Modern narrative structure in animated short films:
a tool to increase suspense

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Abstract

Classical narrative structure introduces specific principles and features to keep the audience engaged with the film. Modern, nonlinear narrative structures, however, provide their own techniques and tools in this sense. They can be utilized in animated short films to develop anticipation and suspense. The majority of animated short films are still focusing on classical narrative principles which only allows chronological order of time and sequence of events. Yet, a considerable potential of applying various nonlinear structures can be addressed when it comes to modern storytelling in animation. Consequently, filmmakers are able to increase suspense by solely adopting such variations. This paper discusses nonlinear narrative structures in five animated short films, "If anything happens I love you" (2021), "Alma" (2009), "Skhizein" (2008), "The house of small cubes" (2008) and "Maestro" (2005), and the way they suggest increased suspense by deviating from classical narrative principles. The present paper explains such potential by relying on David Bordwell theories, where he put an emphasis on important aspects of nonlinear narratives such as time, order, duration and frequency in particular. This paper argues that not only applying nonlinear structures are viable in the context of animated short films, different variations can be utilized as a powerful, innovative and beneficial tool in order to grab and hold the audience's attention without having to concentrate on an excessively complicated timeline in the story.

Keywords: Nonlinear structure, Animated short film, Character development, Time distortion, David Bordwell.

Introduction

Short films, introduced by Lumière brothers, have existed long before feature films. However, their narrative structure was departed from classical narrative premise after feature films were affected by modern era transformations. Feature films such as Citizen Kane (1941), which provided experimentation with linear sequence through flashback, could be considered as a stepping stone to the emergence of more flexible storytelling techniques as Bordwell contends in his book called "The way Hollywood tells it".

> Any temptation to see the studio aesthetic as unadventurous should be scotched by recalling all the dynamic storytelling experiments that emerged in the years 1940–1955. (Bordwell 2006, 72)

Animated-short films which follow the same principles of cinema, have been gradually impacted by the same revolutionary changes. Innovative approaches in narrative structure at the present time is probably far beyond what earliest animation productions, such as Émile Cohl's animated-short film, "A Fantasy" (1908), expected to happen. Successful audience engagement has always been the ultimate goal for either classical or contemporary filmmakers. There are a number of principles in cinema through which this quality has been achieved. Classical narration relies on the protagonists' explorations of the story world and the principal goal is mainly increasing the likelihood of sympathy for the character in a tense situation, thus anticipating final outcomes. For this reason, Syd Field's three-act model has been applied in classical screenwriting, and hence, the majority of classical narratives could be fit into the three acts introduced by this model in the beginning, middle and end of the plot. Other structures which introduced more than three parts are not the focus of this paper. A number of techniques have been applied by well-known filmmakers in order to effectively achieve narrative suspense. For instance, when it comes to suspense in cinema, Alfred Hitchcock is probably the most influential director, who successfully applied renowned techniques. He intended to provide the character with more restricted information than the viewer to create expectations.

Suspense could be improved as a result of utilizing various narrative structures in contemporary animated shorts. That is why narrative structures and their impact on temporal factors will be discussed in this paper. The film may not necessarily be dependent on the introduction of characters and their growing conflicts to achieve suspense. Experimenting with time in narrative structure which consists of frequency, order and duration provides flexible means to create narrative suspense. The Narrative structure of animate-short films have usually been conservative in attempting to grab a new perspective on such temporal features, but the contemporary wave of change which affected live cinema has motivated animation filmmakers to experiment with far more flexible patterns.

Theoretical Preliminaries

According to the theories of David Bordwell in his book called "Narration in the fiction film", the representation of the story on the screen and its temporal construction features are correlated. This article claims that contemporary animation-short films are benefiting from Bordwell theories to present the plot in a far more engaging way. The manipulation of temporal factors may result in less straightforward

stories in comparison with classic narration. However, the complexity level depends on the story requirements, applied techniques and the preferences of filmmakers. Bordwell refers to retardation, narrational gap and flashback as some results of such manipulation. "If anything happens I love you" (Govier, McCormack, 2021), "Skhizein" (Clapin, 2008), "The house of small cubes" (Kato, 2008), "Alma" (Blaas, 2009) and "Maestro" (Tóth, 2005) are five animated-short films which are enjoying a manipulated representation of the story. Their narrative structure is not only departed from linear progression, it is also avoiding excessive complexity. Taking advantage of contemporary storytelling in the animated shorts studied in this paper has resulted in hooking the spectator in the first place, leading to curiosity and interest in following the story. The viewer is, in fact, encouraged to take part in making educated or wild guess about key, withheld information in the story or fabula, accroding to Bordwell. In this sense, Bordwell, who have studied and compared narrative features in both classic and modern films, contends that:

> Manipulations of fabula order offer obvious narrational possibilities. Adhering closely to fabula order focuses the viewer's attention on upcoming events—the suspense effect that is characteristic of most narrative films. (Bordwell 1985, 78)

The second temporal factor that can affect narrative structure is duration of events, which could be varied in narrative and visual contexts. David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and Jeff Smith profess in their book, "Film art: an introduction", that duration can be defined as three types of story, plot and screen. Depending on cinematic techniques, story and plot duration may be expanded or compressed on the screen. "Just as plot duration selects from story duration, so screen duration selects from overall plot duration." (Bordwell, Thompson and Smith 2019, 81). Screen duration is basically pertaining to the time it takes to represent a plot on the screen, which apparently takes much less time in short films than in fiction films. Stretching or squeezing the screen duration could be considered as a lever to flex time when needed in the film. Bordwell also refers to the repetition of events as another temporal feature of narrations, and the role it may have in provoking suspense. Repetition may occur at various points in the story and might even be inferred from a series of signposts without necessarily taking the screen duration.

> Repetition can heighten curiosity and suspense, open or close gaps, direct the viewer toward the most probable hypotheses or toward the least likely ones, retard the revelation of outcomes, and assure that the quantity of new fabula information does not become too great. (Bordwell 1985, 80)

This paper concentrates on attaining answers regarding how the narrative structure of above-mentioned animated-short films are provoking suspense by rearranging time, duration and repetition of events. In fact, the role of non-linear narratives in achieving innovative patterns and impressing the audience is of paramount importance in this study. In order to achieve desired results, this paper will not only discuss the unique narrative structure of each film, it will also discuss the fact that the information flow affected by such restructure could intentionally direct information distribution. This will result in revealing key information at intended moments of the plot, with the purpose of increasing curiosity and suspense. There are, in fact, two components of story information that should be considered as by-products of applying manipulated narrative structures. These components which ought to be evaluated along with analyzing narrative suspense are the range and depth of information. According to the book, "Film art: an introduction", the level of the spectator's knowledge in comparison with characters plays an integral role in suspense and anticipation. The spectator may had obtained more or less information than characters before certain points in the film. Therefore, the range of information could be defined as limited or unlimited. "At any given moment, we can ask if we the audience know more than, less than, or as much as the characters do." (Bordwell, Thompson and Smith 2019, 90). It is also admitted that the depth of story information is defined based on characters' external behavior (objective) or their mental world (subjective). A number of films may also benefit from a combination of objective and subjective narration.

> A plot might confine us wholly to information about what characters say and do. Here the narration is relatively *objective*. Or a film's plot may give us access to what characters see and hear. (Bordwell, Thompson and Smith 2019, 90)

Consequently, the initial discussions will include classic and modern preferences and their distinctive features, which is followed by the way suspense has affected non-linear stories. The approach adopted by mentioned animated-short films are then discussed in order to clarify modern narrative structure varieties and their potential for affecting curiosity and suspense.

Literature Review

Narrative structure has been broadly discussed in cinematic research with concentrations on classical to modern transformations. Narratology in animated shorts, however, appears to be a current issue, which needs to be studied according to the same cinematic perspective. David Bordwell, for instance, has discussed different aspects of a number of animated films in his books. However, it appears that relatively less research could be found with a concentration on studying modern narrative structures in animated shorts and their enormous potential in such films. The concentration of this paper, therefore, is studying the contemporary narrative patterns in animated shorts owing to the increasing desire that animation filmmakers have shown in utilizing more innovative story-telling techniques. Furthermore, Bordwell

theories on temporal factors and information flow are required to be addressed because they not only influences the way narrative structures plan revealing story information, they also improve anticipation and suspense, possibly to the accompaniment of other cinematic techniques.

Classical and Modern Narrative Features

Narratology studies have identified significant differences between the classical and contemporary films in their preferred narrative structures. Temporal features in classical films basically demand describing events which are grounded in reality. Chronological order and ordinary progression of events are therefore preferred in order to serve such purpose. Classical narrative promise relies basically on accurate representation of the plot points and gradual development. Characters are supposed to push the story forward by taking action in proper time as the story progresses. In fact, a striking feature of classical films is their heavy reliance on coherence of the plot in a way that each event is led to the next based on temporal order, thus advancing the whole story in sequence. Consequently, reshuffled events and exaggerated expansion or reduction of screen duration may not be considered a common approach in this sense. Classical narrative structure, known as the three-act model, was popularized by Syd Field in 1970s. In his book, "Screenplay: the foundation of screenwriting", he defines three main acts of set-up, confrontation and resolution with two plot points. The set-up consists of defining the world of the film, characters and their current situation in the story world. The character's conflict is represented when he/she "encounters obstacle after obstacle that keeps him/her from achieving his/her dramatic need." (Field 2005, 25) in the second act. The development of the story in the middle act lead to the climax. Finally, the last act includes whether the issue is resolved. Field confesses that the plot might not be necessarily following above-mentioned order, however, the majority of classical films appear to respect the same arrangement. Bordwell defines the straightforward character development in linear structure of Hollywood in the same way. He also refers to the clarity of mental condition owing to the fact that classical films are usually reluctant to burrow through the psychological and mental world of characters.

> The classical Hollywood film presents psychologically defined individuals who struggle to solve a clear-cut problem or to attain specific goals. In the course of this struggle, the characters enter into conflict with others or with external circumstances. The story ends with a decisive victory or defeat, a resolution of the problem and a clear achievement or non-achievement of the goals. (Bordwell 1985, 157)

In general, ambiguity is avoided when it comes to introducing spatial and temporal aspects of the film as well as characters and their conflicts. Regarding hooking the audience, classical narration tends to present conflicts in a progressive fashion, which is then followed by the climax, where it is expected to engage the spectator at the highest level. That is the reason why the very first scene might not be necessarily utilized as a hook. "Classical narration tends to be overt early on—in opening titles, at the start of the film's action—before gliding into a less explicit mode." (Bordwell 2006, 48). Contemporary filmmakers, on the other hand, have acknowledged the importance of opening scenes as the first opportunity to raise questions in the audience's mind. Therefore, the plot may deal with extraordinary situations and characters as well as engaging incidents at the opening scenes rather than necessarily concerning with the introduction of protagonists, time, space and a normal situation that is going to be threatened later on.

As far as characterization is concerned in contemporary films, mental issues, emotional imbalances and the way the character is dealing with them, often in isolation, is emphasized. In other words, mental and psychological aspects of the character's life is of high importance since it can reflect the character insecurities. Such instabilities may be reflected through memories of the character. Therefore, "The narration is turned to a tangled web of memories" (Payandeh 2020, 24). That is why the story events are not necessarily concerned with regular, routine incidents of real life. Modern world characters may also avoid arranging plans to achieve specific results. Lack of cause-and-effect nature of events are, in fact, reflected in characterization of modern human. Therefore, they may "lack specific characteristics, motivations and goals. Characters sometimes demonstrate unstable behavior and doubt their goals." (Gholamali and Sheikhmehdi 2013, 27). In terms of temporal features, contemporary films are willing to treat the concept of time differently and take advantage of it to provide their audience with excitement, surprise and suspense. Consequently, arrangement of events may not be necessarily in accordance with calendar time.

The structure applied in the animated-short films studied in this paper are not following the exact principles of three-act model in order to represent the story. The reason is that, as mentioned earlier, linear time features depicting outer world events and orderly course of actions may not thoroughly provide necessities required by modern storytelling. These animated shorts are contriving techniques to control critical information by exploiting relocation, retardation, reduction, expansion and omission of time and events when required by the narration.

Suspense in Modern Narrative Structure

Narrative suspense can obviously grab the audience's attention through a gripping plot. The very first scene of a restructured plot can raise interest and curiosity so that the viewers are motivated enough to await character's decisions or the outcome of conflicts. The first few scenes may provide fragments of attention-grabbing information as a means to satisfy enthusiasm. A thought-out arrangement is, therefore,

essential before suspense could work effectively. The same happens in narrative texts when "they suggest, with varying degrees of subtlety: 'the best is yet to come, don't stop reading now, thus stimulating interest, curiosity or suspense." (Rimmon-Kenan 2005, 124). The audience in suspense are persistently invited to await discovering untold facts.

Deliberate time distortion could not only retard revelation of results, it can also produce a sense of mystery, doubt and uncertainty as a result of a great first impression. That is to say, characters' mental or physical situation or reasons behind their intentions could be postponed only after cultivating enough interest. With their curiosity piqued, spectators are then looking forward to find the answers to their questions. David Lodge has divided the questions that may be raised in the story into two categories of cause/effect and time-related ones. "The questions are broadly of two kinds, having to do with causality (e.g. whodunnit?) and temporality (e.g. what will happen next?)" (Lodge 1993, 14). As mentioned before, modern narrative affects both causality and temporality by influencing cause-and-effect chain of events as well as information flow. Turning points, for instance, which play a pivotal role in breathing life into the storyline, can be utilized to juxtapose linear structure with manipulated patterns.

The flow of story Information can be impacted by a variety of cinematic techniques to proficiently and engagingly divulge determinative information at certain points. Flashback is one of the common techniques to unfurl information pertaining to the past, unforeseen events, and filmmakers may be encouraged to apply it in order to dominate the range and depth of information. Flashback may accompany proper point of views and confined visual information to define even more impressive, mysterious plots.

Opening With Middle Act and Secondary Storyline

"If anything happens, I love you" is a short film representing grieving parents who are suffering from the loss of their child to school shooting and their emotional response to this tragic incident. The film is following two concurrent storylines. The first is pertaining to the parents' current life after the death of their child and the second is representing all three family members' shadows and their emotional journey after the school shooting. A second aspect is infused into the story via shadows, which have addressed emotional fluctuations of both parents and their child. Intertwined storylines have been successfully arranged, in spite of the short duration of the film. The opening scene represents parents who are sitting at the furthest distance possible from each other, reluctant to share their sorrow and impatience over the loss of their child, which has not been unfolded in the story yet. The concurrent presence of shadows is emphasizing actual, inexpressible feelings that could not be reflected in the outer world of grief-stricken parents and the non-material child. The film, in fact, involves a psychosocial concept which could explain

the deeper layer of meaning introduced through the shadows. It appears that the main conflict of the film is taking place in the inner world of the characters, which adheres to the theory of shadow personality by Carl Jung. According to his theory "The shadow cast by the conscious mind of the individual contains the hidden, repressed, and unfavorable (or nefarious) aspects of the personality." (Jung and Von Franz 1988, 118). The conflict between who we are and who we intend to be could thus be defined as an inseparable part of our unconsciousness. At the end of the film, the resolution is achievable soon after the shadows of the whole family are in alignment with each other, and parents have reached inner peace with themselves. It is the peaceful shadow of the girl who guides her parents toward facing the issue and embracing their pain. This way, the family manage to heal and experience peace and love once again.

The narrative structure is benefited from an extremely engaging hook. The parents' isolation is introduced as an ambiguous opening scene since the spectator is supplied only with minimal, restricted range of information about such tensional situation. The first few scenes, which can be recognized as the middle act of a linear structure, are now defined as the results of unforeseen causes. The film then proceeds with more scenes consisting only of the results of past situations, such as a blue paint on the wall, in an attempt to raise even more questions in mind. Memories of the girl's childhood are terminated by the shooting scene, where the question planted at the very beginning of the film about the way the incident had happened (the first storyline) is now answered. The intriguing first scenes are therefore attained due to rearranged representation of events in the plot. The gun violence is, in fact, the plot's first turning point which has radically changed the normal life of a happy family. The shooting scene is the point where two storylines are intersected, and from this point on, the shadow storyline is meaningfully intervened in the exacerbated conflicts of parents after the fact. Childhood memories are intrigued by the girl's shadow and exploitation of flashback technique has helped the viewer comprehend the ordinary life of the family after a considerable delay in providing more subjective information. The spiritual girl's attempts to offer her parents the consolation of reunion has eventually led to the second turning point, where she manages to settle the problem of her physical absence. In a linear presentation of events, the story would present the ordinary life of the family in the absence of the intriguing hook, into the first turning point. However, Micheal Govier and Will McCormack decided to begin with the middle of the plot, the grieving parents and their shadows as a striking invitation. Owning to a second storyline, a wide spectrum of objective and subjective narrations is represented in a way that the mental world is directly influencing the external behavior. Reordered events have resulted in restricted information range and delayed revelation, leading to anticipation and suspense in both storylines.

Objective Narration and Time Loops

At first glance, the narrative structure in "Amla" seems to be exactly following three-act classical structure, however, the plot is different in its nature. A number of signposts are indicating that the audience is watching a series of events that was being repeated for numerous times. That is to say, in this structure, certain circumstances are occurring in a circular way. The plot represents the character's external behavior and the audience is supposed to enjoy ignited curiosity in an objective narration. Complete information about the story is already provided visually through evidences of preceding repetitions, but the viewers are not fully aware of them as yet. The opening scene introduces a mysterious location which may only be comprehended in the resolution of the story. Alma begins to write her name on the board, where plenty of other names had been already written. This is the first indicator for a series of repetitive events. In fact, the audience is watching only one single instance of an infinite number of the same incidents. Alma's range of knowledge is as limited as the audience throughout the film. Therefore, both the viewer and Alma are exploring an unprecedented world simultaneously and the character herself is not supposed to be aware of any extra information as the film progresses. The happy, upbeat music which is replaced by a mysterious one with danger undertones has helped suspense and anticipation. "Space suspense deals in not knowing where the threat is. This is all about the anxiety of the unknown." (Iglesias 2005, 100). With her curiosity aroused, Alma is obsessed with having a close look at the doll which looks like her and is unable to detect the growing threat. A number of other alarming facts are provided as Alma is invited to enter the shop and from this point on, the highest level of suspense is injected into the plot since the audience is now tempted to discover both the mysterious world and the results of Alma's decision. The toy of conspicuous cycling boy is, in fact, another indicator of people who had experienced the same destiny. He is a trapped child in a former occurrence of the same plot. The resolution is only evident when Alma herself is trapped inside the doll. The film not only includes an infinite beginning of the same event, it also provides a plot with unlimited ending by offering a new doll for the subsequent, similar story. In fact, the narrative structure includes a never-ending film with infinite duration, which may potentially proceed to live in the audience's imagination even after watching the film. The limitless frequency of events could be considered as a factor that is required to be inferred from the film since it is only represented through one instance of events, and the audience has been entrusted to imagine further instances and outcomes.

An engaging opening scene with effects of unresolved causes, an uninformed character and mysterious world due to the absence of knowledge have all resulted from narrative suspense through time loops. A satisfying level of anticipation is attained owing to equal range of information of the audience and the character, hence delayed responses to questions.

Subjective Narration and Immediate Flashback

"Skhizein" is the only animated short discussed in this paper which exploits dialogues to explain an extraordinary opening scene. Astonishing physical condition of Henri is gradually comprehended through the conversation between the character and his psychiatrist. He had obliged to live 91 centimeters away from himself after being hit by a meteorite. The opening scene consists of the unusual physical condition of the character, scattered information about his life and ambiguity about reasons of the troubled situation, which would be represented in the second act of a linear plot and after the first turning point. However, in a rearranged plot, the audience is now convinced to anticipate upcoming events. That is to say, the plot is now worthy of further consideration to discover the devastating effects of the meteorite, probable strenuous efforts of the character and the final outcomes. The Greek root of the name skhizein suggests schizophrenia, which is implicitly referring to the mental disorder from which the character is suffering. His hallucinatory life could not be seen and apprehended by the doctor or other people in the story world. The story, therefore, is representing Henri's point of view and the way he is perceiving the world around in order to increase curiosity and sympathy. The story information is benefiting more from a subjective narration about the character's memories and mental condition. Thus, depth of information is pivoting psychological aspects of character's life.

The strategies adopted by Henri to live in a world with distorted distances constitutes a considerable duration of the film afterwards, which have been represented through flashback in his counseling session. According to Bordwell, in-depth layer of suspense by flashback can result in micro and macro level uncertainty.

> They provide a double layer of uncertainty: we want to know what happens next in the flashback (micro level uncertainty) and what will ultimately happen in the frame story (at the macro level). (Bordwell 2017, 83)

Therefore, postposing final results is provoking suspense. The reason behind his current problem is resolved after the session and the narrative suspense regarding the outcome of the incident is then triggered. In fact, a tension and anticipation structure is designed by deploying rearranged order of the first and second acts, starting with the esoteric world of the patient and then gradually revealing information about new decisions and circumstances. The resolution includes patient's plans to get rid of the trouble altogether. Patients with such mental disorders may first demonstrate defensive responses in an attempt to relive before adaptation. The resolution is represented based on a linear order, where Henri decides to be exposed to a second meteorite hit. The aggravated result is revealed through a delay in providing information, causing anticipation. The audience is eagerly awaiting to be provided with the result of the

climax owning to moments of silence after the hit. As a result, the resolution is infused with a short-term suspense. The visual and auditory information may also cause false expectations at first. Because they may be inferred as though Henri is now back to his normal life. This has resulted in a surprise as soon as his failure and worsen condition is disclosed.

Divulging Information Through Recursive Structure

"The house of small cubes" is the story of a lonely old man who is assertive enough to avoid leaving his house, although the whole city is flooded. His only viable solution to survive is building the house even higher while the flood water is rising, which appears to be a common activity for him. Uniqueness of the situation have secured potential conflicts from the outset, which is a working hook. The very first scenes are all about his unusual lifestyle, which brings the matter of his satisfaction and calmness into attention. In fact, the viewer is provided with no more information than an extraordinary lifestyle, causing curiosity and interest in the story. Missing pipe is the first turning point, causing a chain of past memories through associations. As soon as the first floor causes reminiscences of the past, he decides to dive even deeper. Diving into the deep water is metaphorically utilized to indicate memories of different stages in the character's life, which not only progressively answers questions about his preferred lifestyle, it also provides elaborate information about his personality. Only around half way through the film the audience begins to realize that the character is actually finding the family memories and reunions a treasured possession. The modern narrative technique which has been adopted to resolve uncertainties about the character's mysterious life is recursive plot. It is the reversed arrangement that has been used as a smart tool in order to invite the audience to follow the chain of events, ranging from his more recent days to his youth. Moreover, it is the earliest stage of the character's life that reveals the principal motivation of him. These narratives "use a series of flashbacks to develop an enigma and delay its resolution before reaching the final flashback of the revelation" (Turim 2013, 11-12), which holds the audience interested.

This is a technique to hold the audience's curiosity until the end of the sequence and the narrative structure of the film is heavily reliant on recursive flashbacks to control the depth of information at different stages of the character's life. The duration of the last memory about the character's wife is comprehensively represented and has shed light on the character's intentions. Consultancy, the recursive plot is not only unfolding information according to their level of importance, it can also postpone the final outcomes of exploring memories. The structure is thus achieving anticipation through recursion of incidents, and also expansion and reduction of the screen duration through flashback.

Transcending Defined Narrative Acts

"Maestro" is a great example to show how contemporary animated shorts are experimenting with time through describing the simple process behind activating the cuckoo bird in a striking clock. The film is taking advantage of gaming with expansion of the screen duration in the opening scene to the almost entire time of the film. This is representing a sharp distinction between classical and contemporary narrative structures. When it comes to expanding narrative time, a great deal of importance is dedicated to representing details. "We have added time in the sense that we have added greater complexity of narrative shape to its passage. This complexity is a matter of the accumulation of incident." (Abbott 2008, 5). Such prolonged expansion of time to display details of a process has raised curiosity about the character involvement in the seemingly routine procedure. The spectator's information range is always less than that of the character and this is one of the factors which has helped in holding a sense of interest. Although the film is solely relying on objective narration, it can be said that time expansion, resulted from narrative structure, has caused relatively effective and profound character introduction.

It could be admitted that the film is not even following a three-act narrative structure, yet the plot is offering a gradual build-up of suspense which holds the anticipation for several minutes before it abruptly unravels the cause of previewed process. The whole time of the film is dedicated to the bird which appears to be getting prepared for a singing performance. The intelligent mechanical hand is programmed to assist him and ascertain that all the necessary tasks in an apparently sensitive process are being performed accurately. A pinch of the location is induced through camera movements, but the whole information regarding the character's job, location and reasons behind the process is introduced in a matter of seconds at the end of the film.

Restricted range of knowledge due to the narrative structure has been intensified by the point of view. The accumulation has helped in hooking the spectator in the opening scene. Suspense is then provoked through retardation of the result. In fact, a narrow camera angle has also helped in maintaining the range of critical information as confined as possible, and thus, postponed delivering outcomes in an absence of complication. The surprising effect has been attained by managing information flow through concealing determinative facts and emblazoning unimportant ones. Rudolf Arnheim confesses visual representation of such information management:

The delimitation of the image is as much a formative tool as perspective, for it allows of some particular detail being brought out and given special significance; and, conversely, of unimportant things being omitted, surprises being suddenly introduced into the shot, reflections of things that are happening "off" being brought in. (Arnheim 2006, 73)

Therefore, the film is infused with a number of techniques to maintain narrative suspense, until it comes to an abrupt ending. The ambient environment sound effects of murmuring in a saloon in the opening scene has been utilized to encourage erroneous assumptions. This has achieved by reinforcing the idea that the bird is actually getting prepared for a real performance in an absence of information about the character and the space.

Conclusion

This study discussed various non-linear narrative structures in five animated-short films according to the theories of David Bordwell. The role of order, duration and frequency as temporal features in the narrative structure was addressed in all the animated shorts. Range and depth of the information flow can be affected by modern structures; therefore, they could be managed in order to increase the spectator's interest and curiosity regarding the storyline and characters. This supplies the breeding ground for amplifying suspense. The opening scene, where the audience's attention could be won, is of particular importance in modern narration. The animated shorts were all offering delays of outcomes, decisions and resolutions in the plot, leading to a sense of anticipation. Modern narrative structures of the films led to providing critical information in unexpected or golden moments, through flashbacks, ambiguity (insufficient information range), time expansion or reduction, rearranged events and misleading signposts sometimes assisted by camera position and specific viewpoints. It could also be concluded that narration is not only a tool to withhold critical information in the story, it can also supply spectators with multiple layers of meaning about the subject, characters and their situation in the limited time that animated shorts allow. Based on the obtained results, a better suspense is viable in an absence of convoluted narration using a variety of nonlinear patterns rather than linear structure. Because they may only require to manipulate specific portions of classical narrative structure. Consequently, the plot could be started after the first turning point by introducing unusual, shocking situations or characters and recollecting missing information afterwards. It may also go beyond the three-act model by removing or extending parts of it. The new structure may also be suggested without explicitly changing the linear pattern, thereby inducing a trend of infinite repetitions. Nonlinear structures applied in the animated films in this article could be inspired to provide an endless number of patterns which are deviating from the rules introduced by classical structure.

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