

Emotional response in a popular film is dependent on the ways in which we are made to identify with particular characters. How far has this been your experience?



A broad introduction

- Cinematic techniques convey emotional connection between audiences and characters such as: our relationship built through cinematography, performance, editing etc. We should also separate the idea of the individual spectator and audience generally.

Priorities:

1. Cinematic style – what are the methods available to a filmmaker?
2. Examples of the above in study films
3. Audience and issues of spectatorship



Malena



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Nostalgia
Fantasising relationships
and
The Power of the Close-up

Nostalgia

What cinematic devices are used to evoke a sense of nostalgia?

- Music - romantic
- Location - historical
- Colour palette – warm, soft
- Voice over narrative – looking back to childhood from old age
- Setting - wartime
- Casting – Renato looks very young, childish
- Emphasis on fantasy/reality through perspective





- The relationship between the two characters in Malena (Renato and Malena) is constructed through the film's narrative construction and emphasised through cinematography.
- NB there is a relationship **because Renato, our narrator says there is**. He (and we) are aware that this relationship is a fantasy

- Renato's perspective is further developed through the medium of film – his POV, the fantasy sequences



Parasocial relationship

- This is a term used to describe one-sided, "parasocial" interpersonal relationships in which one party knows a great deal about the other, but the other does not.
- The most common form of such relationships are one-sided relations between celebrities and audience or fans
- Even though such one-way friendships are based on illusion of interaction via television or radio rather than actual social interaction, a bond of intimacy is created and the viewers feel they really know the media character.
- The viewer is made to believe that the person on the screen is communicating directly to them, even though the other participants—actors or players—have no knowledge or attachment to fans, other than as an aggregation of numbers comprising an audience and their income.



Parasocial Relationship

The parasocial relationship can be one we establish with a character in the context of a single film or as part of an ongoing relationship we feel we have with an actor.

Note how *Malena* both explores this through Renato's relationship with Malena and our relationship with Monica Bellucci





The film's emphasis on cinema, looking and fantasy identification equates Renato's 'looking' with our own.

How does this make us feel – guilty? Powerful?

The film is patterned around shot/reverse shot

- We become increasingly 'close' to Malena through the cinematography, creating the illusion of Renato's/our relationship growing closer



Our relationship with Malena is made complex through cinematic devices. How?



The power of the close-up



Our relationship with Renato becomes more pronounced as he mirrors our actions, watching the unobtainable Malena on screen.



- Remember the 'cinematic' nature of the fantasy sequences

Note the contrast in our other study film and how we are asked to relate to the main characters



The Hungarian critic **Bela Balazs** considered the close-up to be the most **emotive** shot in cinema.

- “Facing an isolated face takes us out of space, our consciousness of space is cut out.”
- “Many profound emotional experiences can never be expressed in words at all”
- “ ‘Microphysiognomy’ (shows) a deeply moving human tragedy with the greatest economy of expression.”
- Do you agree with Balazs?
- Do you have your own perspective?
- Can you explain using an example from Malena or another film of your choice?

Fascination and film

According to Laura Mulvey:



- Film fascinates us (engages our emotions), through images and spectacle
- Mainstream cinema **manipulates visual pleasure.**
- It 'codes the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order'.

Scopophilia

- Scopophilia = pleasure in looking (Sigmund Freud 1905, in 'Three Essays')
- examples of the private and curious gaze: children's voyeurism, **cinematic looking**
- the most pleasurable looking = looking at the human form and the human face



‘Woman as image, man as bearer of the look’

- pleasure in looking split between active/male and passive/female
- women connote ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’



‘Woman as image, man as bearer of the look’

- the woman functions as both erotic object for the characters within the screen story **and** erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium (object of **fantasy**)
- the spectator is led to identify with the main male protagonist

‘the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look’ - Laura Mulvey



The male gaze and fetishistic scopophilia

- Scopophilia is the force driving the movements and positioning of the camera
- the gaze is male, and the spectator is led to identify with this male gaze
- the cinematic apparatus is not gender-neutral
- Visual pleasure therefore panders to male fantasies



Is Malena a film that uses the male gaze to stimulate the spectator's emotion?

If so – through fantasy, eroticism and assumption of a masculinised audience

What cinematic devices suggest this?



Or...

Is the film **about** how the male gaze can repress women?

If so, how?



Critical approaches

- Bela Balazs on the power of the close up
- Richard Wollheim on 'central/acentral imagining'
- Richard Allen on active participation of the audience
- Julian Hanich on looking away from/into the image shows our engagement with artificiality
- Aristotle: our need for catharsis is satisfied by the fictional suffering of one with whom we identify

Audition – our relationship with Aoyama our Asami.



Techniques used to present the two characters.



Aoyama

- Close up, (Bela Balasz)
- Performance, mise-en-scene, etc
- Narrative structure and the way we see his home life
- Other methods of identification



Asami

- Cinematography – e.g use of LS
- Axial cutting and other editing disruptions
- Breaking the 180 degree rule
- Performance
- Sub-sonic rumble and use of white noise
- Narrative distance

Her presence in the film is accompanied by devices that render her presence strange or unnerving

- This signifies to us that there is something wrong and we are being steered to attach to Aoyama, so that we feel sympathy for his situation. (Richard Wollheim and central imagining.)
- Do we get the shock of narrative disruption when our assumptions about him are contradicted?



Let the Right One In – do we identify with the difficult characters? Oskar/Eli – why? Why not?



The Innocents – how are the children rendered ‘strange’?
How do we feel about Miss Giddens?



- Conclusion – central imagining suggests that character identification is central to our bargain with the fiction.

