FILM ANALYSIS PROJECTS[1]

The four study projects in this document accompany and augment the principal Chapters on film aesthetics (Chs. 13, 14, 15, 16 and 27) will develop your abilities to isolate the essentials of image composition, editing, script analysis, and lighting in films. Collectively, these analysis projects yield the basics of *seeing with a moviemaker's eye*, and will be immensely useful to your confidence when you begin directing. Even if you don't do them, read them through carefully because you'll still pick up some important knowledge.

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[1] This document was previously published as *Chapter 5: Seeing With a Filmmaker's Eye* in the 4th edition of *Directing: Film Techniques and Aesthetics.*

PROJECT 1:

PICTURE COMPOSITION ANALYSIS

A stimulating and highly productive way to investigate composition is to do so with several other people or as a class. Though what follows is written for a study group, you can do it solo if circumstances so dictate.

Equipment required: For static composition, a slide projector and/or an overhead projector to enlarge graphics are best but not indispensable. For dynamic composition, you will need a video or DVD player.

Object: To learn the composition of visual elements by studying how the eye reacts to a static composition and then how it handles dynamic composition; that is, composition during movement.

Study materials: For static composition, a book of figurative painting reproductions (best used under an overhead projector so you have a big image to scan), or better, a dozen or more 35mm art slides, also projected as large images. Slides of Impressionist paintings are good, but the more eclectic your collection, the better. For dynamic composition, use any visually interesting sequences from a favorite movie, though any Eisenstein movie would be ideal.

Analysis Format

In a class setting it's important to keep a discussion going, but if you are working alone, notes or sketches are a good way to log what you discover. Help from books on composition is not easily gained because many texts make composition seem intimidating or formulaic and may be difficult to apply to the moving image. Sometimes rules prevent seeing rather than promoting it, so trust your eye to see what is really there, and use your own nonspecialist vocabulary to describe it.

Strategy for Study

If you are leading a group, you will need to explain what is wanted, something like this. We're doing this to discover how each person's visual perception actually works. I'll put a picture up on the screen. In the composition, notice where your eye first goes, and then what course your eye takes as you examine the rest of the picture. After about 15 seconds, I'll ask someone to describe what path his eye followed. You don't need any special jargon; just let your responses come from the specifics of each picture. Please avoid the temptation to look for a story in the picture or to guess what the picture is "about," even when it suggests a story.

With each new image, pick a new person to comment. Because not everyone's eye responds the same way, there will be interesting discussions about the variations. There will usually be a great deal of agreement, so everyone is led to formulate ideas about visual reflexes and about what compositional components the eye finds attractive and engrossing. It is good to start simply and graduate to more abstract images, and then even to completely abstract ones. Many people, relieved of the burden of deciding a picture's "subject," can begin to enjoy a Kandinsky, a Mondrian, or a Pollock for itself, without fuming over whether or not it is really art. After about an hour of pictures and discussion, encourage your group to frame their own guidelines for composing images.

After the group has formed some ideas and gained confidence from analyzing paintings, I usually show both good and bad photos. Photography, less obviously contrived than painting, tends to be accepted less critically. This is a good moment to uncover in striking photography just how many classical elements arise from what first appeared to be a straight record of life.

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Here are questions to help you discover ways to see more critically. They can be applied after seeing a number of paintings or photos, or you could direct the group's attention to each question's area as it becomes relevant.

Static Composition

1. After your eye has taken in the whole, review its starting point. Why did your eye go to that point in the picture? (Common reasons: brightest point in composition, darkest place in an otherwise light composition, single area of an arresting color, significant junction of lines creating a focal point.)
2. When your eye moved away from its point of first attraction, what did it follow? (Commonly: lines, perhaps actual ones like the line of a fence or an outstretched arm, or inferred lines such as the sight line from one character looking at another. Sometimes the eye simply moves to another significant area in the composition, going from one organized area to another and jumping skittishly across the intervening disorganization.)
3. How much movement did your eye make before returning to its starting point?
4. What specifically drew your eye to each new place?
5. If you trace an imaginary line over the painting to show the route your eye took, what shape do you have? (Sometimes this is a circular pattern, and sometimes a triangle or ellipse, but it can be many shapes. Any shape at all can reveal an alternative organization that helps you see beyond the wretched and dominating idea that every picture tells a story.)
6. Are there any places along your imaginary line that seem specially charged with energy? (These are often sight lines: between the Virgin's eyes and her baby's, between a guitarist's eyes and his hand on the strings, between two field workers, one of whom is facing away.)
7. How would you characterize the compositional movement? (For example, geometric, repetitive textures, swirling, falling inward, symmetrically divided down the middle, flowing diagonally, etc. Making a translation from one medium to another—in this case from the visual to the verbal—always helps you discover what is truly there.)
8. What parts, if any, do the following play in a particular picture?
   - Repetition
   - Parallels
   - Convergence
   - Divergence
   - Curves
   - Straight lines
   - Strong verticals
   - Strong horizontals
   - Strong diagonals
   - Textures
   - Nonnaturalistic coloring
   - Light and shade
   - Human figures
9. How is depth suggested? (This is an ever-present problem for the director of photography [DP], who, if inexperienced, is liable to take what I think of as the firing squad approach: that is, placing the human subjects against a flat background and shooting them. Unless there is something to create different planes, like a wall angling away from the foreground to suggest a receding space, the screen is like a painter's canvas and looks what it really is—two-dimensional.)
10. How are the individuality and mood of the human subjects expressed? (This is

commonly through facial expression and body language, of course. But more interesting are the juxtapositions the painter makes of person to person, person to surroundings, or people inside a total design.)

11. How is space arranged on either side of a human subject, particularly in portraits? (Usually in profiles there is lead space—that is, more space in front of the person than behind them, as if in response to our need to see what the person sees.)
12. How much headroom is given above a person, particularly in a close-up? (Sometimes the edge of a frame cuts off the top of a head, or may not show one head at all in a group shot.)
13. How often and how deliberately are people and objects placed at the margins of the picture so you have to imagine what is cut off? (By demonstrating the frame's restriction, you can make the viewer's imagination supply what is beyond the edges of the "window.")

Visual Rhythm: How Duration Affects Perception

So far, I have stressed the idea of an immediate, instinctual response to the organization of an image. When you show a series of slides without comment, you move to a new image after sufficient time for the eye to absorb each picture. Some pictures require longer than others. This is how an audience must deal with each new shot in a film.

Unlike responding to a photograph or painting, which can be studied thoughtfully and at leisure, the film spectator must interpret the image within an unremitting and preordained forward movement in time. It is like reading a poster on the side of a moving bus: if the words and images cannot be assimilated in the given time, the inscription goes past without being understood. If, however, the bus is crawling in a traffic jam, you have time to absorb, to become critical, or even to become rejecting of the poster.

This tells us that there is an optimum duration for each shot to stay on the screen. It depends on the complexity of a shot's content and form, and how hard the viewer must work to extract its significance and intended meaning. An invisible third factor also affects ideal shot duration—that of expectation. The audience may work fast at interpreting each new image, or slowly, depending on how much time the film has allowed for interpreting preceding shots.

The principle by which a shot's duration is determined according to content, form, significance, and expectation is called visual rhythm. A filmmaker, like a musician, can either relax or intensify a visual rhythm, and this has consequences for the cutting rate and the ideal tempo of camera movements.

Ideal Films for Study

Ideal films for studying compositional relationships in film and visual rhythm are classics by the Russian director Sergei Eisenstein, such as *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925), *¡Qué Viva Mexico!* (1931–1932), *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), and *Ivan the Terrible* (1944–1946). Eisenstein's origins as a theater designer made him very aware of the impact upon an audience of musical and visual design. His sketchbooks show how carefully he designed everything in each shot, down to the costumes.

More recent films with a strong sense of design are Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1956), Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), and David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986), Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985), Sally Potter's *Orlando* (1992), and Chan-Wook Park's *Old Boy* (2003). Designer's sketches and the comic strip are the precursor of the storyboard, which is much used by ad agencies and conservative elements in the film industry to lock down what each new frame will convey. Storyboarding is particularly helpful for the inexperienced, even when your artistry is as lousy as mine and doesn't run much beyond stick figures.

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Dynamic Composition

With moving images, more compositional principles come into play. A balanced composition can become disturbingly unbalanced should someone cross the frame, or leave it altogether. Even the turn of a figure's head in the foreground may posit a new eye line (subject-to-subject axis), which in turn demands a compositional rebalancing. Then again, zooming from wide to close shot, or vice versa, demands reframing because the composition changes drastically, even though the subject remains the same.

To study dynamic composition, find a visually interesting sequence of a few minutes, such as the chase in John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939), William Friedkin's *The French Connection* (1971), or almost any part of Andrew Davis' *The Fugitive* (1993). Here, your DVD player's slow-scan function will be useful. Make a shot list and then see how many of these aspects you can note against the picture descriptions:

1. Reframing,
   a. because the subject moved (look for a variety of camera adjustments).
   b. as a consequence of something or someone entering the frame.
   c. in anticipation of something or someone entering the frame.
2. A change in the point of focus to move attention from background to foreground or vice versa. (This changes the texture of significant areas of the composition from hard focus to soft.)
3. Strong movement within an otherwise static composition. (How many can you find? Across frame, diagonally, from background to foreground, from foreground to background, up frame, down frame, etc. Eisenstein films are full of these compositions.)

In addition, try to assess the following:

4. How much do you feel identified with each kind of subject movement? (This is a tricky issue, but in general the nearer you are to the axis of a movement, the more subjective is your sense of involvement.)
5. How quickly does the camera adjust to a figure who gets up and moves to another place in frame? (Often camera movements are motivated by, even mirror, changes within the composition. Subject and camera move synchronously, with no clumsy lag or anticipation. When documentary covers spontaneous events, inaccuracies are normal and signal that nothing is contrived.)
6. How often are the camera or the characters blocked (that is, choreographed) to isolate one character? What is the dramatic justification?
7. How often is the camera moved or the characters blocked so as to bring two characters back into frame? (Good camerawork, composition, and blocking are always trying to show relatedness. This helps to intensify meanings and ironies, and reduces the need to manufacture relationship through editing.)
8. How often is composition
   a. angled down sight lines and seeing in depth?
   b. without depth and rendering space as flat (point of view often shifts at these junctures from subjective to objective)?
9. What do changes of angle and composition make you feel about (or toward) the characters?
10. Find several compositions that successfully create depth and define what visual element is responsible. (Perhaps the camera is next to a railroad line as a train rushes up and past. Both the perspective revealed by the rails and the movement of the train create depth. In deep shots, different zones of lighting at varying distances from the

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camera, or zones of hard and soft focus, can also achieve this.)

11. Can you find shots where the camera changes position to include more (or different) background detail in order to comment on the foreground subject?

Internal and External Composition

So far, we have been looking at *internal composition*, or composition that is internal to each shot. Another form of compositional relationship is the momentary relationship between an outgoing shot and the next, incoming shot. This relationship, called *external composition*, is a hidden part of film language. It is unseen because we are unaware how it influences our judgments and expectations.

A common usage for external composition is when a character leaving the frame in the outgoing shot (*A*) leads the spectator's eye to the very place in Shot B where an assassin will emerge in a large and restless crowd. The eye is conducted to the right place in a busy composition.

Another example might be the framing of two complementary close shots in which two characters have an intense conversation. The compositions are similar but symmetrically opposed. In **Figure FA-1**, the two-shot (*A*) gives a good overall feel of the scene, but man and child are too far away. The close shots, (*B*) and (*C*), retain the feel of the scene, but effectively cut out the dead space between them. Note that the heads are not centered: each person has lead (rhyming with "feed") space in front of his face that echoes his positioning in the two-shot. The man is high in the frame and looking downward, and the child lower in the frame and looking up—just as in the matching two-shot.

[INSERT FIGURES FA-1B, FA-1B AND FA-1C]

Please arrange as a pyramid

FA-1 top, centered

FA-1C and FA-1C

Other aspects will emerge if you apply the questions below to the film sequences you review. Use the slow-scan function to examine compositional relationships at the cutting point. Go backward and forward several times over each cut to be sure you miss nothing. Try these for yourself:

1. Where was your point of concentration at the end of the shot? (You can trace where your eye goes by moving your finger around the screen of the monitor. Your last point in the outgoing shot is where your eye enters the composition of the incoming shot. Notice how shot duration determines the distance the eye travels in exploring the shot. This means that on top of what we have already established about shot length, it is also a factor in external composition.)
2. What kinds of symmetry exist between complementary shots (that is, between shots designed to be intercut)?
3. What is the relationship between two different-sized shots of the same subject that are designed to cut together? (This is a revealing one; the inexperienced camera operator will produce medium shots and close shots that cut poorly because the placements of the subject are incompatible.)
4. Examine a match cut very slowly and see if there is any overlap. (Especially where there is relatively fast action, a match cut, to look smooth, needs about four frames of the action repeated on the incoming shot. This is because the eye does not register the first three or four frames of any new image. This built-in perceptual lag means that when you cut to the beat of music, the only way to make the cuts look in sync with

the beat is to make each cut around three or four frames before the actual beat point.)

5. Find visual comparisons in external composition that make a Storyteller's comment (for instance, cut from a pair of eyes to car headlights approaching at night, from a dockside crane to a man feeding birds with arm outstretched, etc.).

COMPOSITION, FORM, AND FUNCTION

Form is the manner in which content is presented, and its composition component is a vital element in communication. Good composition becomes an important organizing force when used to project ideas and to dramatize relativity and relationship. It makes not only the subject (content) accessible, but heightens the viewer's perceptions and stimulates his or her imaginative involvement, like language from the pen of a good poet.

If form follows function, involve yourself with content and then look for the form that best communicates it. You can also decide on a form and then look for an appropriate subject. The difference is one of purpose and temperament. Content, form, structure, and style are analyzed in greater detail in Chapters 10 through 16.

We have looked critically at pictorial composition, but the composition of a film's sound track is just as important to a film's impact. The study of sound is included in the next editing study project.

PROJECT 2:

EDITING AND COVERAGE ANALYSIS

Equipment required: DVD player as in Project 1.

Objective: To produce a detailed analysis of a portion of film using standard abbreviations and terminology; to analyze the way a film is constructed; and to distinguish the conventions of film language so they can be used confidently.

Study materials: Any well-made feature film containing dialogue scenes and processes that have clear beginnings, middles, and ends will do, but I recommend these films for their excellent development of characters and settings:

- Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven* (1978) for its awe-inspiring cinematography of the Texas landscape, its exploration of space and loneliness, and its unusual and effective pacing. The film uses the younger sister, Linda, as a narrator.
- Peter Weir's *Witness* (1985) for its classically shot dialogue scenes, its exploration of love between mismatched cultures, and the superb Amish work sequences.
- Stephen Daldry's *Billy Elliot* (2000) has strong character studies, dynamic dance sequences, and a strong sense of working-class England.

Book chapters: It would also be helpful to be familiar with film language chapters (Chs. 12–15) as well as Chapter 17: *Exploring the Script*, and Chapter 24: *Coverage and the Shooting Script*.

First Viewing

Before you attempt any analysis, see the whole film at least twice without stopping. Then write down all the strong feelings the film evoked, paying no attention to order. Note from memory which sequences sparked those feelings. You may have an additional sequence or two that intrigued you as a piece of virtuoso storytelling. Note these down, too, but whatever you study should be something that hits you at an emotional, rather than a merely intellectual, level.

[INSERT FIGURE FA-2 HERE]

Analysis Format

What you write down will be displayed on paper in *split-page format* (see **Figure FA-2**). Visuals occupy the left half of the page; all sound occupies the right.

First, transcribe the picture and dialogue—shot by shot and word by word—as they relate to each other. Use wide line spacing for your draft so you can insert more information on subsequent passes. Once this basic information is on paper, you can turn to such things as shot transitions, internal and external composition of shots, screen direction, camera movements, opticals (such as titles, fades, dissolves, superimpositions), sound effects, and the use of music.

Your objective is to extract the most information about an interesting passage of film language, so it is better to do a short sequence (two to four minutes) very thoroughly than a long one superficially. Script formats, whether split-page or screenplay, show only what can be seen and heard. Some of your notes (for example, on the mood a shot evokes) will clutter the functional simplicity of your transcript, so you should keep them separately, or put them in a third column.

Making and Using a Floor Plan

For a sequence containing a dialogue exchange, make a *floor plan* sketch (**Figure FA-3**). In the example, the character Eric enters, stands in front of William, goes to the phone, picks up a book from the table, looks out the window, and then sits on the couch. The whole action has been covered by three camera positions. Making a floor plan for a sequence allows you to re-create what a whole room or location layout looks like, record how the characters move around, and decide how the camera is placed. This will help you decide where to place your own camera in the future, and it reveals how little of an environment needs to be shown for the audience to create the rest in their imaginations.

[INSERT FIGURE FA-3 HERE]

Strategy for Study

Your split-page analysis script should contain:

Action-side descriptions of:

- Each shot (who, what, when, where)
- Its action content
- Camera movements
- Optical effects (fades, dissolves, etc.)

Sound-side descriptions of:

- Dialogue, word for word
- Positioning of dialogue relative to the action
- Music starting and stopping points
- Featured sound effects (that is, other than synchronous, or "sync," sound)

Very important: read from the film rather than reading into it. Film is a complex and deceptive medium; like a glib and clever acquaintance, it can make you uneasy about your perceptions and too ready to accept what should be seen or should be felt. Recognize what the film made you feel, then trace your impressions to what can actually be seen and heard in the film. To avoid overload, scrutinize the sequence during each pass on just a few of the aspects listed below. Try to find at least one example of everything so you understand the concepts at work.

1. First Impressions
    a. What was the progression of feelings you had watching the sequence?
2. Definition and Statistics
    a. How long is the sequence (minutes and seconds)?
    b. What determines the sequence's beginning and ending points?
    c. How many picture cuts does it contain?
    d. Is its span determined by:
        i. Being at one location?
        ii. Being a continuous segment of time?
        iii. A particular mood?
        iv. The stages of a process?
        v. Something else?

The duration of each shot and how often the camera angle is changed may be aspects of the genre (what type or family of film it is) or a director's particular style, or may be suggested by the sequence's content. Try to decide whether the content or its treatment is determining the frequency of cutting.

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3. Use of Camera
    a. How many different motivations can you find for the camera to make a movement?
    b. Does the camera follow the movement of a character?
    c. Does a car or other moving object permit the camera to pan the length of the street so that camera movement seems to arise from action in the frame?
    d. How does the camera lay out a landscape or a scene's geography for the audience?
    e. When does the camera move in closer to intensify our relationship with someone or something?
    f. When does the camera move away from someone or something so we see more objectively?
    g. Does the camera reveal other significant information by moving?
    h. Is the move really a reframing to accommodate a rearrangement of characters?
    i. Is the move a reaction—panning to a new speaker, for instance?
    j. What else might be responsible for motivating this particular camera move?
    k. When is the camera used subjectively?
    l. When do we directly experience a character's point of view?
    m. Are there special signs that the camera is seeing subjectively? (For example, an unsteady handheld camera used in a combat film to create a running soldier's point of view.)
    n. What is the dramatic justification for this?
    o. Are there changes in camera height?
    p. Are they made to accommodate subject matter?
    q. Do they make you see in a certain way?
    r. Are they done for other reasons?
4. Use of Sound: Sound native to the location and heard by the characters is called *diegetic sound*. Sound applied authorially as a counterpoint—for example, panic music and the sound of a loud heartbeat placed over a man trapped in an elevator—is called *nondiegetic sound*.
    a. What sound perspectives are used?
    b. Do they complement camera position? (Use a near microphone for close shots, and a far microphone for longer shots, thus replicating camera perspective.)
    c. Do they counterpoint camera perspective? (Robert Altman's films often give us the intimate conversation of two characters seen distantly traversing a large landscape.)
    d. Are sound perspectives uniformly intimate (as with a narration, or with voice-over and voiced thoughts that function as a character's interior monologue) or are they varied?
    e. How are particular sound effects used?
        i. To build atmosphere and mood?
        ii. As punctuation?
        iii. To motivate a cut (next sequence's sound rises until we cut to it)?
        iv. As a narrative device (horn honks, so woman gets up and goes to window, where she discovers her sister is making a surprise visit)?
        v. To build, sustain, or diffuse tension?
        vi. To provide rhythm (meal prepared in a montage of brief shots to the rhythmic sound of a man splitting logs; last shot, man and woman sit down to meal)?
        vii. To create uncertainty?
        viii. Other situations?
5. Editing
    a. What motivates each cut?
        i. Is there an action match to carry the cut?

ii. Is there a compositional relationship between the two shots that makes the cut interesting and worthwhile?
iii. Is there a movement relationship that carries the cut (for example, cut from car moving left to right to boat moving left to right)?
iv. Does someone or something leave the frame (making us expect a new frame)?
v. Does someone or something fill the frame, blanking it out and permitting a cut to another frame that starts blanked and then clears?
vi. Does someone or something enter the frame and demand closer attention?
vii. Are we cutting to follow someone's eye line to see what they see?
viii. Is there a sound, or a line, that demands that we see the source?
ix. Are we cutting to show the effect on a listener? What defines the right moment to cut?
x. Are we cutting to a speaker at a particular moment that is visually revealing? What defines that moment?
xi. If the cut intensifies our attention, what justifies that?
xii. If the cut relaxes and objectifies our attention, what justifies that?
xiii. Is the cut to a parallel activity (that is, something going on simultaneously)?
xiv. Is there some sort of comparison or irony being set up through juxtaposition?
xv. Are we cutting to a rhythm (perhaps to an effect, music, or the cadences of speech)?
xvi. Other reasons?

b. What is the relationship of words to images?
i. Does what is shown illustrate what is said?
ii. Is there a difference, and therefore a counterpoint, between what is shown and what is heard?
iii. Is there a meaningful contradiction between what is said and what is shown?
iv. Does what is said come from another time frame (for example, a character's memory or a comment on something in the past)?
v. Is there a point at which words are used to move us forward or backward in time? (That is, can you pinpoint a change of tense in the film's grammar? This might be done visually, as in the old cliché of autumn leaves falling after we have seen summer scenes.)
vi. Any others?

c. When a line overlaps a picture cut, what impact does the first strong word on the new image create?
i. Does it help identify the new image?
ii. Does it give the image a particular emphasis or interpretation?
iii. Is the effect expected (satisfying, perhaps) or unexpected (maybe a shock)?
iv. Is there a deliberate contradiction?
v. Other effects?

6. Music: examine at least three music sections.
a. Where and how is it used?
b. How is it initiated (often when characters or story begin some kind of motion)?
c. What does the music suggest by its texture, instrumentation, etc.?
d. How is it used in association with featured sound effects?
e. How is it finished (often when characters or story arrive at a new location)?
f. What comment is it making? (Ironic? Sympathetic? Lyrical? Revealing the inner state of a character or situation? Other?)
g. From what other sound (if any) does it emerge or *segue* into? (Segue is pronounced "SEG-way.")
h. What other sound does it segue into as its close?

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POINT OF VIEW AND BLOCKING

Blocking is a term for the way actors and camera move in relation to each other and to the set. Point of view seldom means whose literal eye lines the audience shares. More often it refers to whose reality the viewer most identifies with at any given time. As you'll see in greater detail in Chapter 9: *Cinematic Point of View*, a film's underlying statement is achieved largely through the handling of point of view (POV), but how this is achieved is complex, and can be specified with any confidence only after you've considered the aims and tone of the whole film. How the camera is used, the frequency with which one character's feelings are revealed, the amount of development he or she goes through, the vibrancy of the acting—all these factors and more play a part in enlisting our sympathy and interest. Chapter 17: *Exploring the Script*, and Chapter 24: *Coverage and the Shooting Script*, explore in much detail at the translation of directorial intention into concrete factors like shot compositions, camera angles, and blocking.

A film, like a novel, can have a main point of view associated with a main point-of-view character, but also can expose us to multiple, conflicting points of view anchored in other characters.

There may be one central character, and one ruling point of view, like the extraordinary portrait of mentally disabled Karl in Billy Bob Thornton's *Sling Blade* (1997). Or it may concern a couple whose relationship is at issue, as in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* (1977), in which successive scenes establish alternate characters' dilemmas and conflicts. Robert Altman's *Nashville* (1975), with nearly two dozen central characters, takes the music town of Nashville as their point of convergence and confrontation with change. Here, the characters are part of a pattern that itself represents an authorial point of view that questions how people subscribe to their own destiny. Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and Altman's *Short Cuts* (1993) both have large casts and serpentine story lines in which each sequence may have a different point-of-view character. Both films deal with the style and texture of groups in their particular time and place.

Following are some ways to dig into a sequence to establish how it covertly structures the way we see and react to its characters.

1. To whom, at different times, is the dialogue or narration addressed?
    a. By one character to another?
    b. By one character to himself (thinking aloud, reading diary or letter)?
    c. Directly to the audience (narration, interview, prepared statement)?
    d. Other situations?
2. How many camera positions are used? (Use your floor plan.)
    a. Show basic camera positions and label them A, B, C, etc.
    b. Show camera dollying movements with dotted line leading to new position.
    c. Mark shots in your log with the appropriate A, B, C camera angles. Notice how the camera stays to one side of the subject-to-subject axis (an imaginary line between characters that the camera usually avoids crossing) to keep characters facing in the same screen direction from shot to shot. When this principle is broken, it is called crossing the line, crossing the axis, or breaking the 180-degree rule, and it has the effect of temporarily disrupting the audience's sense of spatial relationships.
    d. How often is the camera close to the crucial axis between characters?
    e. How often does the camera subjectively share a character's eye line?
    f. When and why does it take an objective stance to the situation (that is, either a distanced viewpoint or one independent of eye lines)?

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CHARACTER AND CAMERA BLOCKING

How did the characters and camera move in the scene? To the location and camera movement sketch you have made, add dotted lines to show the characters' movements (called blocking). Use different colors for clarity.

1. What points of view did the author engage us in?
2. Whose story is this sequence, if you go by gut reaction?
3. Considering the camera angles on each character, with whose point of view were you led to sympathize?
4. How many psychological viewpoints did you share? (Some may have been momentary or fragmentary, and perhaps in contradiction to what you were seeing.)
5. Are the audience's sympathies structured by camera and editing, or more by acting or the situation itself?

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PROJECT 3:

SCRIPTED SCENE AND FILMED SCENE COMPARISON

Objective: To study the relationship between the blueprint script and the filmed product.

Study materials: A film script and the finished film made from it on DVD. Don't look at the film until you have planned your own version from the text. The script must be the original screenplay, and not a release script (that is, not a transcript made from a finished film). A suitable script can be found in Pauline Kael's *The Citizen Kane Book: Raising Kane* (Amadeus Press, 1984). Another is Harold Pinter's *The French Lieutenant's Woman: A Screenplay* (Methuen, 1985). The latter has an absorbing foreword by John Fowles, the author of the original novel. It tells the story of the adaptation and describes, from a novelist's point of view, what is involved when your novel makes the transition to the screen.

If obtaining an original script is a problem, an interesting variation is to use a film adapted from a stage play and study an obligatory scene—that is, one so dramatically necessary that it cannot be missing from the film version. Good titles are:

Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

- Laslo Benedek's 1951 film version with Fredric March
- Wim Wenders' 1987 TV version with Dustin Hoffman (interesting for its Expressionist sets and because a theatrical flavor is retained).

Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*?

- Mike Nichols' 1966 film version.

Peter Shaffer's *Equus*

- Sidney Lumet's 1977 film version.

Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- Elia Kazan's 1951 film version.

Strategy for Study

Studying the original: Try to select an unfamiliar work and read the whole script (or stage play). Choose a scene of four or five pages, then:

- Imagine the location and draw a floor plan (see Figure FA 3 for an example).
- Make your own shooting script adaptation, substituting action for dialogue wherever feasible and making use of your location environment. (See Chapter 6: *Screenplay Ground Rules* for standard screenplay format and language.)
- Mark characters' movements on floor plan.
- Mark camera positions (A, B, C, etc., and indicate camera movements) and refer to these in your shooting script (See Chapter 24: *Coverage and the Shooting Script*).
- Write a brief statement about (a) what major themes you think the entire script or play is dealing with, and (b) how your chosen scene functions in the whole.

Studying the film version: First see the entire film without stopping. Then run your chosen scene two or three times, stopping and rerunning sections as you wish. Carry out the following:

1. Make notes on film's choice of location (Imaginative? Metaphoric?).
2. Make a floor plan and mark camera positions and movements of characters.
3. Using a photocopy of the scene, pencil in annotations to show what dialogue has been cut, added, or altered.

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4. Note actions, both large and small, that add significantly to the impact of the scene. Ignore those specified in the original, because the object is to find what the film version has added to or substituted for the writer's version.
5. Note camera usage as follows:
    a. Any abnormal perspective (that is, when a nonstandard lens is used—a standard lens is one that reproduces the perspective of the human eye; telescopic and wide-angle lenses compress or magnify perspective respectively)?
    b. Any camera position above or below eye level?
    c. Any camera movement (track, pan, tilt, zoom, crane)? Note what you think motivated the camera movement (character's movement, eye line, Storyteller's revelation, etc.).
    d. Note what the thematic focus of the film seems to be, and how your chosen scene functions in the film.

Comparison: Compare your scripting with the film's handling and describe the following:

1. How did the film establish time and place?
2. How effectively did the film compress the original and substitute behavior for dialogue?
3. How, using camerawork and editing, is the audience drawn into identifying with one or more characters?
4. Whose scene was it, and why?
5. How were any rhythms (speech, movements, sound effects, music, etc.) used to pace out the scene, particularly to speed it up or slow it down?
6. What were the major changes of interpretation in the film and in the chosen scene?
7. Provide any further valuations of the film you think worth making (acting, characterization, use of music or sound effects, etc.).

Assess your performance: How well did you do? What aspects of filmmaking are you least aware of and need to develop? What did you accomplish?

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PROJECT 4:

LIGHTING ANALYSIS

Though directors do not have to understand the technical craft of lighting, they must be able to ask for particular lighting effects and discuss lighting using the terminology a DP understands. The sections "Basic Lighting Approaches and Terminology" and "The Expressive Capacity of the Lens" in Chapter 27 covers most of the fundamental concepts and vocabulary for essential lighting set-ups and exposure factors. Please review this section before trying out this analysis. If you would like further detail into the art and craft of cinematic lighting, try Alan J. Ritsko's *Lighting for Location Motion Pictures* (Simon & Schuster, 1980) and Kris Malkiewicz's *Film Lighting* (Fireside, 1986).

Equipment required: DVD player as in previous projects. Turn down the color saturation of your monitor so that initially you see a black-and-white picture. Adjust the monitor's brightness and contrast controls so the greatest possible range of gray tones is visible between video white and video black. Unless you do this, you simply won't see all that is present.

Objective: To analyze common lighting situations and understand what goes into creating a lighting mood.

Study materials: Same as in previous project (a film script and the finished film made from it on videotape), only this time it will be an advantage to search out particular lighting situations rather than sequences of special dramatic appeal. The same sequences may fulfill both purposes.

Lighting Terminology

Here, the task is to recognize different types and combinations of lighting situations and to apply standard terminology. Every aspect of lighting carries strong emotional associations that can be employed in drama to great effect. The technique and the terminology describing it are therefore powerful tools in the right hands.

Again, the sections "Basic Lighting Approaches and Terminology" and "The Expressive Capacity of the Lens" in Chapter 27 covers most of the fundamental concepts and vocabulary for essential lighting set-ups and exposure factors. It would be best to review this section before trying out this analysis.

Strategy for Study

Locate two or three sequences with quite different lighting moods and, using the previously discussed definitions, classify them as follows:

Lighting Sources:	Artificial lights? Available light? Mixture of two?
Time:	Day for day / night for night / dusk for night / day for night?
Style:	High-key/low-key/graduated tonality?
Contrast:	High- or low-contrast?
Scene:	Intended to look like natural light (naturalistic) or artificially lit (stylized)?
Setup (Key light direction):	Frontal / side lit /narrow (3/4 back) / back lit setup?

Angles (vertical):	High / low angle of key light?
Key quality:	Hard light / soft light?
Key motivation (source):	Light source in scene is intended to be: _____
Fill light:	Fill light is positioned where in relation to Key light? What is the relative intensity of the Fill?
Back light motivation:	Back light is intended to be: _____
Practicals:	Practicals in the scene are_____
Light and Shadow:	What areas are lit and what areas are left to fall into shadow or underexposure?
Mood:	Mood conveyed by lighting is _____
Emphasis:	Does the lighting draw your attention to specific objects or areas of the frame?
Continuity:	Any discernible differences of lighting between complementary angles that show lighting has been handled differently?

After making some analysis in black and white, turn up the color and see if you can spot further patterns. This often reveals how the DP and art director have employed the emotional associations of the location, costuming, and decor in the service of the script. Predominant hues and color saturation level (meaning whether a color is pure or desaturated with an admixture of white) have a great deal to do with a scene's effect on the viewer. For instance, David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986) portrays its Lumberton in stark, bright toy-town colors as a surreal setting for sadistic sex and loneliness. Robert Altman's *Gosford Park* (2001) uses the low-key interiors and crowded furnishings of a Victorian country mansion as the setting for his convoluted family tale. The predominant tones are dark red and brown.

Two classically lit black-and-white films are Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941), with deep-focus cinematography by the revolutionary Gregg Toland, and Jean Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast* (1946, whose lighted interiors Henri Alekan modeled after Dutch paintings). A more recent Alekan black-and-white film is Wim Wenders' lyrical *Wings of Desire* (1987).

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CAPTIONS FOR FILM ANALYSIS FIGURES

Figure FA-1 Wide shot and two complementary close-ups (CUs). Notice the lead space in front of each CU character, and how the height and placing in the frame of each replicates the composition of the master shot.

Figure FA-2 Split-page format analysis script for TB Sanatorium Sequence. Picture is always on the left, sound on the right. (Shot abbreviations can be found in Ch. 13.)

Figure FA-3 Floor or ground plan showing entry and movement of character Eric and the camera positions necessary to cover his action.

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