction work together to create the film's world and the underlying messages and values. It is important to be able to name the particular aesthetic being discussed as illustrated in the examples below.

Task

1. Watch the opening of *Alien* followed by the ‘*Breakfast Scene*’ (Scott, 1979).

[Alien - Opening Scene \(HD\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Alien - Breakfast Scene \(youtube.com\)](#)

How are science fiction and horror aesthetics created in these scenes?

Answer the following questions:

- How does the mise-en-scène establish the aesthetic mentioned above?
- How do we respond to the protagonist? Consider cinematography and performance.
- How are the relationships of the characters implied through editing and performance?
- What does the pace of this scene through editing imply about the world of the film and contribute to the aesthetic?
- What diegetic sounds have been amplified? And what is the effect on the audience?
- How does non-diegetic music contribute to the aesthetic?

2. Watch the opening of *City of God* (Meirelles, 2002).

[Opening Scene - City of God \(youtube.com\)](#)

How does the opening create an aesthetic of poverty and violence?

Answer the following questions:

- How does the mise-en-scène establish the aesthetic mentioned above?
- How do we respond to the protagonist? Consider cinematography and performance.
- How are the relationships of the characters implied through editing and performance?
- What does the pace of this scene through editing imply about the world of the film and contribute to the aesthetic?
- What diegetic sounds have been amplified? And what is the effect on the audience?
- How does non-diegetic music contribute to the aesthetic?

Task

Watch these **two** scenes and answer the following question:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLgrTk7Gr38> (*Trainspotting* 'Perfect Day' Scene, a hyper-realist aesthetic)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISsfuEG4GMA> (*Pan's Labyrinth* 'Pale Man' Scene, a horror aesthetic)

How do mise-en-scène and cinematography work together to create a specific aesthetic in these two scenes?

- How does the mise-en-scène establish the aesthetic mentioned above?
- How do we respond to the protagonist? Consider cinematography and performance.
- How are the relationships of the characters implied through editing and performance?
- What does the pace of this scene through editing imply about the world of the film and contribute to the aesthetic?
- What diegetic sounds have been amplified? And what is the effect on the audience?
- How does non-diegetic music contribute to the aesthetic?

Task

How does the aesthetic emphasise key themes from each film? Focusing on a particular scene (different from those above) for each film, how do *Alien* and *Pan's Labyrinth* create a horror aesthetic?

- How does the mise-en-scène establish the aesthetic mentioned above?
- How do we respond to the protagonist? Consider cinematography and performance.
- How are the relationships of the characters implied through editing and performance?
- What does the pace of this scene through editing imply about the world of the film and contribute to the aesthetic?
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Task

How do *Pan's Labyrinth* and *City of God* offer different aesthetics of childhood: *Pan's Labyrinth* through a magical realist fairy tale aesthetic and the more realist aesthetic of childhood crime and poverty in *City of God*? Choose a specific sequence to analyse from each film.

- How does the mise-en-scène establish the aesthetic mentioned above?

- How do we respond to the protagonist? Consider cinematography and performance.
- How are the relationships of the characters implied through editing and performance?
- What does the pace of this scene through editing imply about the world of the film and contribute to the aesthetic?
- What diegetic sounds have been amplified? And what is the effect on the audience?
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Summative assessment task: Essay question

The following can be completed as an essay with a set deadline or as a timed essay in 60 minutes. You should aim to write at least three to four sides of A4.

Try this question from the 2019 Component 2 past paper:

Discuss how aesthetics are used to communicate themes in your two chosen films. Make detailed reference to particular sequences in your answer. [40]