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Balanced Dualism: Technology and Filmmaking

From Super 8 mm film in the 60s and 70s to the digital cameras of today, we see the story unfold through the camera's eye. Even camcorders used to record home videos are able to link family members to coveted memories, kept safe in memory cards. Today technology is viewed as a double edged sword, bringing advancements to society, while also bringing potential harm onto others. While technology can be misused, movies stand in stark contrast, as they provide a unique power to capture emotions and recreate shared experiences, allowing viewers to connect with the film and others. The filming convention allowing the imaginary world to invite the viewer in is ironically called "suturing" as it craftily coheres many film pieces together. Dr. Stan Williams, a screenplay writer and director, explains suturing as "a process in which filmmakers use to make the audience feel as though the camera is not there," (Williams). *Lady Bird*, *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, and *Petite Maman* each utilize a form of suturing to propel the audience *into* the movie, which allows the audience to connect with either the plot of the film, the characters, or a combination of both. Each movie focuses on the relationship between a mother and daughter, yet takes three drastically different approaches. Simultaneously, the movies are centered around a prevalent issue in society such as gender, grief, acceptance, and coming-of-age. Through the use of emotional, physical, and/or moral suturing, specific scenes transcend language, cultural barriers, and experience, allowing an audience to feel tethered to characters or dilemmas within each film.

Lady Bird: Physical Suturing

Lady Bird, directed by Greta Gerwig, follows the life of Christine McPherson — or “Lady Bird,” as she calls herself — and focuses on her coming-of-age story in 2002 Sacramento, California. The movie depicts Lady Bird’s relationships with her friends, her brother, but most importantly, her mother. Lady Bird and her mother have a strained relationship, partly due to tension regarding money, as well as Lady Bird’s seemingly reckless nature. This movie utilizes physical, emotional, and moral suturing in order to connect the audience with both the characters and plot. Through the progression of the movie, Greta Gerwig is able to highlight Lady Bird and her mother, Marion, so as to display their similarities and differences, while amplifying their tension. Gerwig utilizes physical suturing in one scene which features Marion driving through Sacramento on her way home from work. The scene aptly displays the uniquely beautiful sites of Sacramento, but more importantly, emphasizes Marion’s gratitude — contrasting Lady Bird’s disregard for the little things her mother tacitly communicates. Towards the end of the film, Lady Bird drives through Sacramento, regretting her past statements regarding her hatred for her hometown. This scene signifies her growing maturity, and allows the audience to recognize her similarities to her mother. Absent of dialogue, this scene transcends language; by purely focusing on scenery it powerfully draws a contrast between mother and daughter. Greta Gerwig’s use of space and scene symmetry between two characters in the same location grasps the audience’s attention, and reveals Lady Bird’s growth of character.

Petit Maman: Emotional Suturing

Petit Maman, directed by Céline Sciamma, is a film centered around Nelly, an eight year old girl coping with the loss of her grandmother who discovers a unique and newfound

connection with her mother as the film progresses. At the film's outset, Nelly greets every senior in the nursing home where her grandma resides, signifying that her grandmother had been living in the facility for quite some time. The audience sees the kind hearted nature of Nelly and her lack of fear of those aging or even dying as her grandmother perishes in the first scene.

Emotional suturing is used in this scene to allow the audience to sympathize with Nelly who isn't as distraught as her mom who is hiding away unable to cope well, but shows how Nelly needs to grieve in her own way and find a way to connect with her mom. The next portion of the film employs a suspension of disbelief technique when it focuses on the relationship between Nelly and her mother, by portraying them as the same age. This technique requires the audience to suspend their acknowledgment of the fictional nature of the movie in order to believe in this possibility, thus acting as a form of suturing to create connections between the audience and the plot of the film. Nelly (the young child) meets an eight year old version of her mother, and they quickly become friends. The film implies they slowly discover their true identities (mother and daughter) and savor the presence of the mother/grandmother who dotes on them, despite having died at the inception of the film. This distinctive film's emotional suturing explores the idea of multi-generational coping with familial loss, as well as allows an avenue for communication, thereby overcoming typical barriers common after a death. With film suturing, audience members who have experienced loss in their own families might empathize with these characters—either through the mother's eyes or the young daughter's for whom grief is poignant despite being felt differently.

Everything Everywhere All at Once: Moral Suturing and MPS

Following Evelyn Quan Wang, *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, focuses on the strained relationship between a mother and daughter, intertwined with interdimensional travel. The film is divided into three parts: Everything, Everywhere, and All at Once. In her universe, Evelyn's marriage is on the brink of disaster, and she's unable to connect with her daughter. Through her travels in different universes, she embraces her values and focuses on what matters to her as she recognizes that her wish to live a different life does not align with her current actions. This witty, clever, yet devastatingly beautiful film tackles mother-daughter relationships in a unique and unforgettable way. The movie also focuses on pressures from one's culture — expressing the bravery it takes to push back against cultural norms, risking breaking familial ties. As the film begins, Evelyn is introduced as unlikable, critical, and insensitive; yet, Waymond, her husband, is portrayed as the level-headed parental figure, who often chooses to be empathetic and kind. He declares, “the only thing I do know is that we have to be kind. Please, be kind. Especially when we don't know what's going on,” (Quan). This quote exemplifies a Moral Premise Statement, as he clearly states one of the central themes of the movie: kindness's ability to save ourselves and the world. Oftentimes, filmmakers will employ the Moral Premise technique “which describes the core values around which the story produces conflict. This is because all physical action and conflict begins as psychological decisions derived from the character's moral values,” (Williams). In the case of this film, Waymond's empathetic and kind-hearted nature is explicated through his Moral Premise Statement (MPS). Thus, *Everything Everywhere All at Once* includes a Moral Premise Statement, to not only state the overarching theme of the film, but also utilize all three suturing techniques in order to connect its audience to the film.

Everything Everywhere All at Once: Physical Suturing

The final scene of the movie is a direct parallel to a scene in the part one: Everything, in which Evelyn runs after Joy, her daughter, outside of their family's laundromat. In the first scene, Evelyn is unable to communicate her feelings and show her love for her daughter, therefore she insults her instead. While, after Waymond announces the Moral Premise Statement, Evelyn runs after Joy outside of the laundromat yet again, but she is able to convey her love for her daughter, signifying a shift in their relationship and displaying Evelyn's growth as a result of her interdimensional travel and newfound understanding of the power/need for kindness.

Concluding Remarks

Society is evolving alongside technology, yet the perils of such advancements seem to become more apparent. Technology is fraught with isolation, a constant need for improvement, and negativity. However, filmmakers are able to utilize technology in order to connect viewers, and explore difficult themes. Movies can act as a vessel to replicate unresolved conflicts, or simulate individual difficulties through the use of suturing and other techniques. Consequently, the audience experiences enchanting cinematography, amiable characters, and even "suspension of disbelief" though place and time. By using any one of these techniques with camera work and technology, these films transcend language, cultural differences, and personal experiences by creating scenes or dilemmas that appeal to a variety of demographics/viewers. Therefore films and technology can be viewed as balanced dualism as they are an opposing positive force to the potential negativity/harm it can bring onto others.

Works Cited

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