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Stylization by the degree of realisticness in cinematography  
styles ranging from realism and stylization

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**Stylizace ve stupních realističnosti ve stylech kinematografie od realismu po stylizaci**

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Stylization by the degree of realisticness in cinematography styles ranging from realism and stylization

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Leena Patoli

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## **Abstract**

Různé stupně stylizace ovlivňují věrnost obrazu. Tato teze se zaměřuje na technické aspekty a důsledky realistického a stylizovaného obrazu. Navrhuje škálu stupňů realističnosti, a pokouší se porozumět rozhodnutím, které filmaři učinili, a záměru, který za nimi stojí.

## **Abstract**

The various degrees of stylisation impact the fidelity of an image. This thesis focuses on the technicalities and the impacts behind an image's realistic nature. It proposes a scale of the degree of realisticness and attempts to understand the motive behind the choices made by the film makers.

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## Introduction

While beginning a conversation with a director about the treatment for the image of the film, a common understanding of the language must exist for the communication between the two departments. The cinematographer, upon understanding the idea, story, structure and tone can suggest a style for the film.

Referencing is an important part of the process but as most auteurs are not going for an exactitude of a previous work, the referencing is an approximate, an inspiration. All this, to find a cohesive and unique approach to the film.

Before approaching the lensing, colours treatment, movement- which are elements of cinematography, a question that comes to mind is about how realistic or stylistic is the image going to look. Even though a fiction film is a construction, it eventually simulates/interprets reality. But instead of blatantly recording reality, there is an expression by the auteur involved. The expression in context to the socio- political situation, gives the film the relevance of its placement in time. A film could be seen as a statement in time and a journey of its characters.

This thesis intends to classify the realistic-ness of a fiction film's image, purely from a cinematography perspective. Though it will try and understand the choices made in relation to the content and psyche adopted by the film makers.

As art and film theory speak at length about Realism- as a movement, we will spend sometime to understand that this line of classification this thesis falls into. But their political and philosophical motivations have relevance for understanding the motivations of transformations and the shift in choices. The thesis will also include a brief summary of the Classism and Formalism categorisation.

What feels a real looking image? Is it the ugliness, grunginess, low budget looking or is it just the lack of stylisation. Amongst other works mentioned in the thesis, the focus is on three works by Darren Arronofky- *The Wrestler*, *The Whale* and *Requiem for a dream*. A partial retrospective of of a single director helps to put focus on a the free use of tools for telling a story independent of current times. But that the choice of stylisation used is dictated by the screenplay. On the other hand Wes Anderson's style dictates the writing of his screenplay. As a cinematographer, one might find themselves in the company of various personalities of directors and needs to identify what are the directions they are throwing your way.

From a personal experience I have been a cinematographer for a documentary feature; *Marching in the Dark* and a fiction feature; *MA*. The documentary filming was far more controlled than the fiction film. *Marching in the Dark's* director Kinshuk Surjan, insisted on an almost static camera. The film is set in the social situation of the persisting issue of farmer suicides. Kinshuk chose to tell the story via a single strong protagonist; a woman who's

husband had committed suicide. He constructed the film to be told as a story of her recovery. There was a lot of reconstruction of scenes and retakes with the woman herself- Sanjeevni. Kinshuk also laid the rules that Sanjeevni or any other adult would not look into the camera. Only the children/ by passers could be seen to validate our presence and thus, the authenticity of the documentary. Mainly picking a style of filming comes down to the contract between the makers and the viewers. In a documentary, authenticity is the primary contract. Amongst the makers, nothing is real, twenty four lies a second and more idioms run frequent and casual. This, I feel is a combatting of the ethical lies one finds themselves crossing when filming a documentary format.

When we frame an image, there's a negation of reality outside that cage. Of course there are sound influences, but when filming a situation, we focus and show only what helps us forward the story. This specific portrayal of reality is what is referred to as the twenty four lies a second.

Kinshuk, is writing his P.hd about re-takes in a documentary. This speaks about the ethical lies in a documentary. For instance, many a times, the film makers might not be present from the beginning of the story. Some parts need reconstruction. If these are done in accordance with the accounts that the characters have narrated and the persons involved have the equation of expressing themselves freely to express their comfort, the reconstruction might be ethical. The filmmakers have to be weary that they are not being manipulated by the characters as well. It is a delicate space, as a documentary states that it is a minimally distorted account of truth. A cinematographer can choose to shoot these reconstructions with the element of fresh witnessing.

Lines are blurry. Hence, Kinshuk and I came up with some ground rules. We decided the image must be one without the usual fumbles of a documentary image. Everything is in focus, there is no handheld. This would even out the new footage with the reconstructed one. The rule of adults never looking into the camera was heavily resisted by me. On the account that, we are filming in a remote region in India. The natural innocence and curiosity of the people should not be curbed, as then our film would look more unreal and the truth in the story would suffer. Kinshuk's argument was that, the film would be shot over a period of seven months and the comfort of people there with respect to the camera would increase. Their gaze would change from a suspicious one to a friendly one and towards the end they might finally forget about us altogether. This would create problems for a non linear edit. This I understood. Distance of a camera from its characters plays a huge roll in the consistency of the image. This distance is not a physical distance but a gaze. Where the physical distance was concerned, i managed to go very close to Sanjeevni. Speaking the local language and having the same gender did help to build trust. A widow in a village in India is more protected and scrutinised by her family, as they are the first point of blame for the loss of the husband. Moreover, despite of the literary progress in India, seeing the widow as a bad omen, an unfortunate, a lesser person still exists in the psyche of most of the rural societies. Gentle workshops were conducted by Kinshuk to make Sanjeevni comfortable with the camera. I



discovered that not looking into the camera was giving the image a form of quiet integrity; it was quite easy to get past and believe the image. The sanctity of grief was recorded without the need for camera's validation.

Marching in the Dark, expected release 2024



But as we did reconstruct scenes with a single camera, we decided upon no intercutting would be done in the edit. The need to not shoot the rural India in a typical westernised gaze was another agreement. This was dealt with an easy technique, eye level. Culturally, in the rural regions, people are mostly sitting down on the ground and are not very tall. Thus, we needed to find the right tripod, so that we were not looking down upon them.

There were other finer details such as over laps, foregrounding, eye lines, length of shots, entry- exit points, continuity which had to be discussed regularly. Thus, I learnt that filming a documentary does involve reconstructions and rules. To conclude, this drew my attention to what kind of believable image could we construct while filming fiction.

# 1. Etymology of the word- Realism

Realism finds its schools of thought in philosophy, international politics and arts.

Realism, in philosophy, the viewpoint which accords to things which are known or perceived an existence or nature which is independent of whether anyone is thinking about or perceiving them. [1]

Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli were all realists. Though their interpretation of what's real varied vastly. In his theory of Forms, Plato says that beauty, justice exist above the particular beautiful objects or the acts in which they are instantiated. The Form is neither existent in time or space. From this, I infer, he meant, his quest for truth was above sense perception. While Plato endorsed of *universalia ante res* Latin: 'universals before things' his pupil Aristotle took a more moderate approach to realism of *universalia in rebus* 'universals in things': While there are universals, they can have no freestanding, independent existence. [2] Thus, realism has varied interpretations and endorsements. Idealism could be seen as an antirealism. Idealism believes that the truth lies in the Idea and the mind that holds it. However, this disregards the physical parameters of the present situation. Machiavelli, in his rather wicked text, *The Prince* recommends that a prince go to the 'effectual truth' of things and forgo the standard of 'what should be done'. [3] This seems like an advice which asks one to not be idealistic. However, realists have often been pessimistic of reforms.

This brings about to ask, is to be aware of ones surroundings while constructing their beliefs, is to look at things for their ugliness or is it to have a more empathetic gaze? By inference, do we perceive real to be ugly?

## 1.1 Realism as a movement in art



Visual arts from the Pre- historic paintings have attempted to portray what one saw- a real image. Hence, the strive for perfecting perspective is such a visible journey. Hellenistic painters managed to portray depth in their works though it wasn't mathematically correct.



Villa of P. Fannius Synistor  
Cubiculum M alcove  
Panel with temple at east end of the alcove,  
the north end of the east wall  
Middle of the first century B.C.  
Bosc coreale (Pompeii), Italy [x]



Looking in a Mirror by an Ornamental Box  
Wang Shên (c. 1036–c. 1093)  
Southern Sung dynasty



The Annunciation, with Saint Emidius  
Carlo Crivelli  
1486  
eg: accelerated perspective

Hyper/dynamic perspective



Ginevra de' Benci (detail)  
Leonardo da Vinci

eg: arial perspective  
Lighter colours are used  
to depict depth as a tool.



Attempts to apply spatial depth on a flat surface were made all over the world. We now stand at a time when we have excessive connectivity all over the world but in as early as those times to imagine that humans all over the world were puzzled by similar quests. The knowledge of perspective was lost till the 15th century, as the painters did not work in close contact and exchange notes. Till the medieval times, much like the Egyptian paintings, the commissioned works were more religious in nature. The biggest and highest form in the painting wasn't a naturalistic choice but the one who had maximum relevance and the other's diminished. Art is strong and is used for influencing.

Structured art, like films haven't begun as the most inexpensive mediums. Especially the art that has survived or was visible. The material requirement are high and bigger murals required co-ordinated effort, much like film making. To use material that would last was a process of scientific development, made more accessible over the years. The church commissioned renaissance works were decorative and strived for a realistic image by imitating the human body, perspective and intricate complex compositions. They depicted stories and ideals of the Bible through



dynamic poses and situations. Renaissance marked the shift from abstraction of the Medieval to the representational forms. Michelangelo set high bars with detailed nudes which continued to the Mannerist successors of this period. Mannerism came about to be as an influence of humanism. Content took a backseat and pursuit of complex, stylised depictions of human forms outweighed the meaning in the artworks. Elongated limbs, smaller heads were some of the features. Perspective would have played a big role in the depiction of human form. It would've helped in finally understanding foreshortening, how to draw a nose

etcetera. However, with mannerism it seems that the artists once having had the understanding of realistic depictions were in to explore how to stylise the human body. Mannerism derives its nomenclature from the Italian *maniera*; meaning style or manner [4] These trends of endeavours are what we find as an ongoing process.



The Arnolfini Marriage  
portrait, 1434

Jan van Eyck



The Long-necked Madonna,  
1535- 1540

One derivation of the word Romanticism is derived from Roman or Romanesque languages- vernacular language instead of the formal Latin. The vernacular was used to express with great emotion stories of adventures, romance, devotion. In many countries, romanticism was strongly associated to nationalism. Nationalism finds its extension to totalitarian views, which begin with an extreme idealist view of being. Romanticism came about as an accompaniment of the first Industrial Revolution.



*Fishermen at Sea*, J.M.W. Turner, 1796



Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps, , J.M.W. Turner 1812

The above paintings by J.M.W. Tuner are narrations of dramatic events, tragic in nature. In the Fishermen at sea, he depicts a full moon setting in a dark stormy night. The contrast ratio is high. It is a spot lit painting. If we imagine such a night, the fishermen would have endured a great deal of hardship, some would loose their lives. However, the painting is not a narrating that at all. It is beyond the common mans emotion. It is glorifying the sacrifices, like in the second painting Snow Storm. These are evidences of a nationalist sentiment. The suffering of the people is glorified as a contribution to the nation. The strokes are masterful, the decent of the cloud- wave can be felt with the first simmering gush (Snow storm). From 1796 to 1812 Turner's craftsmanship seems to had found much sophistication. The strokes have gentler endings, the colours more subdued. Contrast shifts from a lighting contrast to a complimentary colour contrast. But, the sentiment, the politics does remain quite the same.



Gustave Courbet, *The Desperate Man*, 1843–45



He seems to be excited by the adventures. The tone has traces of a folk tale narration. It is realistic, but the subject and its treatment does seem removed from human sentiment.

Gustave Courbet is known to be the first visual realist. The Desperate Man, is a self portrait of a twenty- four year old Gustave, which was hidden away in his studio till the very end [5]. This painting has evidences of romanticism. Romanticism was a strong movement. This painting is a strong evidence that he felt trapped in the choices that were imbedded into him. He picked a dramatic stance to express in the only way he knew how to paint; a desperate man. Vain still, with rosy cheeks, a billowing white shirt and clearly edged eye brows. The artist seems driven to change and conscious of the politics at play.



Gustave Courbet - The Stonebreakers, 1849

The Stone breakers shows a grand shift from the subjects and instances Turner was picking up to paint. To begin with, we are at ground level with the characters. They are having a regular day. The mundane of lower class is being recognised, seen for what it is. Not celebrated, but reflected. The strong outlines however do not make the image look very realistic, but the subject to begin with would have been radically humble for people to witness. It was recognised as a successful Socialist painting.

Quotes by Gustave Courbet

- Courbet once claimed that he could not paint an angel because he never saw one.
- To know in order to do, that was my idea," the artist wrote in 1855. "To be in a position to translate the customs, the ideas, the appearance of my time, according to my own estimation; to be not only a painter, but a man as well; in short, to create living art—this is my goal." [6]



The Burial at Ornans, 1849-50, Gustave Courbet, 315 cm × 660 cm (124 in × 260 in)

With a painting of a burial scene, non glorifying religion in nature which is six meters long, Gustave must have made a statement he believed was needed to scream for change. The question of selling such a work at the time of romantics would have been a tremendous gamble constantly playing on the artists mind. The imagery is sombre, it is a dull day, Christ stands small and unimposing, present lesser than the skinny dog right across him. The dog is brighter than the Cross. As the painting is long, and the composition is linear, all the human characters get equal weightage. It is an anti- hierarchal painting, a democratic painting.

Thus, realism seems to have stemmed from a social need to shift focus to the actual conditions of the lower and working classes. Art was not trying to be a distraction or an inspiration anymore, but a reflection. Failures and ugliness began to be seen as part of life. Such a movement, helps the viewer find kindness for ones fallbacks. To accept ones sorrows is a regular psychological advice. I believe, the artist tried to heal with his work.



The Nighthawks, 1942, Edward Hopper, American Realism



Christina's World, Andrew Wyeth, 1948,

It could be inferred that once realism found its acceptance, the subjects found space to continue to be observed with the observant gaze. Naturalistic lighting depictions are a characteristic of these paintings. Prosaic found its quiet being spoken about and observed.

To conclude, this journey of depicting a realistic image continues to films. It might have started as a process of understanding foreshortening and then picking subjects such that they have egalitarian representations of the working class. When it reached films, a degree of realistic image becomes a tool. A cinematographer seldom creates a similar looking image for different films. The trend of filming darker images has caught on. Many cinematographers do not use a kicker- back light, low amounts of fill to go towards a more naturalistic image. These explorations of lighting and composition transformations have a long standing continuum with paintings.



## 1.2 Realism as a movement in film theory (Realism vs Formalism)

In film theory, Realism and Formalism have a constant comparison. Formalism is seen as the contra of realism, where its vague definition states 'not just capturing of the image but the way the auteur chooses to narrate it in a certain way' but it has two variations of thought - the ideological and the auteurist.



The two examples of ideological interpretations that are related to formalism are the classical Hollywood cinema and film noir.

Classical Hollywood cinema has a very distinct style, also termed as the institutional mode of representation: continuity editing, massive coverage, three-point lighting, "mood" music, dissolves, grand movements all designed to make the experience as pleasant as possible. The socio-economic ideological explanation for this is that Hollywood wants to make as much money and appeal to as many ticket-buyers as possible.

Film noir, which was given its name by Nino Frank, is marked by lower production values, darker images, under lit imagery, location shooting, and general nihilism: this is because during the war and post-war years filmmakers as well as the filmgoers were generally more pessimistic.

The auteurist formalists believed that a work of art was not a depiction of nature, but a synthesis of metaphors and symbols created by the artist. The beauty or power of the image and sound are primary, displacing a sense of reality. Thus, formalism either describes the form in context's adaptability to the state of the society and the psyche of its audience or an extraordinary way of telling the story.

Formalism doesn't seem to be static, because what it contains might change with the mainstream and pop or what advancements have now become common usage. A new development in form feels yet to be adapted to. Once adapted and put into use, and feels regular, it becomes a part of regular medium. Probably the reason, propaganda-advertisements utilise more experimental forms of narration.

Generally speaking, realistic films attempt to reproduce the essence of reality with a minimum of distortion. We rarely notice the style in a realistic movie because the artist tends to be self-effacing, invisible. Most realists would claim that their major concern is with content rather than form or technique. The subject matter is always supreme, and anything that distracts from the content is viewed with suspicion. In its most extreme form, the realistic cinema tends toward documentary, with its emphasis on photographing actual events and people. The formalist cinema, on the other hand, tends to emphasise technique and expressiveness. The most extreme example of this style of filmmaking is found in the avant-garde cinema. Some of these movies are totally abstract; pure forms- non-representational colours, lines, and shapes'

Realism stemmed from industrialisation and its sub category, neorealism, stemmed from the impacts of the second world war.

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Documentary      Realism      Classism      Formalism      Avant Garde

This is the general referred scale, Theorists use this to classify the degree of stylisation in a film. Though, it accounts cinematography into the categorisation, it is also dependant on the form and the times in which the film is placed as well.

Latcho Drom, 1993, a french documentary by Tony Galiff about Romani music's travel from north-west India to Spain was filmed in a classical manner. The characters do not display any knowledge about the awareness of camera. On the other hand, Songs from the second floor by Roy Andersson has been categorised as both avant garde and formalist, because its placement is inconclusive as as to whether it has been done before or not. The element of newness changes the placement of the films on the graph.

While this classification is interesting, it is incoherent. Further down this thesis we will find that realism is a choice of stylisation as well. Also, the formalism vs realism does not help as much with the discussion a cinematographer can have with a director to conceive an image, while still trying to understand - how realistic does an image look and what are the possible ways to achieve that.

Thus, this thesis intends to put the grades of 'real' in context to cinematography. The thesis will be limited to fiction films. It does not intend to propose the entirety of the preparatory conversations. At the end of thesis, there will be a conclusion to the limitations of the thesis.



## 2 Proposed scale of studying Realistic-ness in Cinematography

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Found footage/  
Diegetic camera                  Realistic                  Mainstream Realistic                  Hyperrealistic

When speaking about how realistic does an image look, we are accounting for how constructed the image feel. The image from a personal camera is not doctored. It is shaky, under lit, the colours are not co-ordinated, people whom we are filming do not act as if the camera isn't present. It could be a security camera, thus its utility placement makes it unconstructed. The news might not be true, but if there is newsreel footage, we do recognise its format.

When watching a Wes Anderson film, the people are caricatures and the camera moves impulsively. As an audience we are trained to understand that it's a story being told and that is the treatment. When we watch a film, we give into the temporary submission to believe what we see. It is an illusion that evokes real emotions. Maybe this is why sometimes we come out of films wishing our world was different or feeling displaced.

A realistic image needs to feel closer to reality. The image must feel more authentic. There is less distortion in the interpretation of what's real. Fact presented as fiction feels stranger. This takes us to a 'less treated' footage- news footage, home videos are images we recognise to be shot with less finesse. Something that appears to have been filmed with less light manipulations, with hiccups like shakes feels like it took less time to have been shot- thus, less manipulated. A stylistic image is used to interpret reality. Thematic representation is given higher value than accuracy. It is the way the film maker intends for us to look at the story.

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### GAZE - various forms of looking

“Early Lacanian film theorists identified cinema with the Imaginary order, demonstrating that it was an illusory force which allowed spectators to enjoy narratives by inviting them to take part in temporary fantasies. However, with their critical distance the theorist task was to pull back the curtains of the Imaginary order to reveal the Symbolic order, the ideologies that orient these shared fantasies into predetermined modes for living one's life or organising a society.”

*The Gaze: Psychoanalysis, Ideology and Representation by by Alex Widdowson*

Gaze in film, has sub categories. And as the generations, wars, revolutions, discoveries go by, there will continue to be different ways of looking at things. Typical example of the shift from a male gaze to a more neutral one is a result of a long term feminism movement. There was a shift in the way how middle class was interpreted from romanticism to realism.

The line of thought that is used to explore gaze in this thesis is about the point of camera placement and image choices. What is the intention of the camera in the film? Is it gentle, intrusive, psychological, or close to its characters is it seeing what they are seeing?

Point of views is a device used across the films in the thesis. How a character sees gives the film makers a device to act in the film. It's the film makers and how they want to show you a characters view in that specific way. Thus, they provide a non-infiltrated insight into their intention.

A cinematographer uses grain, depth of field, camera placement, movement, lighting, size of sensors we can direct an image to feel a certain way. This is vastly different from a realism movement because, we utilise the tools from film to film- not sticking to a style influenced by a socio-political movement.

The approach to analysing the films will be to understand what role did the camera play in the film? What was the intended gaze and how was it achieved? What are the distinct styles of Point of Views used in the films.

## **2.1 Found Footage/ Diegetic camera definition and history**


'Found footage is a cinematic technique in which all or a substantial part of the work is presented as if it were discovered film or video recordings.' In this form the image is closest to that of a documentary. Its early notable example is The Blairwick Project, where the horror of the supernatural event is heightened by the notion that the image is authentic. Despite the lack of a clean and finessed image found footage has a space and reason to be used. Found footage could also be seen as a tool that plays on gossip mentality. CCTV footage, news room footage, handcam, night vision footage are some forms of treatment possibilities. The common note about these is that the camera is diegetic, it is present within the world of the film, rather than being external to it. If there is shot of a phone ringing, and we see the phone, the sound is diegetic, if we don't see the phone, but hear it ring, the sound is non-diegetic.

We are trained to watch a clean image, but to be able to witness something authentic has a psychological drive of its own. Suspension of disbelief is one of the most important aspects for a director. To maintain the illusion that the film is real or at least it is so within its world, involves some contracts that the director makes to the viewer. Found footage has precedents in literature- where a novel is constructed as a series of letters, news paper clippings, diary entries and other such material.

Blairwitch project and Borat! Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan are the two films for discussion. A horror and a comedy.

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## The searching gaze in The Blairwitch project



In October of 1994, three student filmmakers disappeared in the woods near Burkittsville, Maryland while shooting a documentary.

A year later their footage was found.

The protagonist Heather gathers a crew of two other students to go and film a documentary about an infamous haunted forest. The disclaimer in the beginning of the fiction legend film pre-emptly states that things are not going to end up well. Heather is our protagonist and she is the unreliable narrator. We know she is unhealthily driven about the subject and has a mind of a convoluted young director. She has a camcorder and Joshua the cameraperson has a 16mm black and white camera. I believe that the camcorder is the primary camera as most of the story is told through it- it is the evidence camera. The 'found footage' format is supported by constant off screen commentary. The film begins with interviews where residents of the town give accounts for the stories that they have heard and the travel and prep of the film crew.

The principal photography was a bizarre process. The actors were sent into the woods with the cameras, GPS locators and coming material. As the directors ran the risk of getting into the frame, they were not on location. The places in the forest were marked for the actors with milk cartons and flags, the acting instructions were given to them in 35mm cans and they were asked to not share them. The actors had to be non-union, as this was an extreme form of filming. [7]

The image is not polished, we have very low expectations from Heather's camera handling., especially because after sometime she is filming continuously through her chaotic conversations. The camera becomes an intrusive device.

Michael begins to have reactions towards it, when they begin to get lost in the forest. Heather, does not stop filming, she is diligent. So though she is unreliable, we know she will film till her very end. That sets the fear- what all are we going to watch. The unpolished

camera work reduces costs for filming tremendously. Natural available light is the only source that is used. Many of the night sequences are run with a dark screen and sound effects plus dialogues. This keeps us attentive. We are constantly searching in the image for hints of what is happening. It is a great device for horror as it takes the psychology of us imagining the worst.



Direction, Screenplay : Eduardo Sánchez, Daniel Myric  
Cinematography : Neal Fredericks  
1999

The intercutting between the 16mm black and white film and the handycam footage provides the option for the director to have a sense of poetry and a second point of perspective with a tone shift. It also gives them a way to reiterate that Heather is annoyingly diligent. Even though Joshua has films the piles and crosses, she needs to film it as well. This makes us feel the frustration of the boys who are finding themselves trapped and lost. The use of these two very distinct cameras is impressive and well utilised in the screenplay.

The camera becomes a device for us to feel how Heather or whoever is holding the camera is feeling. Is she is panting or is scared; it is visible. When they have a quarrel and Michael gets violent the camera is yanked out, blurred. This makes us a get a first hand account of the story. We are intimately involved and could have been one of them. This closeness and involvement could be inferred as a first point perspective. We find what the characters find. The filmography is effective because the contacts signed are followed and never broken. The narration has found a way with the rules.

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### The nonchalant gaze of BORAT: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan (2004)

Borat, a journalist and the 6th famous man in Kazakstan is heading to the United State of America to learn about the ways there and make a documentary about it. The film is a dark

comedy mockumentary. The few actors in the film are Sasha Cohen who plays Borat, Pamela Anderson, his producer Ken Davitian, Luenell the prostitute and his new wife and the actors who played the Bear. Most of the people who are featured in the film believed that they were a part of the documentary. The presented reality of Kazakstan was seen as hurtful and unethical by many people and the government of Kazakstan, however, this device was very effective to unravel the deeper, more naked truths of the American people. This film is coarsely inappropriate and politically incorrect.



Anthony Hardwick is the cinematographer for the first Borat!. Luke Geissbuhler, who filmed the second one, said in an interview, that they mostly got a single take to achieve the shot. In Borat, like in the Blairwitch project the motivation to have the camera is ingrained into the story. The protagonist is set out to make a documentary. Unlike the Blairwitch project, most of the people featuring in the film were treated as documentary subjects. The camera work is clean in this film as the cameras are not being handled by one of the actors but a cinematographer. Zoom and wide angles lensing is often seen as a characteristic of the diegetic camera. The filmography seems like a typical multi camera set up. The camera used was the Panasonic AJ-HDC27 Varicam, which is a medium sized television camera. There is a lower resolution camera used in some parts, like the car sequences, where they would have needed to install the camera without the rigging.

The edit takes the liberty to cut between the two different resolutions as it has been established that this is a form of news documentary from Kazakstan. In fact, this incoherence might be helping the believability.



Unlike the Blairwitch, the camera is not a deeply psychological device, but an impersonal observer. Borat speaks into the camera and not to the camera operator themselves. If it were to be filmed differently, the impulsiveness of the people in the film would have been compromised.

When Borat is alone in his space, the camera continues to film him and we forget that this would probably not be in the documentary. Zoom ins are used as a device for humour.

Both the films required the actors to stay in characters for long durations. Here, the cameraperson's job becomes to not lose momentum and to keep filming. Lighting and consistent image takes a backseat. That brings about the excitement to watch it as we feel what we are seeing is authentic.

In Dogma 95 films, sometimes the equipment; like the boom is visible in some of the shots. However, it stands vastly different as a form from found footage/ diegetic camera footage. As the appearance of the camera is an acceptable flaw of the low- budget film making. Dogma 95 could be seen as an extension of the art movement Realism. Dogma 95 films also use an unadulterated form of filming, especially with the non-lighting situations and the hand held camera, which do make the image look realistic.

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## Fidelity of an image

A documentary style of filming is used by the makers usually to invite a historical context from the knowing of the world. It is used to express that this story happened and you are witnessing an authentic past. Some stories need to be rooted in this world to be believable.



An ultra sharp image with high resolution which recreates an image close to reality is not what feels authentic. When a diegetic format is used, the camera is the only thing in between the character and the occurrence. The lack of adulteration makes it feel authentic. The feeling that an image is not constructed by a film maker, it is raw, makes it feel unadulterated.

## 2.2 Realistic image

A realistic image in a fiction film, is the one that doesn't feel too staged. It draws from a documentary image the qualities of natural mis-en-scene, natural looking lighting, not too polished and beautified an image. The camera movements are motivated. The image could be grungy if the subject demands grit or could be used to see the mundane of life. But the image does not draw undue attention to itself. The characters are not responding to the camera as if it were diegetic.

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### The Wrestler, Darren Aronofsky

“Right after I did 'The Fountain,' I wanted to go make a documentary or something that was less constructed - more natural. I was searching for a project, and sniffing around, 'The Wrestler' fit right in.”

- Darren Aronofsky
- The Wrestler is a story about an ageing professional wrestler, Randy 'the Ram'. The film begins with a title sequence over magazine and news cutouts from the glory days of Randy juxtaposed with the audio of the crowd cheering for him. Cut to :



A defeated Randy is now participating in a pre-fixed matches, being handed over cash for his performance at the match. For the first few shots, we only see the protagonist from the back but when he is seen from the front it is an undramatic introduction. The gaze from the back is hardly to increase anticipation, but a distant observatory one of the man's body. Darren Aronofsky made an interesting choice for a cinematographer, Maryse Alberti, who was known

for her observational documentary and *verite* style of filming. Thus, Aronofsky chose his image style by the cinematographer he chose. Randy's life is a ramshackle mess, a celebrated, strong man with severe shortage of money, unable to pay rent for a non-permanent recreational vehicle (RV) house, having to take up extra hours at a storage unit to make ends meet. Movement switches between handheld and a loose steady cam. The loose steady cam helps to not over smooth the images, matching the handheld. Camera movement is almost always motivated by the character's movement.

The image with its objectivity neither glorifies his wrestling nor does it extend empathy to his drudgery. The lighting is non-dramatic.

What would classify as non-dramatic lighting?

This painting by Caravaggio, is a text book example of dramatic lighting. The uni-directional light coming from the shaft, makes a high contrast image. Dark skies and a clearing from the sun in the foreground cause for a 'spot-lit' effect. A darker background enhances the focus on the subject in the front. Perhaps, this is the inspiration for theatrical lighting- the predecessor of cinema.



For this reason, cinematographers often work on darkening their backgrounds- to increase the contrast ratio and provide more focus on the foreground by constructing a separation and increases the perception of depth. Techniques used for this purpose are using different lights for the background and the character - though it effectively feels like the same source. 'Skirting' the top lights, to reduce the fall off on the back, dodging the light off the background and sometimes the foreground are ways to increase focus on the subjects in the front.



That is speaking in terms of lighting intensity. On other hand, colour contrasts between complementary colours, help with increasing focus. This is achieved both by lighting and set and costume design.

The following stills from the 2022 film by Noah Baumbach called White noise. In this film there is usage of dramatisation techniques along with the use of organised lines, co-ordinated colour, shallow focus and central framing. Where as in the stills from The Wrestler, the lighting feels more naturalistic and the same super market location is un-coordinated-more real life like.



Inspired by the Randy's grungy, gritty world, the film's image expresses the same with the notable grain if super 16mm. The practical and harsh lighting lend itself to the harsh naked brutality of the sweat and blood of Randy's set up matches, without romanticising them. Randy's mismanaged life filled with money troubles is further emptied when he gets a heart attack after an intense and bloody match. He realises, as we realise, that he is alone, without anyone to care for him. He approaches Cassie the stripper, for some warmth, but she blatantly sees through his needs and suggests him to contact his daughter.

For a story where the protagonist, though suffering, is now in a lonely situation due to the selfish choices he once made- the observational gaze is a very apt treatment. Sympathetic gaze towards Randy would be morally incorrect and a judgemental one would put a bad taste in the viewers palette. But the distance helps us travel with the character and his faults, slowly transforming to seeing the poetry in his world.

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## 2.2.2 Poetry of Prosaic through Abbas Kiarostami's work

- I've often noticed that we are not able to look at what we have in front of us, unless it's inside a frame.

- The calling of art is to extract us from our daily reality, to bring us to a hidden truth that's difficult to access - to a level that's not material but spiritual.
- A work of art doesn't exist outside the perception of the audience.

*Abbas Kiarostami*

Taste of Cherry is an Iranian film by Abbas Kiarostami from 1997. It is filmed by Homa Payvar. A middle aged man from Tehran, Mr. Badi is going around town in his car looking to employ a person to do a task for him. He is offering a large sum of money for it. However, as the task is to help bury him after he commits suicide the next day, to convince someone of the job is not easy. Kiarostami observes life at a pace very distinct from western cinema. It would seem for the longest, that nothing much is happening. But, such is the prosaic of life.



Because of the subject and treatment, Kiarostami's work feels close to reality. The conversations in the film are long and filmed with the same camera positions for long durations.

The camera is on a tripod or is rigged in the car. Taste of cherry is filmed with a slightly tighter than normal looking lens. There is no distortion. A normal lens for a certain sensor is the one which feels closer to how we see things around. This does speak about the field of view inside the peripheral vision. A normal lens has a slight distortion that exuberates perspective. Kiarostami avoids the distortion in his images to find straight lines and a non distracting image with tele-er lenses.

This is a poetic film and is filmed so with a minimalist taste. Compositions are played closer attention to in a realistic film as compared to a found footage one. They are more stoic and follow the orders of composition. Similarly, camera movement and focus fumbles are accepted till a certain limit. Slow focus is acceptable as long as it arrives before the image obscures. There are slow zooms used in the landscape shots for the purpose of reframing, not for the purpose of emphasis.

In this film, over all tones seem to be warmed up in the grade. This is perhaps to make the place look hotter. This choice interferes with the skin tone perception.



The film is interjected with Badi's POV shots. There are ones from the car, which are constantly moving and have vibrations, they help build the world and keep the search going. The other POV shots are the ones where Badi takes a moment to observe. This gives director space to provide a lyrical- visual poetry. We know the man is going through rough times and is about to end his life. The observations he makes in the world that day are a way to retain what he feels and what he will miss. He is trying one last time to retain. The use of POV's is a language used through out the film. The car POV's seem to give context to the quiet static ones.



Badi finds a man for the job. Night comes and Badi goes and lies in the grave he has dug for himself. A thunderstorm begins, screen goes dark. When the image comes back on, the 4th wall is broken, it's shot with a camcorder, the camera crew is revealed and we do not know of Badi's decision. It looks like the film maker did not want to conclude a beautiful journey by answering the question, if Mr. Badi died. Kiarostami was known to be a spiritual man. A suicide at the end of the film would go against his belief system and to say that Badi lived would reduce the drama of the film. Thus, he ends the film by saying this was just a film about a man contemplating a suicide by using a diegetic camera and breaking the trance of the film.

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## Dogme 95 through The Idiots, Las Von Trier

"Dogme 95 is a Danish film movement that was popularised by Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg. The purpose of Dogme 95 is to bring filmmaking back to its simplest roots; to avoid the trappings of mainstream filmmaking like excessive special effects and

sensationalist plots. This is achieved by adhering to a strict set of rules referred to as the Vow of Chastity.”

In Dogme 95 films, sometimes the equipment; like the boom is visible in some of the shots. However, it stands vastly different as a form from found footage/ diegetic camera footage. As the appearance of the camera is an acceptable flaw of the low- budget film making. Dogma 95 could be seen as an extension of the art movement Realism. Dogma 95 films also use an unadulterated form of filming, especially with the non-lighting situations and the hand held camera, which do make the image look natural.

Dogme 95 is an Avant Garde film making movement by Danish film makers Las Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg. They wanted to take back power from the studios. Hence, they came up with a doctrine to minimise expenses and maximise writing and direction.

In the doctrine called the *Vow of Chastity* there are rules for cinematography;

- Shooting must be done on location.
- The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted.
- The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera.
- Optical work and filters are forbidden.
- Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)
- Genre movies are not acceptable.
- The film format must be Academy 35 mm.

Dogma 95 seems to be an absolute way of seeing. The film is being shot and that is the truth of the form. The medium of films is representational and the technical precisions are rejected as they are presumed cosmetic. What we choose to believe is up to us as viewers. We believe what we see, that is the premise of films working as a medium. Dogma 95 questions this very logic. If we are aware we are watching a film, how do we believe it is real. And if we do not mind the knowledge of the presence of film equipment and crew, does it make the story more or less believable.

The writing in the Idiots is complex and layered. The idea of a bunch of youngsters acting as if they have mental disorders to challenge the sensible society unravels into deeply disturbing events. The idea of the film could be seen as a meta film, where a group of directors who have come together to question the rules of commercial film making. However, as the last vow in the doctrine, the director delicately follows the characters. The scene where a group of patients with cerebral palsy are invited to visit the 'the Idiots', puts the film in its own realm. As this scene begins to recognise the problems within the beliefs of the The Idiots by questioning them.

#### *Continuation of the vow of chastity*

"Furthermore I swear as a director to refrain from personal taste! I am no longer an artist. I swear to refrain from creating a "work", as I regard the instant as more important than the whole. My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings. I swear to do so by all the means available and at the cost of any good taste and any aesthetic considerations. Thus I make my VOW OF CHASTITY."

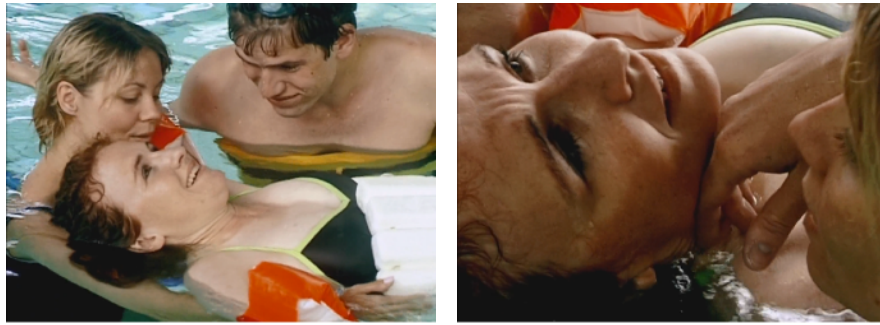
What role does a camera play in the Idiot? What is the achieved gaze?

The film is staged as an a flashback intercut with interviews of the characters and they are all presenting accounts of the protagonist Karen. The film begins with a sweet disoriented girl Karen getting introduced to the group of the scheming youngsters. They are quite opposite to her- loud, confident, vulgar. However, they have formed a community of the misfits. Karen who feels lost, gets absorbed by the group. The cameras used were Sony DCR-VX1000. A multi- camera setup. The uncredited cinematographer of the film is Las Von Trier himself. Though the character's do not look into the camera, the image is similar to a home video format. We are amongst the characters, zoom and movement are used freely. There are not many tools available, as the lighting is unmodified and natural and movements follow the activity without construction. The objective is to get the action filmed.

The lighting and camera work are used to see things for exactly what they are, it is a non glossy image. A caviar is a caviar. A penis is a penis. A bacchanal orgy is an orgy. In the beginning this form of filming might feel like kowtowing to the availability of devices and subservient of rules. However, isn't non glamourising things is exactly what the Idiots are trying to do in the film? Thus, after further thought, the cinematography style is befitting the film and is not a result of mere constraints.



The director does use extreme close ups and contrast of images as distinct tools.



In the above scene, the extreme close up is used to show Karen's first outlet of grief and the warmth the new friends are providing her with despite not knowing anything about her past.

While everyone is busy in an overindulgent orgy, Karen sits there untouched by the chaos. The sequence above is the order of shots in the edit. The film maker uses a chaotic composition versus a minimalist one to establish contrast. He has used the overexposed window, from the rules of the doctrine and it effects in forming an image of purity.



Thus, whose gaze is it? I think it's the film makers gaze, the crew's gaze, who are sometimes visible in the frames. They are searching for ways to narrate send the images across to us. And maybe, by extension, it is our gaze. What we could've followed if we were there, to know the story.

To conclude, there is an account i would like to state. A successful advertisement director friend who had no story but a vague feeling and a considerably high budget was looking for a cinematographer to film for him 'something like a Dogme 95' film.

## 2.3 Mainstream Realistic

Why are movies popular? Maybe, because they are entertaining. Maybe because they help us escape our own realities for sometime. Populist media entrances its audience. When we think about the Hindi film industry and if it will ever completely transform. The answer resoundingly comes out as a no. Our regular audience is a common person in India. Who would in most likelihood have had a very sweaty and tiring day. If they were in the city, there would be traffic, if they were in the town, there would be unmanaged traffic, chaos, honking. We have a massive population. We are constantly involved in facing a sea of people. Thus, at the end of the day, when one reaches home, and it is still not quiet enough on account of neighbours, honking (it does go on all the time), pressure cookers, or just your fan squeaking, what you would come back to is a comforting image. A comforting image is the one which finds its roots in Old Hollywood Cinema. As an audience we are trained and educated in a certain way of watching the film.

In these films the role of a cinematographer gets heightened, as the shots are more staged, more gear is involved, lighting is more elaborate. Budgets are higher.

Some features could be noted as dramatic camera movements, classical choice of shots, does not go into the extremities like realistic and hyperrealistic, if not motivated by the action itself, gaze towards the characters is more caricaturist, clean image (no visible or noticeable grain), for majority of the film, lighting uses acceptable tonality contrasts - without burning the whites or dipping the blacks.

Mainstream realistic is a comfortable way of present films. It is made with a mass viewing in consideration. The image starts to become slightly more controlled and graphic. The steady, consistent image construction provide a non jarring watch. Here, the emotional exposition takes precedent over a psychological one.

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### 2.3.1 An Anti- War film: Full metal Jacket, Stanley Kubrick

- "A film is - or should be - more like music than like fiction. It should be a progression of moods and feelings. The theme, what's behind the emotion, the meaning, all that comes later."

- "If chess has any relationship to film-making, it would be in the way it helps you develop patience and discipline in choosing between alternatives at a time when an impulsive decision seems very attractive."
- "I have always enjoyed dealing with a slightly surrealistic situation and presenting it in a realistic manner. I've always liked fairy tales and myths, magical stories. I think they are somehow closer to the sense of reality one feels today than the equally stylized "realistic" story in which a great deal of selectivity and omission has to occur in order to preserve its "realist" style."

### *Stanley Kubrick*

Propaganda is a frequent user of mainstream cinema. The support for the Vietnam war was gathered using fake news and war films hero worshipping the army. Stanley Kubrick made the film in 1987, which was a revolt towards the war films. The film is about the cruelty of the process that makes sound men into killing machines- the marines. The film has a two parts structure almost independent of each other although they have overlapping characters.

Part one of the film begins with a drill environment. Gunnery Sergeant Hartman uses harsh methods to train them for combat. Among the recruits is the overweight and 'dim-witted' Leonard Lawrence, whom Hartman nicknames "Gomer Pyle", and the wisecracking J.T. Davis, who receives the name "Joker" after interrupting Hartman's introductory speech with an impression of John Wayne. Hartman treats the young soldiers with extreme cruelty. The exercises he inflicts upon them are horrific in nature and the continuous torture is deeply psychological. For this purpose, Douglas Milsome, the cinematographer and Kubrick uses the tools of evenly lit spaces with continuous camera tracking. This continuous movement over a pattern formed by men standing in attention establishes a sense of the long continuous drills coming their way. The camera is on a dolly. For most of the part one of the film, Hartman speaks continuously. He is either insulting the young boys or has a series of songs he sings about loving ones guns or lectures on how they have to think.

During these sessions, either the new recruits are standing in a strict formation or are marching. The treatment is caricaturist, lyrical in nature.

The tracking is used to maintain the shot sizes when the characters are moving in the frame, jogging, walking long walks, even when there is a slight movement when they are cleaning the toilet. As a tool to dramatise the agony in the character- Pyles mind, zoom ins are used. The long zoom ours are used for space reveals, these are accompanied with a crane pull out. A zoom + crane/dolly pull out is an interesting and gear heavy device. To co-ordinate a grip team, camera operator, all the actors in the frame, the focus puller and more gives us an



insight into the shooting ratio. These shots require a lot of rehearsal. Full metal jacket is an impeccably shot film with no camera fumbles. The use of crane provides for interesting perspectives.



The first half of the film frequents the use of cross fades. This device is used to establish a continuum. Days of rigorous training melting into one another. The compositions in the first half of the film are stoic and structured. This helps feel the oppression of the control. Deep focus makes the image more pattern- like, as the actors in the background do not become blobs of colour.



Hartman picks on Pyle and begins to humiliate and abuse him regularly. This leads to his eventual mental breakdown.

As the focus is deep, the night scenes have to have been heavily lit.

The night lighting for the first night scene is treated simulating a blue moon light. The second night scene, which is at the end of part one is treated with a whiter street light.



This could be as white is a more clinical treatment, which emulates the madness with less risk of the blue romanticism of the moonlight.

There is a long list of cinematography devices used for this film. It makes the film maker use an expanse of their tools to tell a story, but this can be afforded as there is time and gear provided owing to bigger budgets. Hence, mainstream cinema allows for a more elaborate cinematography approach. It is not a gritty, grungy imaged film, but it is a psychological war film.

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### 2.3.2 Physicality in The Whale, Darren Aronofsky



“Every film had its own grammar. And it’s your job as a director to basically figure out a language to tell a story.”

- *Darren Aronofsky*

The film begins with the shot of a video call, where the camera zooms into the black of the instructor’s window. The voice encourages the students and is a voice of a sensible, intelligent man. *The Whale* is a film about a dangerously obese man, Charlie, an English teacher and his relationship with his daughter. The other characters in the film are his best friend- Liz, his daughter- Ellie, the missionary- Thomas, his wife- Mary and the pizza delivery guy- Dan. The script of the three act structured film is a tight one. Charlie’s obesity is a result of compulsive over eating, a result of the depression caused by the death of his lover. His lover was Liz’s brother. He died as the Church was a big governing part of his life and staunch followers of the church- his parents did not accept his homosexuality.

The film progresses into Charlie having a stroke post a masturbation session and the missionary- Thomas enters at the same time trying to sell him religion. It is a rather dramatically written film. Charlie calls Liz, who is also his nurse. Liz comes in, checks Charlie and gives him an honest ultimatum- for his death- he will die within a week. Thus, a timer is set on the film. This prompts Charlie to try and mend relationship with his daughter.

*The Whale*, as *The Wrestler* is film about a physically driven character. But the physicalities of the two characters are different. There was a certain grunginess to the *Wrestler*’s life, while Charlie’s life is static, stuck at one place. This invited for a treatment, where the entire film, barring one exterior building shot, is filmed inside one space- Charlie’s apartment. The film



looks like it has been filmed in a studio, given the height requirements for some techno crane shots. To avoid feeling bound in the apartment, the camera moves almost all the time. Matthew Libatique has lit the film classically for a studio lit set. The light changes only involve a rainy foggy day or night light with practicals.

What makes this film a mainstream realistic looking film? It is a clean image. The camera moves almost all the time. The studio-ness is felt through via the movement in the blocking of the dialogues. The camera moves for compensating the movement of the actors, it tracks in for prominence to increase the dramatic value. Music accompanies these movements. Intercutting is used freely in the film.

For example;

As Liz leans into Charlie to sit back and watch the television. He looks towards his bucket of fried chicken. He sombrely begs her to fetch it for him. Reluctantly, she agrees. Upon getting the chicken back from the wide she sits back in the previous mid two shot.



This intercutting makes it evident that there have been several different camera angles and retakes of the scene. It would've been repeated, else we would have had to spot the camera in the opposite angle. However, when watching a mainstream film, we do not ask such questions as the camera's function is dramatisation and as an audience we have been trained to watch an edited scene, given the film is a fiction.



The aspect ratio of the film is 1.33:1. It assists the viewers gaze to feel the constant downward weightiness in the frame. If the same image was 1.85:1, Charlie's body would not be bleeding out at the bottom or the frame wouldn't be bottom heavy. To make the frame bottom heavy the film makers would have to use wider lens- which would have distorted Charlie's body further. Distortion invites attention and is used to make a statement. Distortion in film for portraying a person with physical disabilities, could be an inappropriate imaging and will be frowned upon. The lensing in the film is slightly tighter than normal imaging to tele-er.

The dialogue scenes are broken down into a classical shot break down. There is a wide and an over the shoulder (OTS) or POV shot reverse shot. The following scene is the second day Ellie visits her father. The scene begins with a conversation as Ellie enters. The physical



constraint of Charlie is such that he cannot move much. The film makers, utilise the shot never shot to enhance his lack of mobility. As he has turned around after opening the door to her, the conversation happens with his back to her.

As classical staging goes, the shot on the back of Charlie becomes an OTS on Ellie as she crosses him and sits on the chair. These movements of transient shot types are a trait of the

mainstream imagery. The scene ends with Charlie speaking to the back of Ellie, as she is turned away from him.



Grain looks like has been added in post, as the film is filmed on a 6k Sony Venice sensor and is down converted to a 4K output. Aronofsky and Libatique use this form of constructions, to film every dialogue in the film with a distinct construction. Eye-level variations are used to feel the hugeness of Charlie.







“you are going to die by the weekend”

Unusual, non threatening framing for the delivery of an ominous statement.

## 2.4 Hyper realistic/ Beyond realistic image/ extreme stylisation

This form of image stylisation finds itself in films where world building or a distorted time and space needs to be established. In these films, the cinematography is more expansive and explorative. Tools like speed distortions, unrealistic lighting, soft/hazy lensing, lens distortions, split screens, double exposures etc are used to create the shift from a real space. Zack Snyder's film 300: the Rise of an Empire a historical fantasy about the battle of Thermopylae is a straight forward example of such a film. In this film the story and the treatment go hand in hand. 300 is a film which glorifies the war and has a certain degree of hero worship. The dramatic skies, contrast, pushed colour and use of light images below, from 300 remind of the Renaissance paintings.



A well funded hyper realistic film and a mainstream realistic film have similar gear and language. The placement of use of music is also A film like Harry Potter, though a fantasy fiction is blocked in a mainstream realistic fashion. Perhaps, this was to increase the believability of the world. This form of treatment is not necessarily to construct a fantastical world, but can also be used to express the mind space of the characters.

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### 2.4.1 Requiem for a dream, Darren Aronofsky

“When I go to movies I generally want to be taken to another world.”

*Darren Aronofsky*

Full Metal Jacket, The Whale, Taste of Cherry, The Wrestler are all emotional films where the psychological journey of the characters is explored. Requiem for a Dream is a psychological drama where what the character is mentally driven by is translated into an image. If visuals were a written language of the film, Requiem for a dream is a visual literary work of the inner workings of the crumbling mind. The film is caricaturist. The gaze sees the characters up close, but is less empathetic than the Whale. This film is the second collaboration between the director Aronofsky and cinematographer Mather Libatique.

The film depicts four characters affected by drug addiction and how it alters their physical and emotional states. Their addictions cause them to become imprisoned in a world of delusion and desperation. As the film progresses, each character deteriorates, and their delusions are shattered by the harsh reality of their situations, resulting in catastrophe.

The camera devices in the film used are; slow shutter, split screens, high speed, double exposures, body rigs, circular camera movements, diegetic camera to begin with. Lest to say, that the film is diverse. Every scene in the film is blocked differently. The film begins with a split screen between the Sara Goldfarb and her son Harry involved in a heavy quarrel. Harry is stealing his mother’s television and she is hiding from him in another room. The film makers introduce a smooth but fast paced a split screen amidst the chaos. It begins by creating a disassociation of reality.

Obsession and especially obsession due to addiction is a repetitive phenomenon. A person gets trapped in their head. One cannot see reason. Physical ties get enhanced and sensations are heightened. The film maker portrays this world. The hyper- realistic image is an image beyond the normal. This tool serves well to help create different realities. As we have spoken about gaze and the purpose of the camera in a film. Let’s ask the same questions of Requiem for a dream.

The gaze in the film, is of the four addicts, it's their distorted point of view. The purpose of the camera is to emulate the journey of the person who begins by taking drugs to their eventual disparity. There is a constant presence of sensory shots - treated with extreme close ups. The fast paced edit creates a break in time.



No two scenes are the same. For example, the skin tone in the scene below is much desaturated than the rest of the film. And these scenes are not far apart, the desaturation is not a result of bad health. Whereas, film makers are extremely careful about breaking the consistency of the image. As a film is an illusion, they do not want to break the illusion. However, in Requiem for a Dream, the memo seems to have been, let's break the consistency, as the character's are feeling the same way.

Sara's mind is consumed by television and eating. One day she gets a call that she will be on television and the fragile peace and grace of her world is disturbed. Use of colour is prevalent in the film and treated graphically. Sara wishes to fit in her red dress, the one she wore for Harry's graduation ceremony. Red is treated as the colour of obsession for Sara. While being high on heroine, Harry has a vision, where he sees his girlfriend Marian dressed in a red dress. This seems to be a Freudian thought emulation. Harry wants to hold onto his childhood. At some point the most attractive woman in the world for him must have been his mother. Sara confesses she misses the way her husband used to look at her. Harry's subconscious superimposes this want for his mother onto his current girlfriend.





Mariam seems to like the colour purple- violet. The following shots come right after one another.



In the shot on the left, which is a medium paced long crane into the sleeping couple. All the fabrics in the frame are muted-the sofa covers and the costumes. The only little colour there is, is the nail paint on Mariam's finger nails. The very next shot is Sara dyeing her hair red. The colour however looks purple.

Usually, split screen is a device used to show two things happening parallel in time. The split screen in this film is used when the characters are on different pages of the situation. This is used both when there are arguments and when there is love. It is still parallel time, however it is the same space.



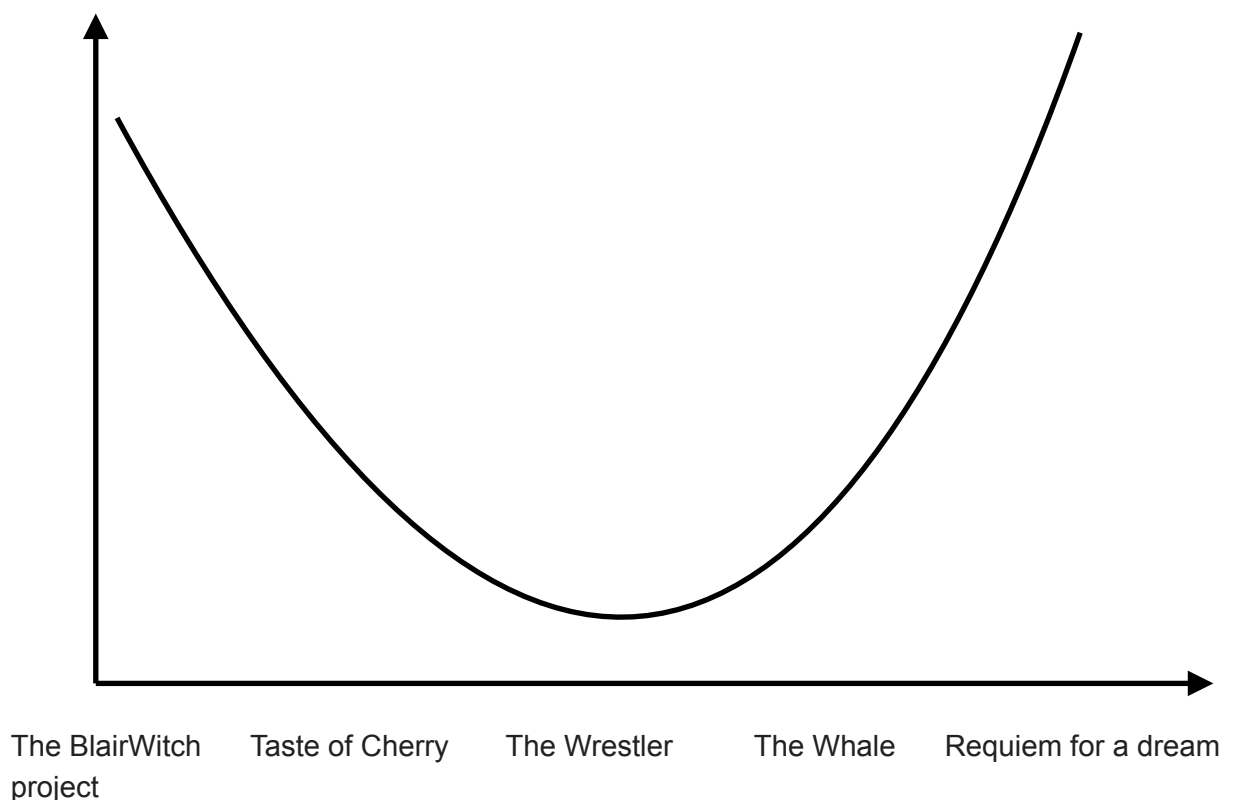
As the background is all black - a limbo, again emulating the state of mind, because there's no black- sheeted bed in the film. On this black background, we do not realise the split screen, till the hands come into the frame. It is a sudden reveal. We are put in an uncomfortable realisation, that this sweet moment is not without the effect of drugs. Harry and Mariam's realities are drifted from each other. The camera goes very close in scenes

where there is struggle or sensation involved. We can see the texture, hear the heightened sound and it creates a a sensation of feeling trapped in the compulsion.

The cinematography carries the erratic, unsteady quality of an addicts deteriorating mind. The filmmaker pick this style of narration to create an atmosphere, an effect of madness.

Image wise, The Blairwitch project and Requiem for a dream have high dramatisation. The two films have variety of shots, constantly intercut. The images in the two films are irregular. They both have disruptive camera movement. This might be because both the films are also the most psychologically heavy films from the lot and deal with an up close gaze of its unstable protagonists. The camera work in these films is involved and Full Metal Jacket also deals with the crumbling of the mind, but the camera feels slightly further in its capacity than the other two.

### Dramatic quotient of the image



The Whale and Requiem for a dream both show compulsive eating. The whale uses slow track ins- unmotivated camera movement; used to increase the tension or the tenacity of the situation. Requiem for a dream uses overlays, sudden appearances of ham burgers, the fridge shaking to portray the same disorder. Though in The Whale, the problem of over eating is much worse than in Requiem for a dream. The degree of dramatisation is hyper in the latter.

## Conclusion

When picking a visual style for a film, it is imperative to understand the ideology the director and the screenplay require. One must know what to look for in the references they find. A tool like a classically designed film can be utilised impact fully into translating the restrictions of the physical movements of the character in *The Whale*.

If every film has parts that can be broken down as Text, Subtext and Context. Kiarostami's *Taste of Cherry* utilises the observations by camera as the subtext of the film. They are observations lending a deeper understanding of life. What the camera sees could be seen as text and how it sees could be seen as subtext.

The knowledge of these decisions needs to be made at the beginning of the filming process. As cinematography is about making an image for the entirety of the film and cannot be found in between the film. Though not a didactic process, the discovery stage for a cinematographer almost commences before the filming begins. Having conversations about the gaze, fidelity, consistency, nature of psychology explored can help come to a conclusion about the style of the image. Realism versus Formalism, is a conversation about the film post it's making. This thesis speaks about the preparation part of the shoot for the film.

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## Choice of films

It is not easy to find films which lie purely within the brackets. Most films, like the ones by Coen Brothers, Wes Anderson lie in between two formats- the mainstream and hyper realistic. Hence, these films were picked for the purpose of making distinct definitions.

The films are deeply psychological and most of them employ the use of point of view shots. To see a comparative POV treatment between *The Blairwitch Project*, *Taste of Cherry*, *The Whale* was a standard point of understanding. They are character psychology driven films. This gives them a point of equalisation for being put into context.

Most films are the same as one of the first few works of the directors- except *The Whale* and *Full metal jacket*- which are both mainstream films with bigger budgets. On a personal note, i align with the politics and ideologies of the films, have similar existential questions.

These films are not regular films in their one formats, they employ the characteristics of the groups they belong to but are masterpieces, all breaking grounds on different fronts.

For example, the found footage films in this thesis are not historical non stylistic films. This scale is not influenced by genre. Hyperrealistic films could seem to be the ones which are more genre focused. However, *Borat* and *Blairwitch project*, a comedy and a horror, are examples of films chosen to bring focus to cinematography. text and how it sees is subtext.



From the found footage to hyper real films one noticeable characteristic is that, the cinematography is more structured. The image tends to get more graphic as we move right on the scale.

A mainstream image is further consistent in its treatment. Films like *Sicario* utilise the diegetic footage from a night vision camera to build tension or *Breaking Bad* utilises handcam footage to build emotion. Somehow, as viewers we are now trained to watching mainstream films where the image jumps if there is a motivation behind it.

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### Is a Realistic image a form of stylisation?

Coming to this conclusion might appear to nullify the point of the thesis, as we are drawing a distinction between a realistic image and a stylised image. But the agenda of the thesis remains to formulate a language to understand what the director and the screenplay envision for the film. After realising, that the *Blair Witch* project and *Requiem for a dream* are both films with high stylistic images, extreme realisticness becomes a stylistic element. Normal image like a normal lens, is a gaze where the cinematography has little deviation from more common formats of more circulated films- the mainstream realistic. Anything far from this middle section is a stylisation. The questions of gaze and fidelity have surfaced as the more important ones to understand the ideology of the film.

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