

Cinematic techniques



**ASSIGN
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Exploring the ways ' Cinematic Techniques' are used in the opening sequence of the ' The Shawshank Redemption' (0: 00 to 0: 03.

30), to portray character and develop certain effects within the film drawing emphasis to Cinematography and Mise-En-Scene. In this essay I hope to analyze and decrypt the various cinematic techniques used by the director to serve a purpose, the film being that of " The Shawshank Redemption" focusing on the specific time codes of (0. 00. 00 to 00: 03: 06) and the specific elements of Cinematography, Sound and mise-en-scène. The film portrays the story of Andy Dufresne, a banker who spends nearly two decades in Shawshank State Prison for the murder of his wife and her lover despite his pleading cases of innocence.

During his time at the prison, he befriends a fellow inmate, " Red" and finds himself protected by the guards after the warden begins using him in his money laundering operation. The opening sequence of the film focuses on introducing one of the main characters in the film, ' Andy Dufresne'. Andy is a banker, who finds out that his wife is having an affair. Within this sequence, we find that Andy is convicted for the murder of both his wife and her lover, and that he is sentenced to undertake two life sentences at the ' Shawshank prison'.

The first editing technique that is used is a split edit, this is used with both diegetic and non-diegetic sound which is synchronous to the on screen action. As the titles begin, we can hear the non-diegetic sound of music playing. The song begins as non-diegetic, but another split edit is cleverly used as the images appear on screen, the sound flicks to being diegetic as it

is playing on the protagonist's radio. This technique is used to link continuity within the film and to fade the opening credits into the actual beginning of the film.

The song, 'If I Didn't Care' which is played during this sequence conveys a slow rhythm and lagging voice of its composer, along with the deep, drawn out bass which adds to the feeling that the crime scene is a place of great sadness. The song title is also filled with irony as in personal opinion it's suggesting that the protagonist 'doesn't care' when it's clear from his intoxication and emotional distraught that he does 'care'. The film continues with an establishing shot of the area which leads to a close up of the central protagonist's face, this shows the audience where the character is and will be used to build sympathy later on. At this point, the camera is panning across the scene in a smooth action which fits to the pace of the music and helps to enhance the mise-en-scène the director is creating.

The mise-en-scène plays a vital part in creating effect to its audience as it refers to all that appears within the camera's shot, including lighting, color, setting and camera movements, In the establishing shot we find that Andy's face is hidden in shadow. This symbolizes his extreme anger, but also his inability to show emotion. The next major editing technique that is used is called an eye line match, this technique is where the camera cuts from a character to a point of view shot of what the character has been looking at. In the clip, this is used when the protagonist is shown in a close up shot to be looking at and reaching towards something and then the next shot is a point of view eye line shot of the character's hand taking something from the glove box. This technique is used to link sequences together and to reveal enigmas

about the prospective plot, it also makes the audience feel as though they are part of the narrative and that they are involved. At 00: 01: 41, there is a high angle used to show the audience exactly what the protagonist is doing, the shot forces the audience to focus on the gun.

The sequence here follows continuity as it doesn't jump around or the gun doesn't change positions for example. The high angle is almost an over the shoulder shot of the action but this is not used because by being used as it is, the prop is center of the screen and therefore most important. A graphic match is used at 1: 51 when the bottle that the protagonist is holding changes to his face in the next shot (A Graphic match, also called a match cut, is a cut in film between either two different objects, two different spaces, or two different compositions in which an object in the two shots graphically match, often helping to establish a strong continuity of action and linking the two shots metaphorically). The various close-up shots of the gun and the whisky bottle symbolize the state of Andy's life.

His situation has lead him to depression, drinking, but most shamefully, the need for revenge. This type of editing allows the flow of continuity to be more smooth and effective. The shots together convey the idea that the protagonist is getting more intoxicated as the scene progresses, this wouldn't have been as obvious without the use of the graphic match.

Juxtaposition of color is used to a great effect at 00: 02. 00. Here, the viewer sees two contrasting images of the protagonist - in the car and in the court room.

In the first image, he looks generally scruffy and worn out, his hair is a mess and his tie is loose. In the next image that the audience views there is a vast change; he is in a smart suit, his hair is neat, and his tie is formal. I feel the use of contrasting images juxtaposes the scenes and from this we can see how the different environments have caused a change in formalities - these help to create a visual theme which the viewer can relate to. At 2: 15, the shots help to establish a mise-en-scène for the viewer. The shot changes from a close up of the protagonist to a point of view mid shot of the lawyer, here, the technique that is used is an eye-line match from the central character. The technique shows the viewer where the protagonist is, what's happening and what he's been looking at, The technique helps the viewer to associate themselves with the action on screen, so that they can follow the narrative that occurs.

I'll draw emphasis to the lighting used in the sequence, in personal opinion I think it shapes mood and develops Andy's secretive character to the audience, Moving onto an observation, within the establishing sequence we only witness natural light upon Andy's face, which leads to a creation of a shadow which intern creates a flat image of the character.. this type of lighting is known as chiaroscuro lighting and is used in cinematography to indicate extreme low-key lighting to create distinct areas of light and darkness in films, in films like ' Schindlers list' and ' The Godfather' it's very common to find the adoption technique, it's especially common in ' film noir'. I feel ' Frank Darabont' wanted to include this technique within this scene for the given reason that it add's an element of insecurity to the audience, it leads them to ask themselves questions such as, is this character

trustworthy or not ? or, should I feel this character is about to do an act which is a negative one, it's open to interpretation what questions the audience will evoke but they're what I thought of when I watched the movie in my analysis.

The technique called a cutaway is used at 00: 02: 45 (it's essentially the interruption of a continuously filmed action by inserting a view of something else) in which we see a clip of the protagonist's wife and her lover together. The shot flicks away from the main action and then flicks back to the courtroom. This serves as a flashback to the narrative and forms a linear narrative - where events happen in a storyline in chronological order. The flashback is only a momentary interruption of the main scene, defining the cutaway technique. There is also a non diegetic sound of music that is played in the background which is also known as incidental music, I personally think this has the effect of linking the scenes together and establishing tension and suspense. A juxtaposition of color is also used at 00: 02: 45, between Andy and his wife's unfaithful actions, as we notice the difference in color of the two scenarios.

I feel the bright, red and yellow of the bedroom furniture to express passion and the solemn blue of the background within the car to express the sheer depression of the character. The graphic match technique which is described earlier is used again at 00: 03: 06 in which we see the protagonist's face in the center of the screen and then the next shot is of the gun which is also in the center of the screen. The effect is defined as; where two different objects are dissolved from one to another, usually the same color or shape. At this point, the gun is obviously not the same color or shape as the protagonist's

head but I feel the technique represents a link between the character and the gun, creating a possible enigma?, there is then a panning reaction shot of the crowd as they watch the case unravel, the shot is a straight cut from the previous shot and reveals what the public are thinking about the protagonist.

Over this pan, there I also a sound bridge of the lawyer's voice talking to the protagonist. I feel the incorporation of such a technique intensifies isolation for the central character. In Conclusion the film ' The Shawshank Redemption' features a wide range of editing and sound techniques, it uses these to an effect of establishing a mise-en-scène and a complex narrative, The Cinematic Techniques which I mentioned in the title (emphasizing the choice of shot, and camera movement at the moment) have been used extremely well - they enhance the viewer's enjoyment of the film and display the narrative in the best possible way.