

Dylan Bollard ~ Week 10 ~ Walters ~ ENG 196

- (CINEMATOGRAPHY - LENS CHOICES) The entire film being shot in a shallow depth of field adds mystery to the story, for the same reason that the elongated soundtrack does. The depth of the film reflects not only Jeff and Kris' personal traits, but the larger view of what the film is. The psychological capacity of Jeff and Kris is limited to say the least. In the beginning of the film when Kris is busy at work, it's obvious she isn't having any trouble being part of the grand scheme of things, given that there are a lot of shots of her out of the shallow depth of field. For example, when she is on the phone with a client and studying the index cards we see her in a more cinematic, deep shot. She appears to be in the frame, connected with what is going on around her. Contrary to the rest of the film when she appears to be separated from the rest of the frame, these images are important for creating a visual contextual difference between her mind before and after the supposed "experiments". Without having much dialogue in the film, and only really knowing three characters, it's hard to convey these differences outside of the lens choice. It would appear that most everything they shoot is with a short focal length. (It could be said that due to the limited budget, they only had enough money to rent one or two lenses, but I think the stylized image was what they were aiming for.) In addition to describing the mental capacity of our characters, this technique makes the whole film seem like a dream, and adds the mystery aspect. By showing us that our characters are in a mental fog, the information about their mental decline becomes apparent. But by showing their fog, we're also literally seeing their interest of perception of what is around them decline as well. For example, when she begins cutting herself after she wakes up from the experiment there is a noticeable difference in perception from the camera. The camera's view of the world becomes a close examination of the smallest things they do, because to do anything for them is stepping outside of their world. In addition to describing the mental capacity of our characters, the shallow depth of field technique shows the limited

effort given to describing the world around them. The film is only concerned with Kris, Jeff, and the pig guy, nothing else. To be focussed on such small parts the film furthers that these people only have enough mental fortitude to look after and care about themselves. The lack of caring from the camera reflects their lack of looking around. It also makes the rare frames out of the shallow depth of field pop and mean something.

- (SOUNDTRACK) The soundtrack to the film is one long sustained succession of chords, which helps to thread the emotional disconnection Kris and Jeff have with the outside world. By sustaining a small selection of notes and frequencies, the soundtrack reflects their inability to process beyond this simple expression. Just as the camera's depth suggested their lack of interest or ability to focus on the outside world, so does the soundtrack. The fact that the pig guy creates the sounds heard in the film would lead one to believe he was responsible for the experiments. The fact that the soundtrack is prolonged during the whole film, and that it's coming from the experimentation of sound creation of someone in the film, suggests further that we are supposed to feel trapped inside the minds of Kris and Jeff. The camera literally traps us, the soundtrack we're forced to listen to traps us, and the moods we are supposed to feel completely trap us. The soundtrack is and of itself one suspended emotion, just like the one emotion surveyed from Kris and Jeff throughout the whole film.
- (CINEMA-SCOPE 2.39:1) The technical use of the cinemascope-esque picture format furthers the idea that our director wants us to focus whole heartedly on our characters' emotions, and what is not explicitly said or described in the film. By taking away roughly 20% of the viewable picture, we have to focus more intently on the emotions coming from Kris and Jeff. Technically, he's literally compressed our view of the film, just as he has shown the compressed view of the world that Kris and Jeff share. Also, when we think of the volume of something, we imagine increasing and decreasing the volume in a vertical position. For

example, adding liquid to a glass or bowl. By limiting how “tall” the frame is we are also shown that the characters have a low “volume” of emotion and mental ability. Carruth has dragged the frame out to the sides (anamorphic possibly or just editing technique) and stretched it thin for us to be able to see. With very little happening and the lack of it being explained in the film, it was important to be able to show literally that something was drawn out. This in combination with the soundtrack and shallow depth of field show just that. They show the decline of mental ability and the effect that their individual minds have on the outside world, not the other way around.

- (JUMP CUTS - EDITING) The editing in the film is incredibly interesting for a number of reasons. For example, the quick “jump cut”, is used profusely to show the passage of time. In a film where the director has decided not to have overlays to describe passing of time, and wouldn’t have a character say so, showing this is difficult. By cutting the scene before an audience has been trained to expect the cut, it drags the audience in wanting more. It also shows that something is missing. When we subtly acknowledge that something is missing due to an early cut, we can assume the next scene takes place in the future because it’s obvious that there was something there that we didn’t get to see. For example, when Kris has coffee with Jeff and gives him her business card, she sees him leave on the train. Before she can look over again to see him, the editor cut the scene. The next scene took place after in the week after Jeff had tried calling Kris. By providing the stylized cut, the editor effectively showed the passage of time. Jeff says in the next scene that he tried calling “last week”, but the audience needs a visual reference for time as well. Later in the film, the jump-cut is used several times to imply the passage of time without a character supplying a time frame at all. To use it so effectively throughout the film, it had to be perfect the first time they used it, so as to train the audience that less is truly more.

- (COLOR-PROFILE) In addition to shallow depth of field, a sustained soundtrack, and the limited availability of information presented by the 2.39:1 formatting, the flat color profile adds to the overall sense that Jeff and Kris are burnt out. The flat color profile is especially flat when either of them are alone in the film, almost as if they feel that way. In addition to feeling that way, they perceive the world that way. Often though, when they are seen together in the film, the color profile remains flat, but the contrast is elevated. It would seem that the elevation of contrast is included to show that even though the two of them are married, they are still very different in the sense that how they handle their own mental reclusiveness is different. The film is about their love in addition to the experiments, and they find that they are attracted to the fact that each of them are different in their own respective way. However, given that they have different limits and show a different perspective of the world, it suggests there is contrast between them. The color-grading that was done included this contrast as an effort to illuminate that contrast between their characters, as well as the emotional state in general.