

Analysing a Scene: notes & noticing

These questions are a way to gather information for a film analysis. In both film and literature, how things are presented (events, characters, settings) is as important as the things themselves. Both the how and the what of film are the result of conscious choices made by the cinematographer and/or director; noticing these choices and the effects they have is the first step in building a convincing analysis.

Context

1. What is the context of this scene within the film narrative?

Mise-en-scène (framing)

1. What is in the shot?
2. What is centered?
3. What is excluded?
4. How do figures move within the frame?
5. Is the shot wide or long? A close-up?
6. What is in focus? Is anything blurred?
7. How is the scene lit?
8. How does the framing of the scene communicate (nonverbal) meanings?

Camera Work and Editing

1. What point-of-view (pov) do the camera angles suggest? Does the camera act as the eyes of a character (restricted or subjective pov) or the audience (unrestricted or omniscient pov)?
2. What camera angles are used here?
3. How does the camera move? What effect does camera movement have on viewers?
4. How are the shots edited? Is the pace slow or fast? What effect does this have on you?

First paragraph (with technical language)

In the scene where Scottie transforms Judy into Madelaine, the camera movements, editing, and lighting mimic the workings of Scottie's mind and bring the spectator inside his fantasy. After the transformation has taken place, a close-up shot shows Scottie kissing Judy-as-Madeleine. The camera starts to track around them to the right, but then pans left as if being drawn into them. The camera continues to track right, but is again drawn in towards Scottie and "Madelaine." Through these camera movements, the spectator's gaze is drawn into Scottie's fantasy. Suddenly, the background of the shot begins to transform into the environment of the Mission San Juan Batista stable, the place where Scottie last saw "Madeleine" and the place associated with Carlotta Valdes. The background continues to morph as Scottie's memory is triggered, and the camera slows down and begins to pull back to a medium shot. Simultaneously, the background itself begins to move from left to right, creating a sense of a spiral set into motion by centrifugal forces. As Scottie's memory recedes again, the camera begins tracking and panning to conclude on the tightest close up of the sequence [Fig. 1]. It is an idealized image of romantic embrace, in which the contradiction between present and past has been imaginatively overcome and the dead brought back to life in a moment of sublime transcendence. However, as the garish green lighting in the background and the dark shadow cast over Madelaine's face suggest, it is an image of desire intimately entwined with a fixation on death.

Second paragraph (without technical language)

In the scene where he turns Judy into Madelaine, Scottie's fantasy of bringing Madeline back to life is shown through camera movements, editing, and lighting. After the transformation has taken place, Scottie kisses Judy-as-Madeleine. We see them up close, but then the camera moves to the right, then the left, as if the spectator is watching them from an invisible position. Suddenly, the background changes into the Mission San Juan Batista stable, the place where Scottie last saw "Madeleine" and the place associated with Carlotta Valdes. This implies that Scottie's memory is being triggered. From here, the camera moves slowly and then stops to focus on Scottie and Madelaine. At the same time, the background moves from left to right, creating an unstable perspective. Then, as Scottie comes back to the present, the camera focuses closely on the couple kissing [Fig. 1]. It is a romantic moment, in which past and present come together. But the green lighting in the background and the dark shadows on Madelaine's face suggest a darker connotation of death.



Fig. 1 Scottie embraces Judy-as-Madelaine

Storyboard Template

Shot: _____ Duration: _____	Shot: _____ Duration: _____	Shot: _____ Duration: _____
Dialogue and/or Action Line:	Dialogue and/or Action Line:	Dialogue and/or Action Line:
Lighting:	Lighting:	Lighting:
Music/Sound Effects:	Music/Sound Effects:	Music/Sound Effects:

Shot: _____ Duration: _____	Shot: _____ Duration: _____	Shot: _____ Duration: _____
Dialogue and/or Action Line:	Dialogue and/or Action Line:	Dialogue and/or Action Line:
Lighting:	Lighting:	Lighting:
Music/Sound Effects:	Music/Sound Effects:	Music/Sound Effects:

Shot: _____ Duration: _____	Shot: _____ Duration: _____	Shot: _____ Duration: _____
Dialogue and/or Action Line:	Dialogue and/or Action Line:	Dialogue and/or Action Line:
Lighting:	Lighting:	Lighting:
Music/Sound Effects:	Music/Sound Effects:	Music/Sound Effects: