

Genre and narrative

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



The two areas I have decided to look into for my assignment are genre and narrative, firstly I will begin to look at narrative, and the media text I am going to be referring to is Quentin Tarentino's Pulp Fiction. The protagonists are John Travolta (Vincent Vega), Samuel Jackson (Jules Winnfield), Uma Thurman (Mia Wallace), Bruce Willis (Butch), Ving Rhames (Marchellus Wallace), Amanda Plummer (Honey Bunny), Tim Roth (Pumpkin).

Main Body

Narrative is a fundamental characteristic of fictional films. A narrative film contains various human stories and documentaries. Also, the meaning of narrative gives to us to understand the sense of films with the consequence to understand the sense of the world. Narrative is the story comes about in the film and the all links of events of story of films-. " We can consider a narrative to be a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space. A narrative begins with one situation; a series of changes occurs according to a pattern of cause and effect; finally, a new situation arises that brings about the end of the narrative" (D. Bordwell & Thomson, 1997: 90)

" We make sense of a narrative, then, by identifying its events and linking them by cause and effect, time, and space. As viewers, we do other things as well. We often infer events that are not explicitly presented, and we recognize the presence of materials that is extraneous to the story world." (D. Borwell & Thomson, 1997: 91)

The narrative in Pulp Fiction is used in a way to create a cultural statement of the American way of life. The characters are living their lives through

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mass culture; the way they talk and serve that purpose. Also, in a narrative included the plot of film which is important for the structure of the story. The causes, effects, story and plot have immediate relationship with the time and location. All those characteristics are very significant for the structure of the plot, the chronological serious of events and the understanding of narrative actions.

Pulp Fiction is based on the narrative and it establishes all the narrative actions. In this film we have three plots. The first plot shows the couple Honey Bunny and Pumpkin who are organizing the robbery in the coffee shop.

The second plot shows Vincent Vega and Jules two gangsters that go to collect money for the lord of drugs Marcellus, their boss. After that Vincent takes Marcellus's wife Mia out for dinner. Things get nasty when Mia sniffs the heroin that Vincent keeps in his pocket and she overdoses. Vincent takes her to his friend Lance where they give her an adrenaline shot straight to her heart. Vincent revives Mia and takes her back home.

The third plot shows Butch who killed Vincent, the conflict between of Butch and of Marcellus and the adventure who they have in the continuity. In the end we are shown again Vincent and Jules who have to clear the car from the occasional accident.

In Pulp fiction we can distinguish many elements of American popular culture. For example Vincent is a gangster and he does not have a relationship with the popular culture because he does not watch television.

Vincent distinguishes Marilyn Monroe from a Jayne Mansfield, basic characteristic of American popular culture.

The characters of Tarantino live their life through references in mass culture for example: " when Jules has to talk down honey as they face off against each other with big guns, she tells her to be 'cool', specifically, as he puts it, like the Fonz in the TV show Happy Days". (Dana Polan, 2000: 13)

In order for someone to understand the intertextual references of the film on the American popular culture he must be also a part of that culture, he has to live in and consume that culture.

The structure of the film is based on the chronological series, interrupted and intermeshed narratives, and various changes of scenes. So, we observed that Pulp Fiction is the puzzle that the spectator must connect the interrupted scenes and put in the correct chronological order. For example: in the beginning of the film we see Honey Bunny and Pumpkin planning the robbery and the resolution of the scene we see at the end. Another scene which has not been put in the correct chronological order is the scene where Butch kills Vincent in the apartment and then we see Vincent again with Jules.

" Tarantino himself in interviews argues that the film is accessible even with this a chronology, and it is true that the film was able to cross over from independent film cult classic to mainstream hit-but there is no doubt that encourages an active spectator who is given the job of putting the pieces of a puzzle together".(Dana Polan, 2000: 26)

So, there are narrative changes that make the film a mixture of calm and intense, for example: A classic example of the intense mixed with the calm is the scene where Vincent is in Mia's bathroom talking to himself and Mia is sitting on the sofa relaxed and calm. The calm is distracted when Mia mistakes Vincent's heroin for cocaine and she overdoses.

Nevertheless, we see that Butch is a very important character in the film because: he moves the narrative ahead in reverse with Vincent who loses the major development of narrative.

For example, Vincent spends all the major moments of the film in the bathroom and kills him with the weapon Vincent left in the kitchen. When Mia has taken the heroin and lost her senses again he was in the bathroom and finally, when Pumpkin and Honey Bunny were robbing the coffee shop he was again in the bathroom.

Also, the characters are important for the narrative action of the film. In Pulp Fiction the characters are active members for the narrative.

Jules is a very strong person, cruel professional on the one hand but he is also a very religious, open-minded and ideological individual. Butch is a very diverse character as well. On the one hand he is very affectionate, moral and idealistic and on the other hand he is very cruel and realistic. This is diversity is seen in almost all the main characters in the film.

Editing is the way that the scenes are connected to each other, the way those scenes interact. Editing is very important to Pulp Fiction because it's

the tool of creating the intermeshed narrative and creating the individual stylistic identity of the film.

" Many of the scenes in Pulp Fiction involve moving from one place to another, two examples of that movement are the following, from outside the kids apartment into their living room; from outside the nightclub into Marcellus's lair; These acts of movement are shown by continuous movements of the camera (for example, the tracking shot of Vincent going to meet Marcellus at the boxing venue). Those movements from one place to another are very similar to when with a click of the mouse, one moves from one side to the next on a video game or a website. The scene in which Butch goes back to rescue Marcellus is certainly like a game, where a hero arms him or herself before descending into the dungeon to battle with a evil forces". (Dana Polan, 2000: 35)

The character of Mia is revealed within small pieces of visual information. Snapshots of dialogue and image are used to create certain conflict. The extreme close-ups to her red lips and her hands operating to control stick are there to create a feeling of mysteriousness and sexual voyeurism.

The use of point-of-view shots in the case of Butch work to make the audience identify with the character and discover elements of the story along with him.

The word genre comes from French (and originally Latin) word for 'kind' or 'class'. The term is known widely in many fields such as media theory, rhetoric and more recently linguistics. Robert Allen notes that (for most of

each 2,000 years, genre study has been primarily nominological and typological in function. That is to say, it has taken as its principal task the division of the world of literature into types and the meaning of those types...'(1989).

Steve Neal stresses that 'genres are not systems: they are process of systematization (Neal 1980). Literary genres in particular tended to be regarded as fixed forms. Neal argued against strictly differentiated and fixed systems. He saw a range of cinematic codes which involved rigid rules of inclusion and exclusion, which made up the relationships of repetition. Opposed to Neal as theorist Gledhill, she believed that they are no rigid rules of inclusion and exclusion. Gledhill believed 'Genres... are not discrete systems, consisting of a fixed number of listable items' (Gledhill 1985, 60). Distinguishing clear definition from one genre to another is difficult and genres tend to overlap. Buckingham (1993) believed that 'genre is not... simply "given" by the culture: rather, it is in a constant process of negotiation and change'.

Genre always be a problem of to define many doubts surround the theory: film theorist Robert Stam (2000) debated if genres were really out of there. He believed genres differed for throughout different cultures.

Pulp fiction is fundamentally a gangster film, however taking three sub-stories and the projecting them at different times it creates a new type of film. The fact the ending takes place in distorted time makes it unclear to the audience what happened. Unlike almost every other mainstream Hollywood production.

The director thoroughly undermines the traditional myths and effectively replaces them with myths of his own construction. The complexities of structure, character and theme within Pulp Fiction exceed the conventional boundaries of the gangster genre and the myths commonly associated with gangster films become inadequate. The narrative leads to non-romanticized situations and characters that appear too realistic to be contained within the "inadequate" boundaries of the gangster myth. Here then, Tarantino is effectively exposing the inadequacies of the gangster myth.

Conclusion

Concluding, the Pulp Fiction gives to the spectator the ability to discuss and think about the messages that the film is trying to get across. This helps the spectator to open his/her mind and to expand his/her culture and personality. Pulp fiction can be seen all together as a reference of the American way of life and culture, through fictional characters and situations it is portrayed the culture of the middle class American people.