**Subjective/Objective Realities on Film**

Film depicts the exterior and interior lives of characters in a variety of ways, including performance, music, sound, graphics, camerawork, narrative structure and mise-en-scene. I shall here mainly concentrate on the last two, narrative structure and mise-en-scene, adding a postscript on a third way, the significance of spatial relationships, the positioning of characters in the frame, in drawing attention to a character’s state of mind.

1. From the point of view, first, of narrative structure, a character's inner self may be revealed, for instance, through dreams (as in many Buñuel films) or a voice-over flashback commentary (as in many film noirs), which can sometimes seem like secular confessions. A good example is Walter Neff's (Fred MacMurray) recording of the events that led up to the murder of his lover Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck), the married femme fatale in Billy Wilder's unrivalled *Double Indemnity* (1944). Neff comes clean as he sits at his insurance office desk, speaking into a recording machine to his boss, his paternal analyst surrogate, the Claims Manager, Barton Keyes (played by Edward G Robinson), whose symbolic name carries keys to Neff's complex personality.

In other films the inner landscape of a character's mind is revealed through subjective camerawork, i.e. conveying information to the viewer through the eyes of a character. This technique is perhaps most famously associated with Robert Montgomery's Raymond Chandler-inspired film *The Lady in the Lake* (1947), where on all but a couple of occasions the entire film is shot from the viewpoint of the protagonist. Or, in Hitchcock's films, where subjective shots often seal identification between viewer and character-- the most elaborate variant of which occurs in *Rear Window* (1954). There, through L. B. Jefferies’s (James Stewart) telephoto lens we observe the anonymous lives of others in the building across the way from his. Jefferies is a damaged individual, his broken leg a synecdoche for an injured mind, his attitudes conditioned by latent suspicion of women, and a fear of commitment (incredibly, to a girlfriend played by Grace Kelly!).

. What he sees in the mini dramas enacted in the apartments in front of him are the distorted projections of these anxieties and phobias--just as, confronted by windmills, Don Quixote saw only the romances of chivalry giants that crowd his fevered mind. As Jefferies watches, responds to and interprets the apartment screen of ravelled narratives, he is our alter ego, making sense not only of life but also of art. The fantasies, desires and voyeurism of L.B. Jefferies, the professional photographer with a broken leg watching the lives of unsuspecting neighbours, assume the exteriorised forms of the viewer's own interiority.

2. Moving on to the second of my categories, mise-en-scene, popular and art films abound in examples where decor, lighting, costume and location represent observable objective as well as imagined realities. Towards the end of *Testament of Youth* (James Kent, 2014), an Oxford university friend of Vera Brittain's (Alice Vikander)--the film's protagonist and author of the memoir on which it is based--says that, since the war (World War I), everyone seems to be surrounded by ghosts. Often dressed in white, characters seem like phantoms, their inner lives devastated by the effects of lost or war-damaged loved ones. Earlier on in the film, Roland (Kit Harington)--later Vera’s fiancé--visits her at home, and overhears her angry refusal to conform to provincial middle-class expectations of young women. Vera storms out of the house and makes for the back yard where, as if trapped by domesticity, she hangs out the family washing. Close-shots here, as elsewhere, reveal through the nuances of expressive eyes her interiority. Her feelings are further relayed through mise-en-scene. The billowing, spectral sheets hanging on the line enshroud her, not only presaging the horrors of a war yet to be declared, but also projecting a character's anxieties about aspirations in danger of being blighted by the stifling atmosphere of a narrow-minded society.

Elsewhere in, for example, the romantic comedies made at Universal Studios in the late 1950s and early 60s, starring Doris Day and Rock Hudson or James Garner, are further cases in point. Pastel shades in the decor of these films match Doris Day's costumes, which in turn represent the prim allure of their female star's persona. Day's wardrobe in films like *Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon, 1959) and *The Thrill of It All* (Norman Jewison, 1963), acts as a kind of armour in the battle of the sexes. Her suits replicate, in softer shades and patterns, the male businessman's public attire. In *Pillow Talk*, Doris Day's Jan is an interior designer with designs on Brad (Rock Hudson), an implausibly perfect gallant, a Don Juan pretending to be a courteous, sexually innocent Texan. When Brad's real intentions are exposed, mise-en-scene becomes an unambiguously outward expression of Jan's fury, where her customary pastel shades and hues give way to primary, clashing, garish colours, all applied in the redecoration of his apartment in the style of a Turkish harem. A repressed and raging libido returns vengefully through the application of violent colours and provision of cheap and vulgar *objets d'art*.

Postscript

My final reflection considers how spatial relationships may expose the inner and outer perspectives of a character’s state of mind. A key scene in *Viridiana* (Luis Buñuel, 1961) illustrates this process, providing additional interest through its focus on a child’s viewpoint. The Spanish cinema has generated a number of enthralling child-centred films, such as *El espíritu de la colmena /The Spirit of the Beehive* (Víctor Erice, 1973) or *Cría cuervos* /Raise Ravens (Carlos Saura, 1974), where child protagonists hold the narrative together. *Viridiana,* not a child-centred narrative, at one point concentrates on a female child’s spellbound observation of the perverse desires of her mother's employer (and possible lover) inescapably conjures up images of the primal scene. Rita (Teresa Rabal) represents simultaneously innocence and sexual curiosity. Also the film's chorus, witnessing key events, bewildered by the strange impulses of the adults around her, she provides silent or verbal commentary on what to her seems like their eccentric behaviour. At one point she disposes of the crown of thorns kept for self-mortification by Viridiana (Silvia Pinal), taking on the role of executioner in the provincial *auto de fe* of Viridiana's past. In an earlier scene, the Gothic ambience of Don Jaime's estate (Fernando Rey), with its candle lit, shadow-congested mise en scene, accompanied by sacred (*Requiem*) music, acts as a backdrop to a frustrated act of proto-necrophilia (Viridiana has been drugged, not murdered). The child Rita looks on from outside the room, but only at the very end of the scene, when questioned by her mother, does she reveal that the scene she has witnessed has been viewed through the prism of a sexually-charged dream: ‘I saw a black bull’, she tells her mother, repeating an account of a nightmare she had earlier given to one of the workers on the estate. The black bull, carrying all its traditional associations with male potency, is reincarnated as Don Jaime, attempting to seduce Viridiana, the child's projected substitute. She looks from outside, from the threshold of budding puberty, but is also looked at from inside the room of unfulfilled seduction, caught by a camera to show us the extent of her fascination with the drama of the primal scene.

The scenes I have mentioned here demonstrate the versatility of film in capturing the inner workings of the human mind. Narrative structure, mise-en scene, and the positioning of characters *vis a vis* objects or other characters, can guide the spectator into a film’s treatment of selfhood, individual or social relationships and the ebb and flow of desire.

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