

Film analysis essay on crash (2004)

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



The movie “ Crash” - from director and producer Paul Haggis - pictures one day in the lives of various characters in Los Angeles, all of them from different social and racial backgrounds but nevertheless connected and intertwined throughout the story. The movie’s story is being told in a mostly chronological way, except that it puts one scene to the very beginning of the film and then cuts back to the day prior, indicated by the visual text “ yesterday”.

In this first sequence, detectives Graham Waters and his partner Ria have been rearended when they arrive at a crime scene, leading to a fight between Hipic Ria and the accident responsible, furious Chinese Kim Lee, involving race-related insults towards each other. Breaking through the temporal order and showing everything that has happened prior to this fight gives the explanation why Kim Lee is so furious and why she was in such a hurry, as her husband is in hospital for being run over by a car.

This strategy of playing with the viewer’s opinion and sympathy about the single characters is one that is central for the movie. Therefore a lot of prejudices are implicitly and explicitly presented through the narrative and the movie’s surface. Anthony and Peter for example are being pictured as two young adolescents just leaving a diner and discussing the (non-)discriminating treatment of the waitress. In Anthony’s opinion even other black people are racist towards Afro-Americans and that white people are scared of them although they are not even dressed like “ gang-bangers”.

This gives the impression of young people being worried and angry about ungrounded racialdiscrimination. Then the dialogue suddenly changes, both of them pull a gun and they steal the car from Rick and Jean Cabot - the two

white people they just accused of having prejudices about them – leaving the viewer with a sudden change in the characterization they were given before. The movie continues like this when it shows the Hipic locksmith Daniel Ruiz - mean-looking, tattooed and with a shaved head.

Jean Cabot's assumption about him being a Gang member who will sell the keys to their house as soon as he is out the door is consistent with his outward appearance. It is not until later in the movie, when he arrives at home taking loving care of his daughter, that the first impression is negated and turned into the opposite. Most of the characters in Crash turn out to be different than the first picture that is drawn of them all the time turning the story towards unanticipated events and revealing important information about character backgrounds. Beyond that, it is important mentioning the complex net of connections and entanglements that occur between the characters and their stories and events. There is Jean Corbet, accusing her locksmith Daniel Ruiz of being a gang member, whose daughter is almost shot by the Persian shop owner Farhad, whose daughter works in the mortuary where Detective Graham Waters dead brother is identified as Peter, who stole Jean Corbet's car, making her change the locks in her house in the first place.

This list of connections could be continued with for another while, as there are more characters involved with even more links between them. This motive of connection is also shown by the cuts from one scene to the next via an audible and/or a visual connection. For instance when Ria storms out of Graham Waters apartment and slams the door after her, the film cuts to Officer John Ryan lying in his bed – suddenly being woken up by his Crash –

2004 Identity and Diversity in American Film Miriam Keller - 05/30/2012

Miriam Keller - 05/30/2012 groaning father.

To the viewer it looks like he is wakes up from the slamming door, although there is no diegetic connection. Another example is the cut from Anthony and Peter just having stolen the black navigator, to the crime scene of the shooting between two drivers. As the car with Anthony and Peter drives through the picture it cuts to a police car passing by in exactly the same camera-shot and revealing the crime scene behind it. Match-cuts like this are a reoccurring stylistic element, emphasizing the just specified net of entanglements.

The central topic of racism and prejudices in the movie Crash is shown from various different angles, pointing at the complexity of this issue. It states that nothing and no one can be easily characterized and the importance of looking at the bigger picture instead of pigeonholing someone. All the different characters with their intertwined stories make it clear that everyone is connected and the range of influence of one person's behavior is further than one would expect.