

# Compare and contrast early cinema with mainstream assignment

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Compare and contrast early cinema (1895 – 1910) with mainstream narrative cinema. The history of film was set in motion in the late 1800s with the development in camera and film technology. There has been deliberation about who were the first to broadcast film, however after much research it is believed that the first projection was introduced by the late French born Auguste Marie Louis Nicholas and Louis Jean, famously known as the Lumière brothers'.

Cinema started off more as an art, favoring the Avant-Garde movement, a movement introduced in the late 1800s that refers to the examination of culture and politics through art in an experimental, imaginative and innovative way. It was exhibited for pleasure and to a small group of interested spectators, viewed more that of something of a hobby. Early cinema narrative was designed on a completely sterile slate, by artists who had not already been taught how to regard the cinema by a thousand other writers' March, W.

Conversely, with the passion for cinema and photography, technology has been developed over the years, and now cinema has become one of the most influential ways of communication and pleasure to the masses. In this essay, I aim to explore similarities, differences and influences within early cinema compared to mainstream narrative, whilst also contrasting the changes it has endured over the past century. I will be comparing by Winsor McKay and directed by Edwin Stanton Porter, the infamous 'Dream of a Rarebit Fiend' (1906) to the recent 'Dream House' (2011) by Jim Sheridan.

I have chosen these two films as one is from the earliest time spans of cinematography and the other is contemporary horror, but they hold a very similar conception in terms of exploring the capability of the pugnacious and unconscious mind. Both films are about the lucidity of dreams and repression. In this essay I am going to explore the directors techniques and design to implement their visions and intentions, but also explore the generalizations of early cinema in comparison to mainstream.

As my previous essay explores the actual dream state in relation to experimental Avenue Grade and its influences, I am going to focus mainly on the technical and formal aspects of early cinema in comparison to mainstream narrative, and how cinema over the years have developed skill and reoccurred to communicate to the audience. Dream of a Rarebit Fiend is a short experimental film, which follows a man through a lucid dream, with a eidetic soundtrack running from beginning to end.

From my interpretation, this film doesn't have a clear point at which we see the man in his prime conscious state neither do we see him enter into his unconscious as the movements are much exaggerated. ' Their smiles are lifeless, even though their movements are full of living energy and are so swift as to be almost imperceptible. Faces. Before you a life is surging, a life deprived of words and shorn of the living picture of colors the grey, the soundless, the bleak and dismal life' Gorky, M. 1896) At the beginning we see the man in gluttony stuffing his face with rarebit and drinking multiple beers. He then spits some beer out, and through his composure and his analistic behavior, subconsciously we have automatically depicted that he

as the protagonist may deserve any wrong coming towards him. We see the man stumble and consequently tries to regain balance by grasping hold of the lamppost. As he struggles whilst waving his handkerchief around hysterically, assuming he is ailing for help, a policeman appears on screen and ushers him off.

We then follow him on a Journey to his bed, where he and his bed take a trip above town and thus suffers spectacular hallucinatory dreams' (Youngling. C). *Dream House* (2011), directed by Jim Sheridan is about a doting father currently residing in a house which is haunted by a mother and two kids that were believed to be murdered by him as recalled by his fellow village members. As there is no evidence, the man is able to walk free, however he has developed a split personality, or 'dream' as stated by the title, to believe that his wife and kids are still alive and vying with him.

He embarks on a wild Journey to uncover the truth of how his family was murdered with the help of his neighbor who believed him from the beginning that he did not commit the grotesque and unforgivable crimes. One difference in early and mainstream cinema is that the narrative of *Dream House* explores the art in deception to the audience's mind, to confuse us with the conscious and unconscious state that we can't differentiate what is real and what's not; however, to achieve this, mainstream narrative uses an arrangement of complex codes and conventions within the narrative.

The director will use time codes, close-ups, and continuity in other measured shots, to create an illusion to the audience so they can believe it and empathic with it. However, as explained by Tom Gunning, early cinema

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narrative didn't focus on complex codes to reiterate a reality, it was more concerned with showing the audience more about the tricks' the director/artist could achieve with the camera. There were hardly any close-ups or point of view shots; more so exaggerated movements to emphasize feeling. The camera was more used as a spectator placed at one fixed position.

In *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend*, the camera is always fixed, and the object of interest is always at the centre of the screen. " The chase had been the original truly narrative genre for the cinema, providing a model for causality and linearity as well as a basic editing continuity. " Gunning, T. (1922) p. 4

In *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend*, even though the camera is used as a spectator watching this character, and though the film consists of no close-ups, Porter uses montages to achieve with his techniques as an artist and with the invention of cinema, he is not focusing on telling a story, the story is for the viewers to interpret themselves. ... TTS inspiration for the avenue grade of the early decades of this century needs to be re-explored' Gunning, T. (1922) p. 5

Mainstream cinema uses codes conventions such as those in Walter March's ' *In the Blink of an Eye*' to communicate narrative and is more focused with creating an illusion to the audience. In *Dream House*, we as the viewer are deceived as much as the mental health patient. This film is very tidy in its use of short cuts, but the *MIS- en-scene* is approached and executed systematically that we as the viewer then begin to unravel the twist of the narrative.

Only during about halfway into the film, we are notified that this man is believed to have killed his family that he believes in his head are still alive. When he then revisits the home every time after, we are visually notified each time that the characters are just illusions of his mind via effects and MIS-en-scene, when his house starts to crumble whilst also appearing dark, grey and lifeless, as stated by Hermann, W. 'The film must become graphic art'. The audience then experiences a poetic MIS-en-scene, as similar to Dream of a Rarebit Fiend, to differentiate what is real and what's not. The purpose of art is to impart negation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. 'Shylock, V. Even though early cinematic wasn't as complex as it is today, the idea still remains which is a similarity between the two films spoke about in the essay, and in general. Directors, artists, writers and producers work alongside each other as a team to create cinematography, which the viewer can then reflect on.

Early cinematic used continuity shot editing and montages to demonstrate surrealism and to also build up conflict. Dream of a Rarebit Fiend interprets Juxtaposition, shocking imagery, and exaggerated body movement, very poetic in imminence's to communicate a narrative to the audience which would there after linger on the viewers mind to understand it. Dream House incorporates less of montages in terms of two complete different shots layered onto each other, and Juxtaposition, but sticks to continuity editing and effects to build conflict.

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As *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend* starts signifier such as the characters attire versus his behavior, signifies a sense of wealth versus gluttony, and so subconsciously we initiate a sense to believe that this man may deserve some approaching transgression. In early cinema, as it being a clear canvas, no right or wrong answer to it, cinema wasn't really as much structured to have a beginning, middle and end, to offer any closure to its viewers. Along with many other films from that era, are known to leave viewers baffled, so much so a viewer may want to watch it again to maybe profit an understanding.

However one of the differences in early cinema compared to structure of beginning, middle and end with its climax and anti climax's. In mainstream cinema there is a flow of action with a clear developmental pattern and a cause-and-effect chain. M?? I?? es, IPPP, (1996) In *Dream House*, even though it has a poetic narrative given its twists' and surprises, it has a clear flow of action, and mystery is revealed to the audience, that the central character believes he is someone else (his dream state), we then see the steps taken to overcome this nightmare he is living in reality; and this systematically gives the viewer a sense of closure.

One way it achieve this is via a philosophy mainstream cinema incorporates called the ' Kink Eye', to let the audience see it as if they were a art of it. In early cinema, specifically in regards to dream cinematography, the viewer is a spectator in the character/writers eye, however in mainstream cinema the viewer is more a part of the character. Artists/ writers/ producers use films to challenge the ideology of society: they included erotic and anti-religious

elements that challenged socially accepted behavior. Combs, N). In Dream House we are blind to speculation, where we see through the characters eye and this arises empathy and understanding. This method I feel, has successful potential more so than early cinema, because it confuses the viewer much more so they question the toenails of their own minds and mental state, and this method dictates how the audience should do it, by directing them subconsciously. Another difference in early and mainstream cinema is the spectators' viewpoint and the way cinema is delivered to us.

Early exhibition of film, held first by the Lompier brothers, made a room very basic, holding a few rows of chairs, a piano, the screen and the projector. Films tended to be projected Wherever facilities existed for entertaining the general public' (Abram, N). They were projected whilst the public were eating, dancing, funfairs and theatres. Again going back to the intentions of early cinema, not to create an illusion through a narrative, but creating it through MIS-en-scene.