

100%
Awesome
Done!

For centuries audiences have been fascinated by stories told using sequences of images.

Before film was even invented, crowds would gather in Indonesia to witness stories being told with shadow puppets projecting images onto flat surface (which seems eerily similar to Plato's Cave). In the seventeenth century people enjoyed sitting in a darkened room and watching images that were presented before them in the manner of a slide show. When film was finally created in the eighteenth hundreds crowds were accustomed to theater settings but were amazed at how powerful film could be. *The Lumières' Train Arriving at a Station*, which was a short film of a train approaching a camera and then closely passing it filmed in 1896, shocked many audiences and had some people believing that the train was actually going to burst through the screen (Rickitt, 10-11). Of course, movies have become much more sophisticated over the past century and audiences have grown accustomed to styles of filming and expect much more out of films. So what is it that makes this billion dollar a year art so powerful that large audiences everywhere wish to see it?

Great point!

Noël Carroll believes that one reason movies are powerful is that they are able to be understood by all types of people, no matter what culture they are from. In his essay, *The Power of Movies*, he says "we learn to recognize what a picture stands for as soon as we have become able to recognize the objects...that serve as the models for that picture" (Carroll, 93). What this means is that to understand what is shown on a movie screen doesn't take any formal education, it is typically very easy to understand the events that are shown.

This is the image level of the divided line.

Carroll goes on to explain that movies also become powerful because of the method in which the stories are often told. He says that movies are typically presented using an erotetic storytelling style. This, he explains, is organizing the story so that questions will arise in the

minds of the viewers and will, at some point later in the movie, be answered. It provides a way to keep an audience interested in the movie and also helps to connect scenes in the end of a movie to those in the beginning (Carroll, 96-97). To demonstrate this, the movie *The Sixth Sense* created by M. Night Shyamalan. The reason for using this movie is that it provides an excellent example of Carroll's erotetic storytelling and also because it was part of pop-culture for a while and has been out for eight years so it is safe to assume that this essay won't ruin the movie for anyone.

Singular
also uses
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interesting
ways

The movie begins with Bruce Willis's character, Malcolm, drinking with his wife discussing an award he had just received. The sequence serves to acquaint the viewer with his character and learn that he received the award because he is good with children. At the end of the scene, Malcolm discovers that someone has broken into his house and he is then confronted with the intruder. The intruder carries out a brief dialogue and then shoots Malcolm in the stomach before turning the gun on himself. The movie then cuts to Haley Joel Osment's character, Cole, leaving his house and hurrying down a street followed by Malcolm. All of these events demonstrate the first part of erotetic storytelling—the question. Why did someone break into the home and who was he? What happened to Malcolm between then and now? Who is the young boy Malcolm is following?

The answer of who the boy is is soon revealed in the next scene, but with the answer comes a multitude of questions about him. Answering the question connects the scene to the one before it but it also keeps the viewer interested in the plot by unleashing more questions to be answered. The remainder of the movie continues in the same fashion, with the smaller questions being answered from scene to scene and the larger questions answered later on.

This is a great example of how the erotetic model plays out in a non-linear fashion.

In different parts of the movie Malcolm spends time with his wife and in his basement (which he always finds locked). These scenes help the film answer the questions about his past, and the sequences in his basement reveal that the man who shot Malcolm was a former student that he was unable to help. Towards the end of the movie all the questions the movie presented are answered except for one; what happened to Malcolm after he was shot? The question wasn't brought up except for in the beginning of the film and could have slipped from the viewer's mind, but once revealed the whole movie and all the scenes leading up to the end make sense. The movie is a perfect example of erotetic storytelling because the questions presented early on truly do help make the movie interesting and connect the scenes together. Without the questions presented early in the film, the ending would make no sense at all to the viewer.

Another way in which Carroll states that films can be powerful at storytelling is by applying photographic techniques. Using methods such as bracketing and scaling "assures that the average viewer has not gotten lost in the space but is looking precisely at what she is supposed to see" (Carroll, 94). Bracketing means to contain all the action into one space that the viewer will see. Any actions that take place outside of the bracket are unable to interfere with the viewers' attention (Carroll, 95). If sad event is shown but a clown is dancing next to the event, it doesn't matter as long as the clown is not within the brackets; the audience will have no idea that he is even there. However, bracketing can also be used in the opposite way for dramatic effect. In *The Sixth Sense* when the intruder shoots himself in the beginning of the movie it happens outside of the brackets. The shot shows him holding the gun up to his head but then the camera pans behind a wall so that the viewer doesn't see him pull the trigger. Having an action such as this take place outside of the bracketing spares the viewer from witnessing the event, but gets the point across through the use of audio and showing the preceding events.

Perhaps the scene is more dramatic because of this choice.

You've pulled excellent textual examples + paired them with great real-world examples. Well-done!

Scaling is also very important in cinema storytelling. It is when an object is made to appear larger or smaller to show that it is important or insignificant (Carroll, 95). In *The Sixth Sense* many objects are made larger by zooming in on them to draw attention and show that they are important. An example is the red doorknob to Malcolm's basement. The doorknob holds value because it is always locked to keep the door from opening; without scaling the item to make it larger, the viewer would have no idea that it was important in answering what happened after Malcolm was shot. Scaling can also be used to make something smaller. If a character is insignificant or weak, they can be filmed from further away to make them appear smaller and less important.

Movies have the ability to keep viewers interested in a story and can be quite powerful and effective due to the techniques demonstrated. Scaling and bracketing help focus a viewers and "movies are therefore easier to follow than typical stage productions" (Carroll, 94). Also, the erotetic method of storytelling makes films interesting and keeps scenes connected to one another. It's no wonder that cinema has become one of the most popular forms of media around the world.

Bibliography

Carroll, Noël. "The Power of Movies." *Aesthetics: A reader in Philosophy of the Arts*. p 93-97
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This is an AWESOME journal entry. See me as I would like to include this in a portfolio of sorts.