

The Truman show – image

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Discuss the use of and creation of images in The Truman Show. Refer specifically to three key scenes. Pay particular attention to the filming techniques used in these scenes.

The Truman Show is a film that relies heavily on the use of evocative images. To create these images, the director, Peter Weir uses a number of techniques. The major techniques used throughout the film include camera angles, framing, shot types, camera movement, the style of music and costuming, and sequencing. Combining two or more of these techniques enables Weir to create emotive images.

In the second scene, when we see Truman leaving his house for the first time in the film, a number of the above-mentioned techniques can be seen. As Truman leaves his house he says to his neighbour in a corny style, In case I dont see you, good afternoon, good evening and good night. While he says this he has a cheesy, almost fake smile on his face. This gives the impression to viewers as if it is almost scripted. Also when Truman leaves his house we see his conservative costuming. His outfit is nostalgic of the fifties. This particular sequence is filmed from a middle distance shot. By using this shot, the director is able to show us Trumans surroundings. We see the perfectly mowed lawns, white picket fences, pastel-coloured houses and the bright blue sky. The image created is idyllic and almost too perfect, showing that his whole world is artificial.

As Truman approaches his car in scene two a large object comes crashing onto the middle of Trumans street. The sound that comes from the object is a contrast to the atmosphere already created. As the object is falling through

the sky there is an extreme high angle of Seahaven. When Truman picks it up and looks to the sky a low camera angle is used showing us the clear blue sky again and giving the sense that Truman is small and insignificant. Once in his car we see Truman from a hidden camera. It is made obvious that Truman is unaware of it because the shot is framed by a circle of black and across the image we can see the dials of the radio. While driving along we hear the radio announcers saying that a plane has been dropping parts onto Seahaven and that it is nothing to worry about. The director of The Truman Show, Christof has used this to manipulate Truman into believing everything that goes on around him is perfectly normal.

In another scene of the film, where we see Christof being interviewed on a television program called Tru talk, we again see various filming techniques implemented to create particular images. Throughout the scene we see Christof in a dominant position. While being interviewed, there is a small image of Truman in the top right of the screen, taking up only a fraction of the screen. This image is symbolic of the power Christof has over Truman. Images created in this scene give the impression that Christof is almost a god-like figure. We see the huge moon that has been shown throughout the film is actually the directors headquarters and is known as the omnicam ecosphere. Christof actually lives on the moon and sees everything, like a god.

The lighting in this scene is an important technique used to create a particular image. Whilst the camera is on Christof, there is a soft blue light covering the shot. This creates an image of coldness and darkness. The way in which Christof speaks also gives this impression. His voice is slow and very

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cool. He has little expression, but at the same time seems to be passionate about what he is talking about. When Christof tells the interviewer how Meryl, Trumans wife will be leaving the show, the camera cuts to Sylvia who gently touches the screen with Truman on it. The image of Truman on the screen brings great sadness to Sylvia. Also in the scene we see Christofs costume change slightly. When he is not being interviewed his beret comes off. When this occurs it symbolises Christof stepping out of the directors role.

In the final scene of the film we see Truman sailing on a small boat. We see Christof directing the shots. He calls for the shot to be cabin cam. When this occurs, Christof says, Thats our hero shot. In this shot, Truman is looking relatively happy and content. In order to stop Truman from reaching the perimeter of the set Christof goes about setting a storm on Truman. Again, placing Christof in the omniscam ecosphere and directing where the storm should hit makes Christof seem like a god. Christof feels like a god too, and this is why he has no problem with trying to kill Truman. However through his determination we see Truman survive the storms and sail into the side of the set. We see a long shot of Truman from behind, banging his fists against the sky as he realises how trapped he really is. The long shot enables us to see all of Trumans actions. Truman then walks along the side of the set until he discovers a set of stairs leading to a door. The white steps resemble a stairway to heaven, or in this case, freedom. Another event symbolising the god-like status of Christof is when he speaks through the clouds. There is a low angle shot of the sky, with light beams shining through and Christof announces in a booming voice, I am the creator of a television show that gives hope, joy and inspiration to millions.

As Truman decides to leave the set he says his opening lines again. In case I dont see you, good afternoon, good evening and goodnight. Truman then gives a stage bow and with that he leaves the set. The camera then cuts to various audiences around the globe, all of which are ecstatic and cheering for Truman. The camera then cuts to two security guards and one says, What else is on? Lets check the TV guide. This line shows how the worldwide audience was basically only watching the program because it was on. The emotional attachment of the audience to Truman shown throughout the film is almost instantaneously wiped. This is somewhat humiliating to Christof, as he has been living thinking how important he was to so many people when really nobody particularly cared.

The Truman show is somewhat ironic. In demonstrating how Christof, the director creates certain images using different techniques to manipulate the audience of the Truman Show, we too are being manipulated by the techniques employed by the real director, Peter Weir. The most important images throughout the film are all a result of successfully combining the various filming, costuming and lighting techniques available.