

Introduction

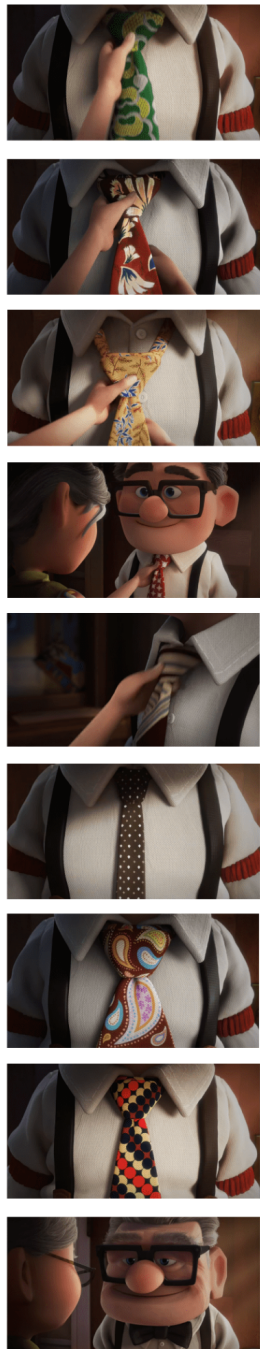
With a rich history of producing countless of impressive animated feature films, it is no surprise how a credible animation studio like Pixar is able to cook up a magical montage like “The Married Life”, a brilliant five-minute masterclass in narrative exposition (Bradshaw, 2009) from their multi-award-winning feature film, “UP” (2009). In this essay, I will show examples for my working premise of how Pixar uses “trajectory phrasing” (Pearlman, 2016) to enhance the portrayal of intentions and emotions within the narrative of The Married Life.

Trajectories between two shots



Figure 1

In Figure 1, the first image on the left serves as a crucial turning point of the film. The mise-en-scene is designed to draw the audience in with the prominent feature that is the mural of a stork delivering a baby, a culturally famous symbol of a pregnancy made popular by Hans Chrisitan Andersen's "The Storks" (2001). Combined with a primary use of the colour yellow, which according to Goethe (1810), is a colour that conveys excitement; this mise-en-scene that is further enhanced by the natural daylight coming from the window was crafted with the intention of conveying the emotional excitement that Karl and Ellie are experiencing as they eagerly open their arms to the new world of parenthood. However, this uplifting energy presented in the first shot is then redirected by a camera pan into a dark environment, resonating a much lower energy as we are presented with the couple, situated in a dimly lit clinic room. The audience is presented with a contrastingly tragic scene of Ellie's failed pregnancy as she sits on a chair, crying. The seamless flow between these two contrasting energies - one highly spirited and another, low; are what Pearlman (2016) refers to as a "colliding trajectory", where, regardless of whether two shots are linked together with a transition as smooth as the dolly pan, the colliding energies between the two shots are what creates a shock factor that is essential to move the audience's emotions to create a scene as impactful as this.



Trajectories presented by multiple quick-cuts

In Figure 2, Karl and Ellie have picked themselves back up after their devastating phase in life, deciding to take life as it is and work their way towards their dream of moving to Paradise Falls. This forty-second sequence is jam-packed with quick shots, effectively cut with ellipsis in between to achieve an illusion of time that is quickly passing by. However, it takes a skilful editor to achieve a balance of cutting and piecing the 'right' amount of information within each cut in order to achieve a consistent flow of trajectories, enough to retain the audience's attention. As Murch (2001) had mentioned in his lecture, "If you are in an actual fight, you will be blinking dozens of times in a minute because you are thinking dozens of conflicting thoughts a minute— and so when you are watching a fight in a film, there should be dozens of cuts per minute. This would make the audience participate emotionally in the fight itself". Similarly in *The Married Life*, the editor arranges approximately 10 cuts per 10 seconds, activating what Restak (2008) refers to as the "mirror neurons" in the audience's brains that allow them to feel personally and emotionally involved in Karl and Ellie's lives as they process these series of thoughts in short period of time. Therefore, when a scene is made of the right balance of cuts, holds, and ellipsis, it is powerful enough to create a consistent flow of trajectory that retains the audience's attention and for them to develop a strong sense of emotional attachment towards the two characters.

Conclusion

To conclude my analysis, I would like to quote the wonderful Goddard (1956) as he says, “cutting on a look is, in effect, to bring out the soul under the spirit, the passion behind the intrigue, to make the heart prevail over the intelligence by destroying the notion of space in favour of that of time”. Trajectory phrasing is an important part of rhythm-making to convey an emotionally-centred narrative so as to achieve a seamless flow of energy between shots. This can be achieved through combinations of a well thought mise-en-scene, a seamless transition between shots no matter the nature of the two shots, cutting just the right amount of information per each shot and instinctively knowing how long to hold the shot- so that the audience is able to fully immerse themselves in the emotions and narratives portrayed, for them to be able to ride along with the direction in the flow of energy that is the trajectory phrasing. For them to be able to feel the lingering sense of emptiness that a character feels, just like how Karl is left with, even years after watching a film. Just as how *The Married Life* successfully has.

Word count: 807 words

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Goddard: Will need help from Chris with citing this article extract