



Research Paper

## Film Aesthetics: A Mode to Translate Writer's Creativity

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**Abstract:**

*"Aesthetics is the study of philosophy and theory of Beauty in all forms of cultural expression - art, literature, dance, music, film, and painting etc. Since film is a technological construct, depending on movie cameras and sound and light technologies for production and movie theatres with screens and projectors for exhibition, its aesthetics is also framed by shot compositions, camera movements and strategies of lighting and sound effects etc. Film aesthetics navigates the areas of form and content, illusion and reality and time and space besides all other components of aesthetics. The finding of research will exhibit writer's attempt in depicting characters with variety of emotions and beautifying their role to justify position with the help of examples and its correlation with cinema and aesthetic world.*

**Index Terms:** *Aesthetics, The photographic narrative film, Hitchcock's Spellbound, Carol Reed's The Fallen Idol*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The aesthetic refers to how a film's visual and aural elements are combined to create fundamentally non-narrative aspects of the picture, such as its 'look.' Aesthetics can be defined as a film's style, tone, appearance, or mood. Aesthetics include both natural and man-made sources of aesthetic perception and judgement. It examines what happens in our minds when we engage with aesthetic things or surroundings, such as examining visual art, listening to music, reading poetry, attending a performance, or exploring nature. Art philosophy is the study of how artists envision, create, and perform works of art, as well as how the public uses, enjoys, and criticises art. Aesthetics examines why some works of art are favoured over others, as well as how art can influence our moods and even our beliefs. Some distinguish aesthetics from art philosophy, arguing that the former is concerned with the study of beauty and taste and the latter with the study of works of art. However, aesthetics frequently considers both aesthetic and artistic concerns. It looks at art works, aesthetic experiences, and aesthetic judgments. Since Hegel, some regard aesthetics as synonymous with art philosophy, while others maintain that there is a major distinction between two closely connected areas. In practise, aesthetic judgement relates to the sensory contemplation or admiration of an item (which does not have to be a work of art), whereas artistic judgement refers to the recognition, appreciation, or criticism of art or a work of art.

Numerous factors contribute to the intrigue of a film. This includes both the historical backdrop (for example, social, government, and economic) and the theory that surrounds it. Films are a reflection of their eras and everything that goes with them. On the other hand, there is aesthetic consideration. Films can be viewed as works of art in their own right. This can involve a creator's approach, narrative framework, and uniqueness, among other aspects. These factors continue to influence the films we produce today.

Mise-en-scene is a critical aspect of aesthetics (put in scene). The mise-en-scene is the order in which everything appears in the film. This is created by the use of scenery, props, costumes, and makeup, among other things. It began as a theatre phrase, but has grown in popularity over time. This brings us to cinematography, which is defined as the aspects of the shot that include the camera. Cinematography encompasses a variety of elements, including duration, lens, and angle. Cinematography is a critical component of any film. The following point is valid. Sound in film might be synchronised, off-screen, music, or even effects. Editing is the process by which all of these elements come together. It is the method by which a film is constructed shot by shot.

Aesthetic philosophy must not only discuss and evaluate art and art works, but also define art. A issue of contention is whether art is self-contained in terms of moral or political objectives. Aestheticians balance a

culturally contextual view of art against a strictly academic one. They examine the diversity of art in relation to its physical, social, and cultural contexts. Aestheticians also employ psychology to gain a better understanding of how people see, hear, imagine, think, learn, and act in response to artistic materials and challenges. Aesthetic psychology is the study of creativity and aesthetic experience. 'Aesthetics' is a large and elegant word that refers to a complicated subject. Aesthetics is the art philosophy. Thus, aesthetics in film is the study of film art and the contribution of many aesthetic viewpoints to the evolution of film as an art form.

Film aesthetics has historically been dominated by concerns about realism. Three types of realism can be attributed to film: realism inherent in film due to its use of the photographic method (realism of method); realism as a style that approximates normal conditions of perception (realism of style); and realism as the capacity of film to create an illusion of the reality and presentation of fictional characters and events in the viewer (realism of viewer) (realism of effect). Some theorists claim that methodological realism needs us to avoid adopting a realist style, while others say that it forces us to adopt a realist style. While most agree that a realist style results in effect realism, many disagree on whether this is a desirable goal. This essay argues that these realisms are distinct from one another, that realism of style does not imply philosophical realism, and that realism of effect is unimportant to comprehending the ordinary experience of film. Style realism proposes a way of concretizing the assertion that cinema is a time and space art, as this type of realism is partially explicated in terms of the portrayal of time by time and space by space. Psychological theorizing about cinema has been inextricably linked to effect realism and the notion that an illusion of the film's reality is formed when the viewer's position is identified with that of the camera. According to another school of illusionism, the experience of viewing a film is very similar to that of dreaming. Such beliefs are undercut when we recognise that impact realism is a trivial phenomenon.

How do we define or understand a film? According to F.E. Sparshott, "A film is a series of motionless images projected onto a screen so fast as to create in the mind of anyone watching the screen an impression of continuous motion, such images being projected by a light shining through a corresponding series of images arranged on a continuous band of flexible material." (Sparshott in Mast and Cohen, , 1974, p.209). Thus the basic features of a film include the description of the 'mechanism' employed and a reference to the creation of an 'illusion' of motion. What is the mechanism of film? "More than any other art, film is technologically determined. The history of the film is the history of invention of its means. Aestheticians of the cinema may often be differentiated by how they react to various aspects of its technology: the properties of lenses and emulsions, the conditions of production and display." (Sparshott, *ibid*).

How do we respond to the illusion of motion created by cinema? The motion on the screen has to be unreal, but can and should faithfully portray a motion that really took place just so in the real world. This ought to remind us that the basic illusion of movement by itself gives an impression not of reality but of a sort of unattributable vivacity. This also raises the question of the relationship between illusion and reality in cinema. This relationship is usually ambiguous. However, the "development of the cinema's technology shows the interdependence of realism and illusion. Film has been equipped to capture more aspects of reality and to interpose fewer of its own characteristics between audience and image so that the man in front of the screen comes ever nearer to seeing as much and as clearly as the man beside the camera... In fact, changes in film technology have all tended in one direction: towards completing the illusion of reality." (Perkins, 1974, 43-44)

The illusion of reality in cinema makes it a kind of magic. But the movie offers "two forms of magic, since its conquest of the visible world extends in two opposite directions. The first on which the reality theory concentrates, gives it the power to 'possess' the real world by capturing its appearance. The second, focus of the traditional aesthetics, permits the presentation of an ideal image, ordered by the film-maker's will and imagination. Since the cinema's mechanism incorporates both these tendencies, neither of them can be condemned on rational, technical or aesthetic grounds.... At one end of the scale we find the most rigorous forms of documentary, which aim to present the truth about an event with the minimum of human intervention between the real object and its film image; at the other end lies the abstract, cartoon or fantasy film which presents a totally controlled vision." (Perkins, 1974, 60)

The photographic narrative film occupies a compromise position where a fictional reality is created in order to be recorded. Here the relationship between reality and illusion, object and image, becomes extremely complex. "The fictional film exploits where purer forms attempt to negate the conflict between reality and illusion. Instead of trying exclusively either to create or record, the story film attempts a synthesis - it both records what has been created and creates by its manner of recording. At its most powerful it achieves a credibility which consummates the cinema's blend of actuality and fantasy." (Perkins, 1974, 62)

The fiction movie presents reality as both malleable and solid. The world is shaped by the film-maker to reveal an order beyond chronology, in a system of time and space which is both natural and synthetic. The movie offers its reality in a sequence of privileged moments during which actions achieve a clarity and intensity seldom found in everyday life. Motive and gesture, action and reaction, cause and effect, are brought into a more

immediate, dynamic and revealing relationship. The film-maker fashions a world more concentrated and more shaped than the one we usually experience.

The criteria of order and credibility apply significantly to the narrative film in most of its forms. "The movie itself creates these criteria whenever it proposes to be at the same time significant and convincing. The impurity of the medium is consummated by a decision to project a world which is both reproduced and imagined, a creation and a copy. Committed to this impurity, the film-maker is also committed to maintaining a balance between its elements. His aim is to organize the world to the point where it becomes most meaningful but to resist ordering it out of all resemblance to the real world which it attempts to evoke." (ibid, pp. 69-70)

The aesthetic effects of a film can be obtained by various means, such as framing, exposure, different depths of focus and cutting etc. Certain aesthetic principles lie behind these techniques, which can be conveniently deduced. However, many technical effects in a film are extremely subtle. For instance, one needs to concentrate fairly well to detect the difference between a very rapid mix, a very rapid wipe and a straight cut. "Again, cutting rhythm - the timing of shots, the speed of transition - is of considerable importance in a film, but it is a difficult thing to analyse. It is far more complex than the visual rhythm of a painting - not only is there a time dimension additional to those of space, but there is also the added interrelation of sound and image, and finally, all these interrelated elements are in constant motion, not static and unchanging. (Ralph Stephenson and J.R. Debrix, *The Cinema as Art*, Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1978, pp 30-31)

The contrast between film and reality occupies a prominent place in discussion of film aesthetics. The film differs enormously from physical reality. The film developed into an art by transforming its mechanical means of reproduction into an artistic means of expression. Although it may appear to be an exact copy, the world we see on the screen is quite different from the world we live in. In particular, neither space nor time have the same characteristics. "In the everyday world for our senses, everything exists in a space-time continuum constructed from real space and real time, and forming a continuous framework of reference and identification. The space-time of the cinema is completely different. Spatially the screen shows us a flat world reduced to a single plane, lacking the basic dimension of depth, and limited by the frame which surrounds it.... Furthermore, by montage and camera movement the cinema makes all kinds of transformations of space which would be impossible in reality. Time also is constantly subject to contradictions, extensions, breaks and jumps which do not occur in the continuous chronology of the real world." (ibid, p. 36)

It is a function of the film-maker to ensure that the film-universe, objectively false, should give the spectator, by suspension of disbelief, a feeling of reality like that created by a natural scene. It is in the creation of this artistic 'seeming', in which the screen world takes on a semblance of nature, that an art of the film first makes its appearance.

The basic difference between film and reality is not physical but psychological. Scenes which exist in nature are emotionally and dramatically 'neutral', in the sense that they do not seek to move or influence us at the bidding of any exterior will. But the images of a film are impregnated with the essence of the film-maker's own feeling and imaginings, and they become mental images as much as physical. "They are designed not only to affect the senses but also to seize the imagination, and they even have a dynamic power of arousing the spectator's emotions by subtly following the change movements of his own inner thoughts. The natural scene is there. It stays detached. It can be enjoyed, but remains aloof, indifferent. But the film as a work of art is deliberately made to attack us, to force its way into our feelings and our beliefs. (ibid, p. 37)

The question of form is at the centre of all aesthetic discussions including the form of a film. We know that a film is not simply a random set of elements flung together. "A film has form, and by film form, in its broadest sense, we mean the total system created by a given film. Form is the **overall system of relationships among elements that make up the whole film.**" (David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson, **Film Art : An Introduction**, New Delhi : Prentice - Hall of India, 1985, p. 27) According to this view, form is not the opposite to content. But subject matter and abstract ideas all enter into the total system of the art work. They become related to one another and interact dynamically, constituting the essence of form.

The aesthetic value of film form depends on the fact that our experience of art works is patterned and structured. But how does form guide our experience of an art work? For one thing, form creates the sense that 'everything is there'. Why is it satisfying when a character glimpsed early in a film reappears an hour later or when a shape in the frame is balanced by another shape? Because such relations among parts suggest that the film has its own organizing laws or rules - its own system. Film form can even make us perceive things anew, shaking us out of our accustomed habits and suggesting fresh ways of hearing, seeing, feeling and thinking.

Artistic form also has the power to disturb our expectations. We often associate art with peace and serenity, but many artworks offer us conflict, tension and shock. A form may even strike us as unpleasant because of its imbalances or contradictions. Many people find atonal music, abstract or surrealist painting and experimental writing highly disturbing. Similarly, there are many important directors like Resnais and Eisenstein whose films jar rather than soothe us. Such disturbing artworks may display new kinds of form to which we are not accustomed.

In recognizing film form the audience must be prepared to understand formal cues through knowledge of life and of other art works. The spectator's emotional response to a film is related to its form as well. Often form in artworks appeals to ready-made reactions, already formulated emotions : fear of darkness or height, or even stereotyped reactions to certain images - sexuality, race, social class. But form can create new responses as easily as it can harp on old ones. Just as formal conventions often lead us to suspend our normal sense of real-life experience, so form may lead us to override our everyday emotional responses. Why else would people whom we despise in life become spellbinding as characters in a film? How can we watch a film about a subject that normally repels us and find it fascinating? The answer lies in the systematic quality of our involvement in form.

The film form being a system, there must be some principles which help create the relationships among the parts. But there cannot be any absolute principles of form which all artists must follow. Artwork are products of culture, hence many of the principles of artistic form are matters of social convention. But within these social conventions, each artwork tends to set up its own specific formal principles. We can distinguish five general principles at work in the operation of a film's formal system : functions; similarity and repetition; difference and variation; development; and unity/disunity.

**Function:** Every element in the totality of interrelations among various systems of form has one or more functions. Of any element within a film we can ask : what are its functions? One useful way to grasp the function of an element is to ask what other elements demand that it be present.

**Similarity and Repetition:** Similarity and repetition comprise an important principle of film form. Throughout any film we can observe similarities and repetitions of everything - from lines of dialogue and bits of music to camera positions, character behaviour and story action. Formal repetitions are known as **motifs**. A motif may be an object, a colour, a place, a person, a sound, or even a character trait. We may call a pattern of lighting or camera position a motif if it is repeated through the course of a film.

**Difference and Variation:** Difference and variation constitute another fundamental principle of film form. The need for variety, contrast and change in films requires that characters must be distinguished, environments must be delineated, different times or activities must be established. Even within the image, we must distinguish differences in tonality, texture, direction and speed of movement, and so on.

**Development:** One way to keep ourselves aware of how similarity and difference operate in film form is to look for principles of development from part to part of the film. Development will constitute some patterning of similar and differing elements. One way to size up how a film develops formally is to compare the beginning with the ending. By looking at the similarities and differences between the beginning and ending, we can start to understand the overall pattern of the film.

The film form engages our emotions and expectations in a **dynamic** way because the constant interplay between similarity and difference, repetition and variation, engenders an active, developing awareness of the film's formal system. The film's development may be visualized in static terms, but we ought not to forget that formal development is a *process*.

**Unity/Disunity:** When all the relationships within a film are clear and economically interwoven, we say that the film has **unity**. We call a unified film 'tight' because there seem to be no gaps in the formal relationships. Every element present has a specific set of functions, similarities and differences are determinable, the form develops logically, and there are no superfluous elements. Unity, however, is a matter of degree. Almost no film is so tight as to leave no end dangling, but if a film largely manages to create clear relations throughout its form, we generally find it unified.

Films may also introduce a degree of disunity. Some films simply fail to achieve unity; such films' formal system introduces elements and then fails to create clear relationships between them and the rest of the film. On the other hand, some films create disunity as a positive quality of their form. Their disunity is systematic and it is brought so consistently to our attention as to constitute a basic feature of the film.

Apart from the element of form in film aesthetics, other elements that occupy an important place in it are related to the use of space and time in cinema, besides lighting, colour and sound etc. As Ralph Stephenson and J.R. Debrix correctly observe : "Although it may appear to be an exact copy, the world we see on the screen is quite different from the world we live in. In particular, neither space nor time have the same characteristics. In the everyday world of our senses, everything exists in a space-time continuum constructed from real space and real time, and forming a continuous framework of reference and identification. The space-time of the cinema is completely different. Spatially the screen shows us a flat world reduced to a single plane, lacking the basic dimension of depth and limited by the frame which surrounds it. For much of its history the screen has been without colour and (except for 3-D) without the relief of sculpture and other plastic arts. Furthermore, by montage and camera movement the cinema makes all kinds of transformations of space which would be impossible in reality. Time also is constantly subject to contractions, extractions, breaks and jumps which do not occur in the continuous chronology of the real world. Finally, the cinema was for a long time without sound or speech and when it does make use of these elements it does so in ways which are very different from our experience of them in everyday life." (**The Cinema as Art**, op.cit., p. 36)

The peculiarities of the film vision determine to a large extent the nature of the elements of film aesthetics. "Because the cinema gives a two-dimensional picture of a three-dimensional world, objects will not necessarily be recognizable on the screen irrespective of how they are photographed. They must be taken from the right angle and with the right lighting and this involves selection by the cameraman from the many aspects of the objects which exist in reality.... In the cinema, the spectator is not only outside the spatial framework of the things he sees in the film; he is also immobile. The object has to move on the screen.... The spectator outside the screen lacks any system of reference or any scale of dimensions by which to judge its size. The operator must choose a suitable viewpoint or give some other artificial means to help the audience assess the object." (ibid, pp. 38-39) From this, shooting-angle, scale and lighting etc. emerge as forming the rudiments of film aesthetics.

Let us first take the question of scale. The importance of scale as an element of film aesthetics can be illustrated from a few examples. In the film **King Kong Meets Godzilla**, an octopus is shown as large as a house. It is the combination of reality (the animal's oozing, slithery movement) and illusion (its immense size) that gives the sequence its shocking effect. Similarly, by making all the rooms, furniture and props very small or very large, human beings can be represented as giants or midgets.

What is the aesthetic significance of scale in a film? "Properly used," say Stephenson and Debrix, "scale by itself can give an emotional tone to a film. Close shots will give a scene an oppressive or intimate feeling; medium or long shots, an effect of formality or coldness. We use this language in ordinary life and speak of 'being close to someone' or 'a distant manner'. In some of the love scenes in Bertolucci's **Last Tango in Paris** the camera by never leaving the couple, expresses a brooding atmosphere of the obscene sexual obsession." (ibid, p. 42) Medium and long shots can have other qualities; formal beauty, richness of detail, peaceful detachment. "Though there may be relatively more close, medium or long shots, the general pattern is for the scale of objects to be constantly changing far more violently and often than in real life." (ibid, p. 42)

In well-made films shooting angle is used to bring out the essential nature of complex objects like a building, a statue or a person. For example, Abram Room, in his film **The Ghost that Never Returns**, stresses the gross brutality and greed of a thickest detective by filming him at a slight downward angle, from behind his heavy neck and jowl which bulk enormous in the foreground of the picture, as he scoffs his food like an animal. Similarly, in order to express the speed and power of a locomotive, usually upward-angle shots are taken as the train rushes fast. In filming crowd of any size, the only way to show its typical feature, that is, its numbers, is by setting up the camera in a dominating position and shooting at a downward angle. In Lindsay Anderson's film **This Sporting Life** the mud-covered football players taken from a low angle appear as black brutal giants.

Abnormal camera-angles can be used to give an object or person a misleading character. Seen in a certain way, a frank expression can seem hypocritical, an inoffensive gesture threatening, a dwarf a giant. "The way a director shows an object will depend very much on the dramatic action or on the type of film being made or on the audience for which it is intended.... Besides its physical properties, every object has other properties -

dramatic, psychological, poetic - which in certain circumstances are more important and should be stressed.” (ibid, p. 44)

Shooting angles in suitable cases can also be used to express subjectively what things are like as seen through the eyes of a character in the film. In Hitchcock's **Spellbound** the camera shows us the world seen by a sick man coming out of a coma : an upside-down world of people seen from below. A film has been shot from ground-level to show the world as a dog would see it. “In Carol Reed's **The Fallen Idol** many scenes are shot from the visual angle of a boy of twelve. Unusual angles, abnormal framing and lighting - all suggest with delicate precision a world which is familiar but is not that of grown-ups. A subjective camera- angle is used in Pier Pasolini's film **The Gospel According to St. Matthew**, in a sequence showing John the Baptist by the River Jordan. As Jesus comes forward to be baptized the camera draws backwards and into the clouds as we hear the words ‘This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased’.” (ibid, p. 45)

## II. Conclusion

Aesthetics refers to a film's style and appearance. The director employs a variety of components to create the film's aesthetic, which elicits an emotional response from the audience to the people, circumstances, and places. Additionally, the filmmaker can use the scene/structure films to explore themes and develop messages for the audience. Cinematography is an art of the camera, its placement, movement, and lighting. When assessing the construction of a scene, it is critical to analyse how the audience has been positioned.

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