

# Film Studies



## **Objective**

- To develop an understanding and to develop an appreciation of world cinema including Indian cinema in terms of genres
- To expand ones understanding and analysis of films from some key film makers
- To draw comparisons between Indian films and Hollywood/European/Other films.

## Different schools of world cinema

1. Formalist
2. Realist
3. Neo-realist
4. Classical
5. New Wave
6. Post-Modern
7. Any other...

# Formalism

- Major theory of film study
- Focuses on the formal, technical elements of film  
(i.e., the lighting, scoring, sound, set design, use of color, shot composition, and editing, etc.)

## Realism

- Films that are lifelike with believable locations and details
- Minimum of distorted elements
- More of realistic elements
- Presenting world as un-manipulated
- Presenting world as an objective mirror of the actual world

## Neo-realist

- Stories set among the poor and the working class
- Filmed on location, frequently using non-professional actors
- Term used to describe a trend away from abstract expressionism toward a subjective expressionism focusing on true-to-life forms, the factual and easily evident forms.

## **Aristotelian realism**

- Philosophical theory
- Refers to the existence of Absolutes and Universals

## **Platonic realism**

- Philosophical theory
- Refers to contextual aesthetics

## **Classicism**

- An intermediate style that avoids the extremes of realism and formalism
- Most classical films lean one way or another



## **New Wave**

- A movement in French cinema in the 1960s
- Abandons traditional narrative techniques
- In favor of greater use of symbolism and abstractions
- Deals with themes of social alienation, Psychology, sexual love, etc.

## Parallel Cinema

- Film movement in Indian cinema originated in Bengal in 1950s
- Alternative to the mainstream cinema: Commercial; Bollywood, Kollywood, Tollywood, etc.
- Inspired by Italian New-realism
- Known for its serious content, Realism and Naturalism
- Has a keen eye on the Socio-political platform
- Absence of dance and song (that are typical of mainstream commercial cinema)

## **Postmodern cinema**

Emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a powerfully creative force in Hollywood filmmaking, reflecting and helping to shape the historic convergence of media culture, technology, and consumerism.

Attempts to subvert the mainstream conventions of narrative structure, characterization

Destroys audience's suspension of disbelief

Also breaks down the cultural divide between high and low, gender, race, class, etc.

Creating something different from traditional narrative expression

## Different Film Genres

- Action
- Adventure
- Comedy
- Crime
- Fiction
- Fantasy
- Historical
- Horror
- Romance
- Philosophical
- Science Fiction
- Satire
- Animation
- Gangster
- Indian
- Western

# Genre

Term for any category of literature/ forms of art / entertainment

(e.g. music, whether written or spoken, audial or visual, based on some set of stylistic criteria, etc.)

Formed by conventions

Changed over the time as new genres come up

Art works fit into multiple genres

- Borrowing
- Recombining conventions

- Entire entertainment industry - based on genres
- Learning - which genres suit you the best
- Crystallizes - unique style of writing from your strength
- As systems for expressing various themes
- Strategies for story telling
- Concept that involves a process of categorisation and labelling of easily recognisable conventions that exist in any particular set of films.
- Both depend on audience's foreknowledge / past experience

# **ACTION**

An action story - similar to adventure

Protagonist usually takes a risky turn, which leads to desperate situations (including explosions, fight scenes, daring escapes, etc.)

Heroic bloodshed

Action revolving around stylized / artificial / schematic sequences and dramatic themes - such as brotherhood, duty, honor, redemption and violence.

Military Fiction

Story about war/battle - either historical or fictional. Usually events a certain warrior goes through during the battle's events.

# ADVENTURE

Story of a protagonist - journeys to epic or distant places to accomplish something.

Could include other genre elements - because it is a very open genre.

Protagonist has a mission - faces obstacles to get to his destination.

Usually aimed at marketing to young males of 10 and above.

Typically characterized by high-action

Often humorous plots featuring male protagonists.

Attractive female characters with exaggerated features

Adventures of costumed crime fighters - superheroes - possess superhuman powers

Similarly powered criminals - super villains.



# **COMEDY**

Story that tells about a series of funny or comical events - intended to make the audience laugh - very open genre

## **Comedy of manners**

Film that satirizes the manners and affections of a social class - the plot is often concerned with an illicit love affair or some other scandal - generally less important - witty dialogues - has long ancestry (Shakespeare, etc. E.g. *Much Ado about Nothing*)

## **Humorous**

Fiction full of fun, fancy, and excitement - meant to entertain.

## **Tall tale**

Humorous story - blatant exaggeration - swaggering / bombastic heroes doing impossible things

## **Parody**

A story that mocks or satirizes other genres, people, fictional characters or works - employs sarcasm, stereotyping, mockery of scenes, symbols, lines from other works

## **Comedy horror**

*Shaun of the Dead; Jennifer's Body, etc...*

## **Black comedy**

Satirical story - based on normally tragic or taboo subjects - includes death, murder, suicide, illicit drugs, war, etc.

## **Romantic comedy (Rom Com)**

Combines romance with comedy - focusing on two or more individuals - discover and attempt to deal with their romantic love, attractions to each other. The stereotypical plot line - "boy-gets-girl", "boy-loses-girl", "boy gets girl back again" sequence - innumerable variants to this plot - new twists - generally lighthearted comedy - social interactions - sexual tension between the characters - very often refuse to admit they are attracted to one another / must deal with others meddling in their affairs.

## **Comic fantasy**

Subgenre of fantasy - primarily humorous in intent and tone - usually set in imaginary worlds - includes puns - sometimes known as low fantasy

# **CRIME**

Story is about a crime - being committed / committed - account of a criminal's life -  
Action or Adventure genres.

## **Courtroom drama**

Television show - subgenre of dramatic programming - presents fictional drama  
about law - law enforcement, crime, detective-based mystery solving, lawyer work,  
civil litigation, etc.

## **Detective Story**

Story about a detective / detectives - professional or amateur - one who has to  
solve a crime committed

## **Mystery / Thriller**

Mystery/Thriller - complex, plot-driven variety detective story - audience is given the opportunity to engage in the same process of deduction as the protagonist - provided with the clues - the investigation is usually conducted by an eccentric/amateur/semi-professional detective

## **Gangster**

Literature focusing on gangs, criminal organizations - much larger and more complex criminal transactions than an individual ones - subject of many movies - period between 1930 and 1960.

## **Gentleman Thief**

Centers around particularly well-behaving, well-bred/polite thieves - preferring to rely on their charisma - physical attractiveness - clever misdirection to steal the most unobtainable objects - for their own support - mostly for the thrill of the act itself.

## **Hardboiled / Hardened / Hard edged**

Sharing the setting with crime fiction (especially detective stories) - deriving from romantic tradition - emotions of apprehension / anxiety, horror and terror, and awe - detective's cynical attitude towards those emotions - conveyed through the detective's self-talk to the reader/viewer

## **Legal Thriller**

Subgenre of thriller and crime fiction - major characters are lawyers and their employees - system of justice is always a major part - justice is the character itself - lawyers proving their cases - usually their client's innocence of the crime

## **Murder Mystery**

Mystery story focusing on one type of criminal case - homicide - one or more murder victims - detective figuring out who killed them - they may or may not find themselves/loved ones in danger because of this investigation

## **FICTION**

Text depicted as based on real historical figures

Actual events woven together with fictitious elements

Confusing to people who are trying to find facts



## **Science fiction**

Similar to fantasy - stories in this genre use scientific understanding to explain the universe - generally includes or is centered on the presumed effects or ramifications of machines - on travel through space, time, alternate universe, alien life forms, genetic engineering - science and technology used may or may not be thoroughly elaborated - scientific elements stories are reasonably detailed and well-researched - current knowledge and technology are often referred to as hard science fiction

## **FANTASY**

Fairy tales and legends - about magic/supernatural forces, rather than technology - though include elements of science fiction elements (computers/DNA,etc) - happens to take place in modern era - depending on the extent of other elements, the story may or may not be considered to be a "hybrid genre" series - Eg. Harry Potter series - to be a wizard - but referred to only as a fantasy series.

### **Contemporary Fantasy**

Set in the present day - stories set in the putative/assumed real world - magic and magical creatures exist

## **Urban Fantasy**

Subgenre of fantasy defined by place - narrative has an urban setting - contains supernatural elements - also stories can take place in historical, modern, or futuristic periods, as well as fictional settings - prerequisite is to be set in a city

## **Dark Fantasy**

Can refer to literary, artistic, filmic works - combine fantasy with elements of horror - works that have a dark/gloomy atmosphere/sense of horror and dread

## **Epic/High Fantasy**

Mythical stories with highly developed characters/story lines. E.g. The Lord of the Rings

## **Heroic Fantasy**

Chronicles the tales of heroes in imaginary lands - protagonist is reluctant to be a champion/of low or humble origin - has royal ancestors/parents but does not know it - events are usually beyond their control - they are thrust into positions of great responsibility - their mettle is tested in a number of spiritual and physical challenges.

## **Magical Girl**

Popular in Japan - of girls who use magic in either their training, idol stardom or even to fight evil.

## ROMANCE

- Traditionally it involves chivalry, adventure and love
- In modern writing, a story about character's relationships / engagements  
story about character development and interpersonal relationships rather than adventures
- Feature the mutual attraction and love of a man and a woman as the main plot, and have a happy ending
- Easily and commonly combined with comedy, fantasy fiction, realistic fiction, or action-adventure.

## **SATIRE / MOCKERY / IRONY**

- Often defined as literary genre
- Human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, irony or other methods
- Ideally with the intent to bring about improvement
- Purpose of satire is not primarily humor in itself
- Using the weapon of wit. Common feature is its strong vein of irony or sarcasm, exaggeration, juxtaposition, comparison, analogy

# **HISTORICAL**

Story about a real person or event - often written in a text book format

**Biography** - details of the life story of a real person, told by someone else

**Autobiography** - same as biography - written by the person himself / herself

**Memoir** - same as autobiography - told more "from memory", i.e. it is how the person personally remembers and feels about their life or a stage in their life more than the records - considered to be nonfiction

**Historical fiction** - story that takes place in the real world, with real world people, but with several fictionalized or dramatized elements

**Period films** - features historical places, people, events - history is used as a backdrop

Costume drama - type of drama that heavily relies on lavish costumes and designs

# **HORROR**

Story is told to deliberately scare or frighten the audience through suspense, violence or shock

1) Physical Fear 2) Supernatural Horror - violations of laws of nature

**Ghost story** - story about the intrusion of the spirits of the dead into the realm of the living.

**Monster** - story about a monster, creature that terrorizes people

Slasher - featuring a usually male serial killer or psychopath as an antagonist - methodically killing a number of vulnerable, often female protagonists in succession, Eg. Final girl

**Survival horror** - horror story about a protagonist who is put in a risky and life-threatening situation that he or she must endure - the rest of the plot is how the hero or heroes overcome this.



## **Mystery**

Normally associated with the crime genre - the focus is on supernatural mystery (even if no crime is involved) - titles such as Dime mystery, Thriller mystery, Spicy mystery, - supernatural horror

**Dime Mystery** - started out as an ordinary crime fiction magazine - conventional hardboiled crime fiction

## **PARANOID**

Works of literature - explores the subjective nature of reality - how it can be manipulated by forces in power - these forces can be external - such as a totalitarian government - can be internal, such as a character's mental illness - or refusal to accept the harshness of the world he or she is in

## **Philosophical**

Significant proportion of the work is devoted to a discussion - questions - function and role of society, the purpose of life, ethics or morals - the role of art in human lives - role of experience or reason in the development of knowledge.

Philosophical fiction includes utopian views - modus operandi to use a normal story to simply explain difficult and dark parts of human life

## **Political**

Subgenre of fiction - deals with political affairs - uses narrative to provide commentary on political events, systems and theories - often "directly criticizes an existing society - present an alternative, sometimes fantastic reality - frequently employs the literary modes of satire

## THRILLER

- Common theme in thrillers involves innocent victims dealing with deranged adversaries - as seen in Hitchcock's film *Rebecca* (1940): Mrs. Danvers tries to persuade Mrs. De Winter to leap to her death
- Story is usually a mix of fear and excitement - It has traits from the suspense genre and often from the action, adventure, mystery genres
- It generally has a dark or serious theme - also makes it similar to drama

## **Disaster thriller**

Story about mass threat where the protagonist's job is to both survive, and to save many other people from a grim fate - often a natural disaster such as a storm or volcanic eruption, terrorist attack, epidemic attack

## **Psychological thriller**

Emphasizes the psychological condition of the hero that presents obstacles to his objective, rather than the action - also about complicated stories that try to deliberately confuse the audience

## **Crime thriller**

Story that revolves around the life of detectives, mobs, or other groups associated with criminal events in the story

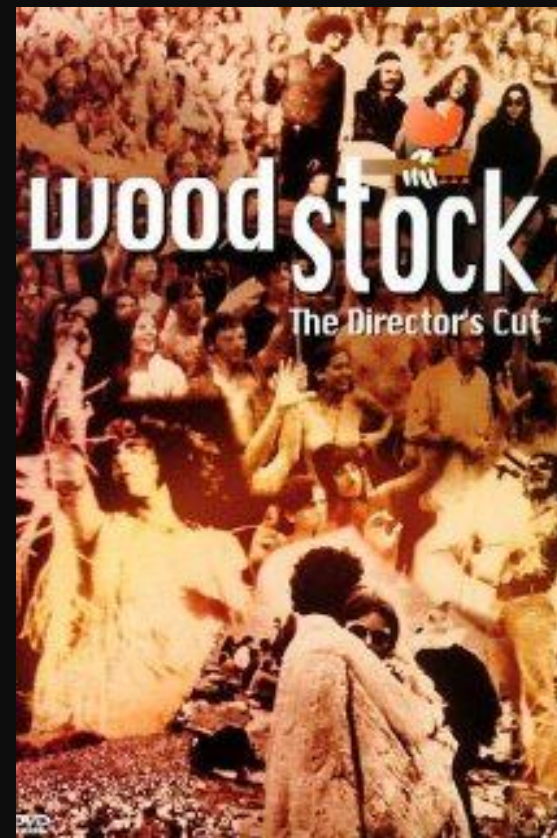
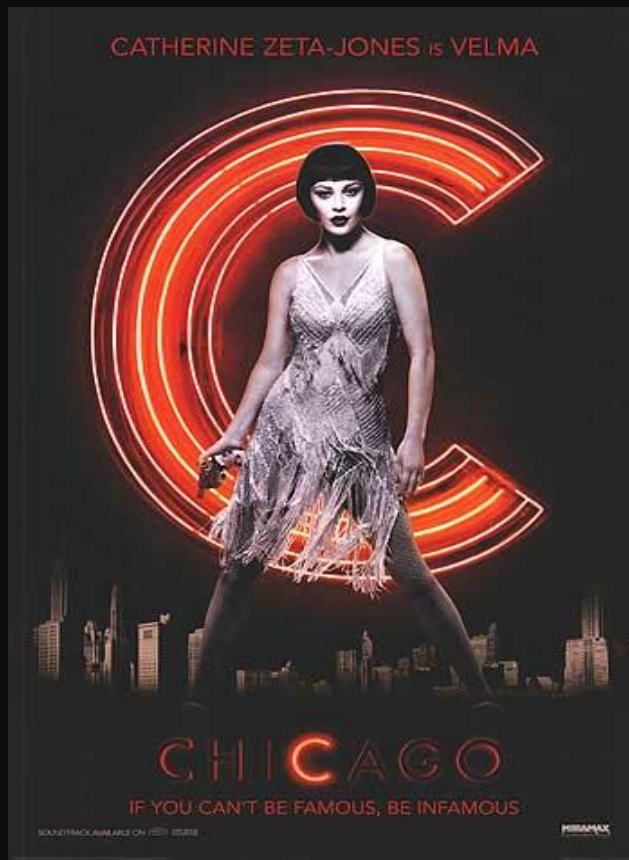
## **Techno-thriller**

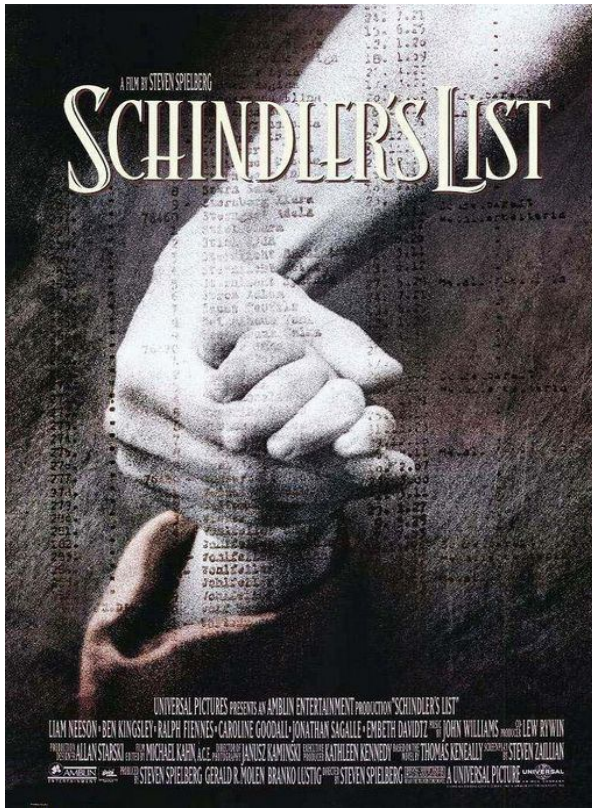
Story about technology, danger behind the technology people use, threat of cyber terrorism, cyber crimes

# MUSICALS SUB-GENRES

Concert/Performance Films

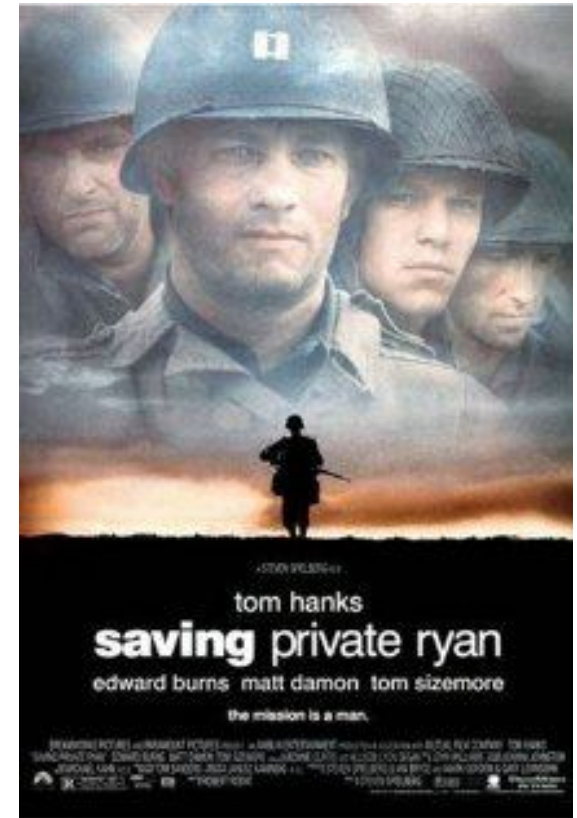
Film version of a live musical performance  
Singing & Dancing





## War Films

War films are based  
on  
battles  
recorded in human history



War films acknowledge the horror and heartbreak of war, letting the actual combat fighting (against nations or humankind) on land, sea, or in the air provide the primary plot or background action for the of the film.



# NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Every drama / film is built on this basic structure

1. Exposition
2. Development of plot
3. Rising Action
4. Climax / Anti-Climax
5. Falling Action
6. Resolution & Conclusion

## POINT OF VIEW

- A particular attitude or way of considering a matter.
- Way of thinking, way of looking at it, thoughts, ideas
- More in fictional writing, the narrator's position in relation to a story being told. “This story is told from a child's point of view“
- Position from which something or someone is observed.  
“Certain aspects are not visible from a single point of view”

## HISTRIONICS / ACTING

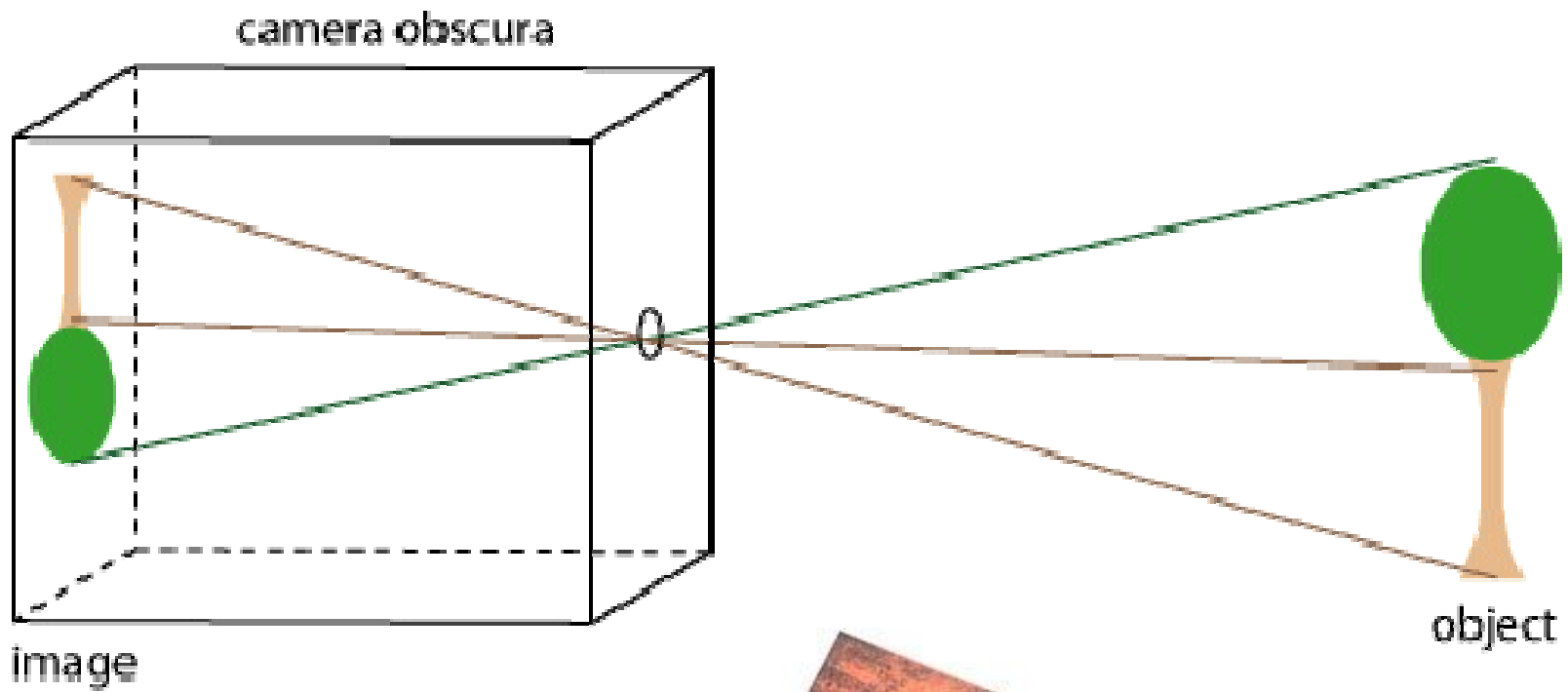
- Melodramatic behaviour designed to attract attention.
- Dramatic representation; theatricals; acting.
- Behavior or speech for effect, as insincere or exaggerated expression of an emotion; dramatics; operatics

*Cut out the histrionics - we know you're not really mad.*

- There is enormous historical and cultural variation in performance styles in the cinema
- In the early years of cinema, stage acting and film acting were difficult to differentiate, as most film actors had previously been stage actors and therefore knew no other method of acting
- Eventually, early melodramatic styles, clearly indebted to the 19th century theater, gave way in Western cinema to a relatively naturalistic style
- This more naturalistic style of acting is largely influenced by Constantin Stanislavski's theory of method acting, which involves the actor fully immersing themselves in their character

## **CAMERA OBSCURA (1604)**

- from Latin "**camera**" means chamber or room
- "**obscura**" means darkened
- Camerae obscurae refers to pinhole image
- Natural optical phenomenon that occurs when an image of a scene at the other side of a screen (or for instance a wall) is projected through a small hole in that screen as a reversed and inverted image (left to right and upside down) on a surface opposite to the opening.
- The surroundings of the projected image have to be relatively dark for the image to be clear
- So many historical camera obscura experiments were performed in dark rooms.



**English  
Box Camera  
Obscura  
(circa early 1800s)**

# INTERPOLATION

- Insertion of something of a different nature into something else.  
“The interpolation of songs into the piece“

## Motion interpolation

- Motion-compensated frame **interpolation** (MCFI)
- Hardware applications · Software applications· effects

## **CROSS-CUTTING**

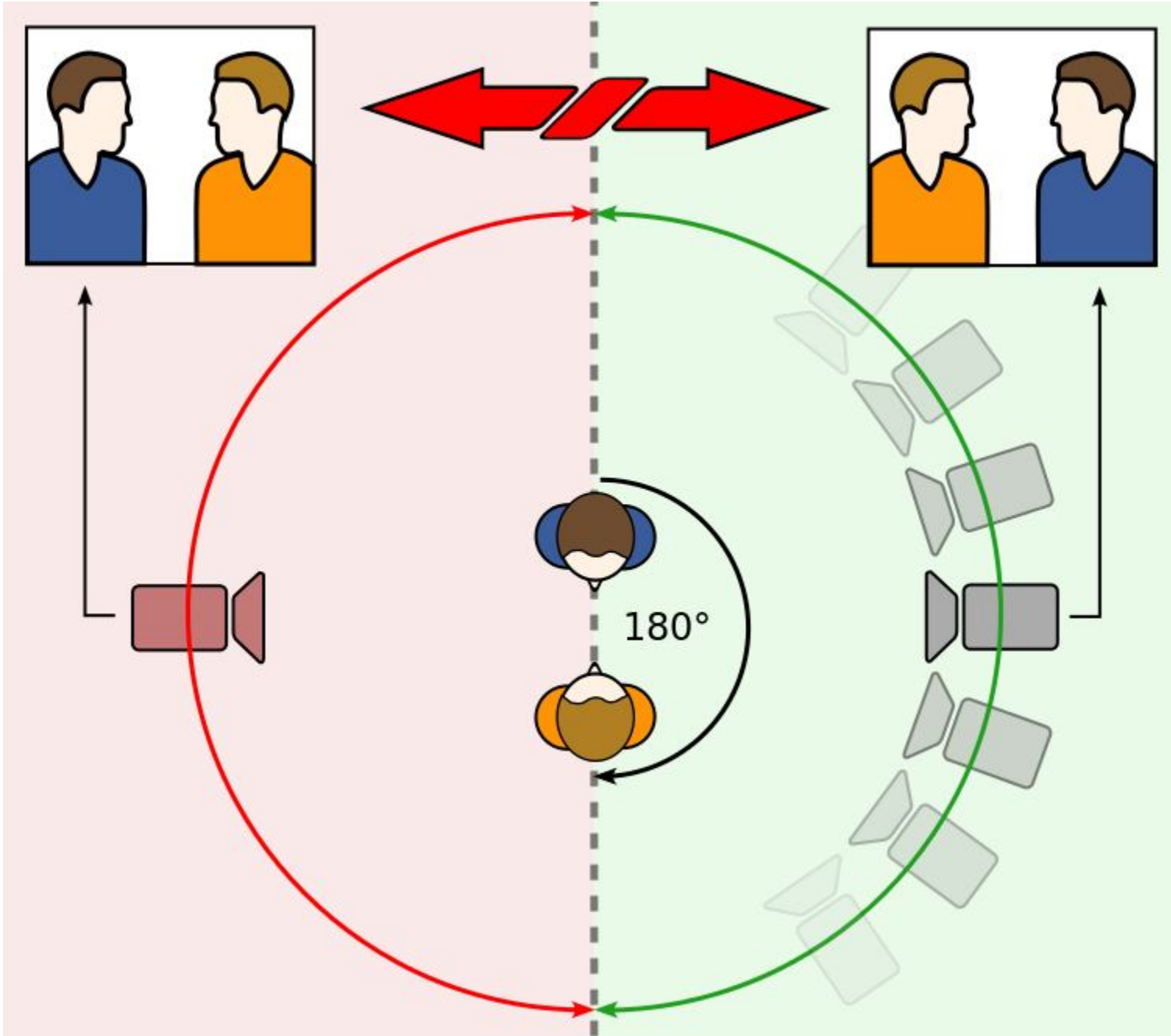
- Editing technique
- Used in films to establish action occurring at the same time in two different locations
- The camera cuts away from one action to another action
- Suspense may be added by cross-cutting
- It also forms parallels - illustrating a narrative action that happens in several places at approximately the same time (activities of rich businessmen and poor people waiting in line for bread. This creates a sharp dichotomy between the two actions, and encourages the viewer to compare the two shots)
- Used for strong emotional effect, and frequently at the climax of a film.

## THE 180° RULE

- A cinematography guideline
- States that two characters in a scene should maintain the same left/right relationship to one another
- When the camera passes over the invisible axis connecting the two subjects, it is called crossing the line and the shot becomes what is called a reverse angle
- Guideline regarding the on-screen spatial relationship between a character and another character or object within a scene



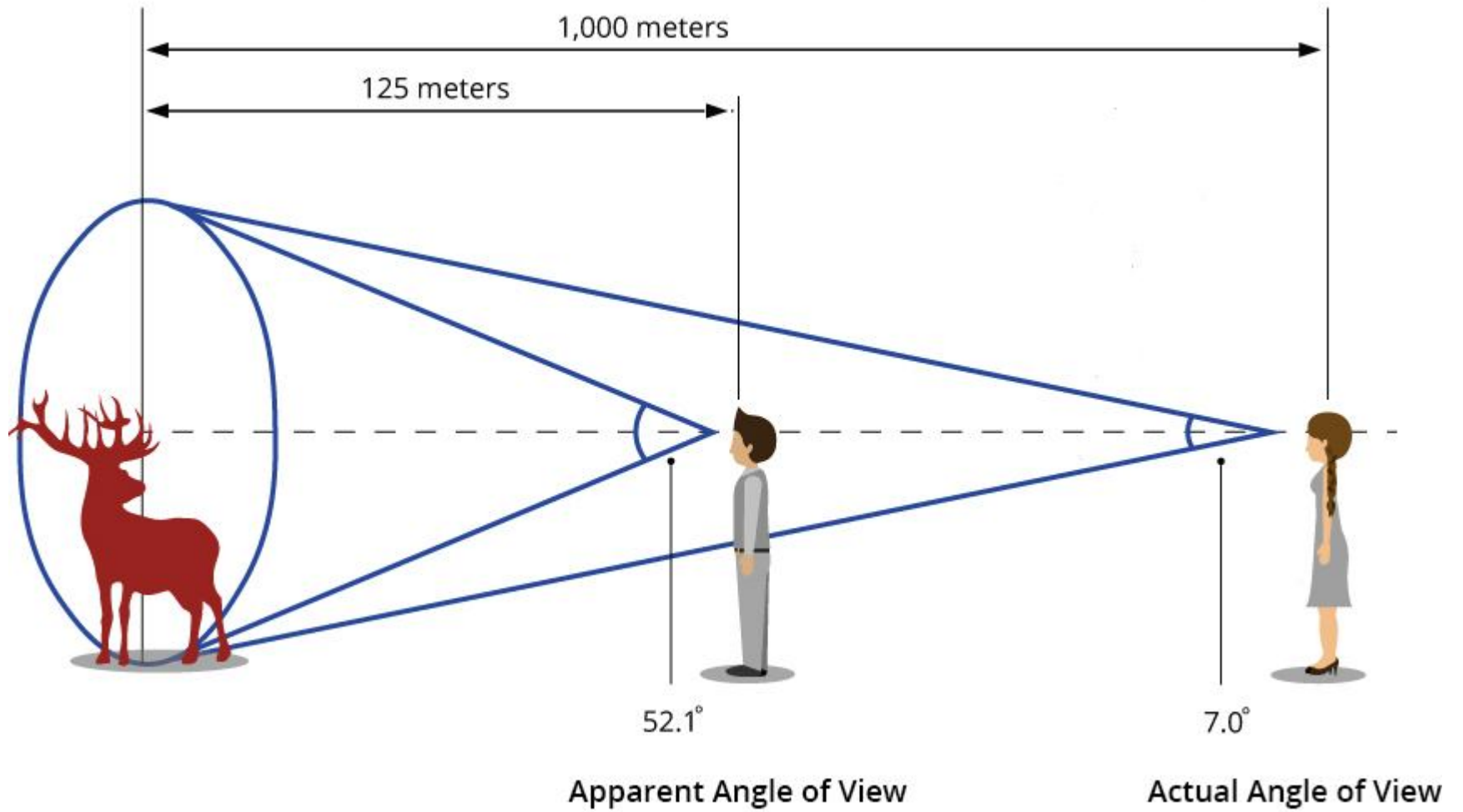
- An imaginary line called the **axis** connects the characters, and by keeping the camera on one side of this axis for every shot in the scene, the first character is always frame right of the second character, who is then ALWAYS frame left of the first
- The camera passing over the axis is called *jumping the line* or *crossing the line*; breaking the 180-degree rule by shooting on all sides is known as shooting in the round
- This rule enables the audience to visually connect with unseen movement happening around and behind the immediate subject and is important in the narration of battle scenes.



## ANGLE OF VIEW

- Known as AOV
- Describes the angular extent of a given scene that is imaged by a camera
- It is used interchangeably with the more general term field of view
- It is important to distinguish the angle of view from the angle of coverage, which describes the angle range that a lens can image





## MISE-EN-SCENE

- French pronunciation, "placing on stage"
- Expression used to describe the design aspects of a theatre or film production, which essentially means "visual theme" or "telling a story" both in visually artful ways through storyboarding, cinematography and stage design and in poetically artful ways through direction.
- It is also commonly used to refer to multiple single scenes within the film to represent the film
- The arrangement of the scenery, props, etc. on the stage of a theatrical production or on the set of a film
- The setting or surroundings of an event

## Mise en Scene of Romeo et Juliet



## SET DESIGN

- An important element of "putting in the scene" is set design
- The setting of a scene and the objects (props) visible in a scene
- Set design can be used to amplify character emotion or the dominant mood, which has physical, social, psychological, emotional, economic and cultural significance in film
- One of the most important decisions made by the production designer and director is deciding whether to shoot on location or on set
- The main distinction between the two is that décor and props must be taken into consideration when shooting on set

# Set design - Romeo and Juliet





# LIGHTING

- The intensity, direction, and quality of lighting can influence an audience's understanding of characters, actions, themes and mood
- Light (and shade) can emphasize texture, shape, distance, mood, time of day or night, season, glamour; it affects the way colors are rendered, both in terms of hue and depth, and can focus attention on particular elements of the composition
- Highlights, for example, call attention to shapes and textures, while shadows often conceal things, creating a sense of mystery or fear
- For this reason, lighting must be thoroughly planned in advance to ensure its desired effect on an audience
- Cinematographers are a large part of this process, as they coordinate the camera and the lighting

# SPACE

- The representation of space affects the reading of a film
- Depth, proximity, size and proportions of the places and objects in a film can be manipulated through camera placement and lenses, lighting, set design, effectively determining mood or relationships between elements in the story world.

# COMPOSITION

- The organization of objects, actors and space within the frame
- One of the most important concepts with regard to the composition of a film is maintaining a balance of symmetry
- This refers to having an equal distribution of light, color, and objects and/or figures in a shot
- Unbalanced composition can be used to emphasize certain elements of a film that the director wishes to be given particular attention to - this tool works because audiences are more inclined to pay attention to something off balance, as it may seem abnormal
- Director can place a character accordingly depending on the importance of the role

# COSTUME

- Costume simply refers to the clothes that characters wear
- Using certain colors or designs, costumes in narrative cinema are used to signify characters or to make clear distinctions between characters





# MAKEUP AND HAIR STYLES

- Establish time period, reveal character traits and signal changes in character.





# ASPECT RATIO

- The relation of the width of the rectangular image to its height
- Each aspect ratio yields a different way of looking at the world and is basic to the expressive meaning of the film



Each of these photos are different in size, but the aspect ratios are all the same, a constant 3:2, or 3 units wide by 2 units high.



4:3 aspect ratio



16:9 aspect ratio

The image on the left is a 4:3 aspect ratio (common for 8x10 and 16x20 frames) and the right image is in a 16:9 ratio, a common size used for film and your HDTV.



“A work of art should appeal to me both  
intellectually and emotionally”

- Balu Mahendra

