

Fight Club (David Fincher, 1999)

Fight Club (David Fincher, 1999) is using almost every type of film editing techniques we learned. Here I will attempt to dissect a few. Several of my classmates included this movie in their top ten list. I have never seen it because I am not attracted to senseless violence and my preconception about this movie was limited to this feeling. After I watched it on DVD yesterday I was having some difficulties trying to think about the movie in the context of this film course as the content, message was more exciting for me.

Thinking about "Time" I noticed that it starts with a triple flashback. The protagonist is in a room at the top of a skyscraper and narrating the events, recalling his encounter with "Bob" in a health support group. Right after this scene we are switched to another time frame, at another location at a "normal" office day. All of these are establishing shots to show the major settings of the story. Another moodsetting part from the director is the extreme long (trick) cuts of zooming out. In the first 3 minutes we see two of these shots: during the credits we are zooming out from the inside of a human body, then a few seconds later from the depth of a trashcan. This is already sending a message to the audience and suggesting similarities between garbage and human life. So does the extreme close-up part of the opening sequence that shows a gun in a guy's mouth.

I also enjoyed the next scene, where we are introduced to the carefully selected objects of a condo's interior. We are shown the price tags and short description projected in front of each item, exactly as the narrator sees them in the catalog, where he is selecting them from. This kind of visual humor pops up at numerous places in the movie. For example in the sequence where the homework assignment is to start a fight with a complete stranger. Here we see the cross-cutting of 3 scenes. In one a man hoses down with water the pedestrians - an homage to old silent comedies -, in the second we see an overhead shot of a building lobby where people trying to chase each other, and in the third we see a low-angle shot of similar actions in a car dealership.

Another comic element I enjoyed on the DVD is a short text at the very beginning of the movie after the standard FBI warning about the DVD owner's rights of what s/he can do with the disc. The text is an introduction to the philosophy of the movie, written in Tyler's style about the fine prints of life. This is already an example of how the movie is pushing the standards. Later, after a cathartic scene the viewer sees the edge of the film (the physical material) with its sprockets. It is, as if the film would be sliding out of the projector. In the same shot the faces of the two main actors are superimposed onto each other. The intended combined effect is that we are starting to grasp the possibility that these two people are the same.

Asynchronous sound is used throughout the film in the form of the storytelling told by the inner voice of the narrator. The tone of his voice is very reassuring, calm. The tension created by the aggressive, often bloody fighting scenes are strengthened by the juxtaposition of this smooth toned voice-over.

Ceaser Quintero, my peer, describes the movie's text as "revolutionary socio-babble". On the first level he is right, however I believe there is more to it. I think it points our attention to the right problems (sense of purposelessness, consumerism...) and shows us some "wrong" solutions.