

### Take home exam

#### Question 2

In the following task I will examine how the assigned scene represents two elements: the discord between Jim and his father and Judy's tense relationship with her father. There are a lot of similarities between the two relationships but they are also dissimilar in many ways: Jim (played by James Dean) shows something that resembles disappointment in his father. It seems like Jim is searching for the father to stand up for himself – something he seemingly doesn't live up to. Judy (played by Natalie Wood) seems also to be disappointed in her father, though for different reasons. In Judy's case she is constantly seeking for attention and affection from the father, only to find herself pushed away. I will examine these contrasts through the use of editing and especially *mise-en-scene*. In this, and in the later task, *mise-en-scene* is understood as: "All of the elements placed in front of the camera to be photographed: the settings and props, lighting, costumes and makeup and figure behavior" (Bordwell, Thompson & Smith, 2017, p. G-4). All, or some of these specific will be analyzed. *Editing* is understood as the task of selecting camera takes and the set of techniques that governs the relationship among shot (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p. G-2).

Finally I will examine the differences between *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and the more contemporary teenage film *LOL* (2012).

In the following paragraph I will use three examples from the assigned scene: the kitchen scene, the father scene and the laughing scene, representatively at 0:00-0:05, 0:05-0:12 and 0:31-0:39. When analyzing the *mise-en-scene* of the kitchen scene (Movieclips, 2017, 0:00-0:05), it becomes clear that it have an important role in establishing Jim as a rebel. The scene starts off with Jim in the kitchen. He looks like he just recently entered the house: he is sweaty, his coat is still on and he is thirsty. It seems like he have done something that demanded a great deal of physical effort. He stands in front of a dark green background, which can give connotations to renewal, youth and vigor (Bignell, 2008, p. 90; Marshall, 2008). These two aspects create an impression of Jim being up to hard work and to be strong. Standing behind the open door of the refrigerator, he drinks milk straight from the mug. He consumes the white milk eagerly, without even visibly noticing the offscreen noise which indicates something is happening elsewhere in the house (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p. 185). The action in itself (drinking milk from the mug) signals rebellion: even though he lives in a house

with other people, he does not care to drink from a glass – an action many people would see as rude and unhygienic.

What further establishes Jim as a rebel is the contrast present in the frame. Jim and his rebellious action is the center of attention. This focus is created by using the fridge as the allegedly light source, lighting up his face and the milk. The contrasting color scheme further enhance this impression: the whiteness of the milk, the fridge, Jims t-shirt and the white kitchen towel around his neck creates contrasts to Jim's dark coat and the dark green background. The white milk might function as a metaphor signaling something more than just being liquid. It might signal youth, purity and humility – elements that Jim swallows (Marshall, 2008). The action can seem to establish Jim as hiding or eliminating his pure, young self, being left with a more adult, impure version. This assumption is further supported in the next clip, when the white kitchen towel is removed and Jim's dark coat is closed in such a manner that the white shirt underneath almost completely vanish.

The director then makes a hard cut to Jims' dad who is crawling around the floor in an apron. He is dressed in a suit, but it is hidden below the kitchen clothing. Jims' father is shot in a low contrast color scheme, with all the colors being pale pastel (Movieclips, 2017, 0:05-0:11). The fathers light grey suit and yellow apron makes him however stand out from the pale pink floor and background. Even though this makes the father the center of attention he is more invisible, blending in with the surroundings. The color scheme further creates a warm frame. The pale pink color gives connotations to love, innocence, soft and "feminine" characteristics, indicating that the father is a warm, caring figure (Marshall, 2008).

This impression is further emphasized by the fathers costume and action. First of all he is dressed in an apron. The clothing is pale yellow, with flowers and fringes on it. Second, he is crawling around the floor, picking up food he made for his wife that "(...) doesn't feel too well" (Movieclips, 2008, 0:20). Taking into account that the movie was made in 1955, these two characteristics becomes especially evident. In the 1950s men were not supposed to make food or display "feminine" characteristics – this were solely the chores of the woman (Gardiner, 2015). The woman was however supposed to be a housewife, taking care of the children and the husband. In the assigned scene, these gender roles are however turned around. This colors the father-character with female characteristics. This is further made explicit when Jim mistakes his father of being the mom (Movieclips, 2017, 0:11).

The caring traits of the father are however not displayed in an independent matter. He seems warm but at the same time submissive. During the whole interaction with Jim, he is

seen crawling on the floor never getting on his feet (Movieclips, 2017, 0:11-1:24). Despite that the actor was taller and bigger than James Dean, he seems smaller. Every time the father is shot in a straight-on angle, he is seen behind the stairway railing (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p. 188). This might create two connotations or associations (Bignell, 2008, p. 90). First, the railing can create a connotation to prison bars; he is a prisoner locked in his life, his own body or possibly the authority of his wife. Second, they might create an association to a baby gate. This matches the characters' action: he crawls around the floor picking up food – which looks similar to a child playing. The railing serves as creating an image of the fathers' life as claustrophobic – the prop seem to trap him figuratively and literally speaking. At the same time he seems to be living with a childish ignorance; he does not take a stand and does as he is told.

Through *mise-en-scene*, the two characters are in other words heavily contrasted. This creates a *clinch*. The strong, rebellious young man seems to be disappointed and agitated by the fathers' weak traits. He stands over his father with his arms crossed; giving him commands and later tries to pull him up from the floor.

Despite this discord between them, the dimensions of editing create harmony and closeness in the frame. The hard cuts create an explicit closeness: as the frames shifts we see the two characters rapidly after each other. Further, the scene is taking use of continuity editing, transmitting the narrative smooth and clearly (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p: 230). Among many things, the use of *eyeline match* and the 180 degree rule harmonize the frame and the interaction between Jim and his father (Barrance, 2016). Through use of *analytical editing*, breaking the frame into closer views, the two characters seems close to each other in the frame (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p: 226). This can imply that they are psychologically close (even though the two characters might not necessarily agree on everything). They share a common spatially and mental ground where they meet. This is emphasized through *mise-en-scene* and the figure behavior. During a sequence of eight seconds, the characters laugh together, creating a moment of intimacy; it seems like they share a common state of mind which amuse them both (Movieclips, 2017, 0:31-0:39). This, together with the editing, makes the characters look emotionally close. Despite the discord, there is a bond between them.

As written above, Jim's father is not the classical distanced 1950s man, but rather a pleasing, compassionate and caring dad. Judy's father is on the other hand distancing himself from her, refusing to kiss her and give the attention she wants.

The film visually contrasts these two different relationships through staging – specifically acting and figure behavior. When analyzing the contrast between the two relationships, the focus will therefore be on the body language depicted in the different scenes. As written above the scene between Jim and his father signals (through mise-en-scene and editing) a disharmonic but at the same time close relationship. Jim's father seems caring of his son, among many things addressing him as "Jimbo" (Movieclips, 2017, 0:12). Throughout their interaction, the two characters face each other, keeping eye contact as they speak. When Jim enters the room, his father turns towards him. When Jim further asks if he dropped the tray, he answers with a gentle smile, responding to his approach. The father is tuned towards Jim and Jim is tuned towards his father. This tuning creates a flow in the interaction: the two characters prudently respond to each other. The exception is when Jim's father looks away to tidy the floor and simply ignores Jim's proposal to leave the mess (Movieclips, 2017, 0:46). Later, at the moment of confrontation, when Jim is approaching his father and drags him by the apron, the father devotes his son full attention (Movieclips, 2017, 1:04-1:20). He looks heavy-hearted at Jim, seemingly expressing sadness and a kind of fear.

The relationship between Judy and her father is on the contrary acted out in a completely different way. As the two figures enter the dining room, Judy's father is giving her a short amount of attention (Movieclips, 2017, 0:28-0:30). Judy's figure is constantly turned toward her father; she looks at him seeking to establish contact. Her father is however turned away from her, towards the dining table, only engaging in elusive eye contact when she asks him a question (Movieclips, 2017, 1:33; 1:36). When she leans in to kiss him, he pulls away and looks at her in disgrace. He then turns toward the table and later his son when he enters the room (Movieclips, 2017, 1:45). Even though Judy is standing right next to her father, his rejecting body language creates an empty space between them, breaking the possibility of a common ground and emotional intimacy.

Later, when Judy still stands beside her father, he is fiddling with the cutlery. This distraction makes it seem like he is trying to avoid looking at her. When she tells him that she does not understand anything, he answers while looking offscreen (Bordwell et al., 2017, p. 186). The offscreen gaze doesn't seem to be fixed on a figure the viewer can't see. His avoiding look is rather characterized by being just that: avoidant. It doesn't matter what he

looks at, as long as it's not her. At the moment of confrontation, when Judy approach her father implying that she still loves and care for him, he only devote little, if any, attention to her (Movieclips, 2017, 2:25-2:32). Instead he is tuned toward his son, looking at him and showing affection by patting his back and head. This signals that the son is the more important and deserves full attention. When Judy leans in to a kiss him once again, the father gives the ultimate sign of rejection: he hits her in anger (Movieclips, 2017, 2:32).

As Bordwell et. al. note, a genre means “kind” or “type” (2017, p. 327). A genre is further classified by certain conventions (Bordwell et.al., 2017, G-3). Teen movies are a genre that surrounds the life of a teenager – depicting someone at a stage between childhood and adulthood (Fox, 2009). The films are in other words classified by a shared subject or theme: the teenager (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p. 328).

In the 1950s this intermediate stage between being a child and adult started to manifest (Fox, 2009). A teenager is typically searching to establish a “new” self in the journey to becoming an adult – with all the accompanying characteristics. Often the young adult feel the need to rebel against its' parents. This is the case in both *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and the more contemporary *LOL* (2012). In *Rebel Without a Cause* the characters are disappointed by their parents. In *LOL* it is however the other way around. The reasons for their disappointments are also quite different – with manifestations in the cultural context surrounding the two movies.

The movie clip in *Rebel Without a Cause* draws a clear picture of the 1950s norms. The disappointment in both of the relationships regards the father figure. In Jim's case, the father is “too weak”. He doesn't have the characteristics of a strong, independent man. This characteristic is was expected of a father in the 50s, and the lack of them is part of Jim's disappointment in him. In sixteen-year-old Judy's case, her father has made the decision to treat her as an adult. He therefore, in Judy's view, shows less affection for her than he previously did. This distanced father reflects the image of the expectations of a 50s father.

In *LOL* the conflict rather lays in the parents expectations to a child and the child's eager to explore new things. The movie especially focuses on the mothers' need of protection – representing a shift in view when compared to *Rebel Without a Cause*. It is not the father that is – or is supposed to – protect the child's “honour”, it is the mother. The movie portrays Lola having sex for the first time, smoking marihuana and drinking alcohol and her mother desperately trying to protect her.

Even though the movies contain some of the same central themes (a love story, teens, rebellion), there is a change in the expression of the genre. Both of the movies are classified as a drama (IMDb, 2017; 2017). However, while *Rebel Without a Cause* is presented in a thoroughly drama genre, *LOL* is presented in more of a mixed genre (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p. 335). The contemporary teen movie use conventions from the comedy genre, for instance stereotypes like a funny nerd and an idiot. The movie also uses sex and sexuality more explicit. This might represent a shift in the teenage genre, from the more serious to the mixing of drama and comedy, with “Teen Comedy & Drama” being put together in one category by the public (Wikipedia, 2017).

### Question 3

In this task I will compare the visual differences between daytime and night time talk shows using the assigned images. In addition I will compare the representation of gender before I end the assignment with a discussion on whether or not the television genre can transcend its medium.

A talk show can be defined as “a radio or television program in which usually well-known persons engage in discussions or are interviewed” (“Merriam-Webster”, 2017). It is in other words a show where a host asks questions or lead a discussion – often with celebrities (which we see in many of the assignment pictures). The genres’ contains in other words conventions like a host, an audience, a guest and a conversation/discussion (Bignell, 2008, p. 125). When analyzing the mise-en-scene of the assignment images we find many similarities between them (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p. 115-140). The setting of all of the shows takes place under highly controlled conditions (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p. 115). They are all shot in a studio, with artificial light and backdrops characterizing the images. The main characters in the frame are a host and a guest. The host is placed to the right in the frame and the guest to the left. The costumes, or clothes, are more or less formal, with none of the characters using a sloppy outfit. It looks like they all dressed up: with many of them wearing shirts, suit jackets and formal pants. In addition they are all – both the host and the guest – dressed in neutral colors: black, grey, white and dark blue. When looking at the cinematography, all of the frames are a medium long shot, displaying both the figures and surroundings (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p. 189). With that being said, there are many visual differences between them. Looking at the visual characteristics in the assignment images it seems like the genre can be divided

into two subgenres: daytime talk show and night time talk shows. Of the eight images in the exam assignment, the upper four represents daytime talk shows, whilst the lower four represents night time talk shows.

Of the *daytime talk show* we find The Ellen Show (1), The Oprah Winfrey Show (2), The Queen Latifah Show (3) and The Ricki Lake Show (4). They are all characterized by a light colored studio, in the form of pastel or earthy tones: dark red, green, light brown, beige, pink, violet and light blue. The earthy tones and the pale pastel can give an association to love, creating a warm atmosphere (Bordwell et.al., 2017, p. 121). The colors can also signal a more feminine expression – which corresponds to all the hosts being women. The props of the set further give a feeling of informality and warmth. The interview takes place in two comfortably looking chairs or a sofa, creating a safe ground for the interview. In addition to signaling this informality, the props further create a warm atmosphere – some of them more explicit than others. In 1 and 4 the backdrop gives a direct connotation to a warm climate through their pictures of palm trees (Bignell, 2008, p. 90). Number 2 gives this warmth by using a light brown, light orange and yellow background, possibly giving a connotation to the warm sun. Number 3 is characterized by props similar to a forest, with brown floor, chairs and drawer, green plants and light grey backdrop.

The light colored studio makes a contrast between the background and the two characters in front of it. It is important to note that the contrast is created by the colors and not the lighting in itself. The *high-key lighting* (illuminating the whole frame) lights up both the background and people. As written above, the characters are dressed up nice and, to a certain extent, formally. Both the guests and the host use dark colored clothes (except from Oprahs white sweater), creating a contrast to the light set. By making this contrast, the attention of the viewer is drawn to the host and the guest. The clothing further creates a personalization of the characters, especially the host. Even though they are dressed formally, they are all dressed unequal. Ellen DeGeneres is dressed in a suit jacket, Ricki Lake in a skirt while Queen Latifah wears sneakers. This signals individuality and makes it possible for the viewer to draw conclusions on personality without being familiar with the host beforehand.

The seating further makes the viewer see the whole body of both the host and the guest. They are both exposed, showing themselves as vulnerable and open. The figure behavior also have certain characteristics: the two characters face each other in the same height and are seated just close enough to touch each other on the hand or knee

(TheEllenShow, 1:21). The whole staging imitates a casual conversation between two good friends, not an interview with a leader (host) and an interview object (guest).

When looking at mise-en-scene of the *night time talk shows*, the colors, props and costume become different. In the images of night time talk shows we find The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon (1), The Late Show with David Letterman (2), Jimmy Kimmel Live! (3) and Conan (4). They are all characterized by three colors: dark blue, grey and brown. The color scheme makes the studio somewhat cooler. However, the heavy use of brown colors outweighs the coolness, creating a warmer frame (Marshall, 2008). The combination of blue and brown/orange is a well-known contrasting scheme (Cima, 2015). They are typically colors you will find on news set, which is associated with neutrality, actuality and importance (Pinterest, 2017). They further create a masculine expression, with especially blue giving a connotation to the male gender. All of the images contain two props: a grey chair and a brown desk. The grey guest-chair resembles a lot the one in daytime talk shows: it looks comfortable with armrests and cushions. The brown desk creates however strict, formal impression.

Further, the backdrop is quite distinct: with a blue background and city lights. It seems like the blue connote the clear night sky and the city lights resembling the city the show is recorded in. The backdrop of a skyline and city lights connect the talk show to the outside world, making the busy, hectic life of the city as the underlying tone. In contrast to the calm, warm backdrops we see in the daytime shows, the night time backdrop gives connotations to actuality, to something that happens here and now, something that is important.

The costumes and figure further enhance this impression. The hosts are dressed up more formally, with all of them wearing a suit and a tie. This gives anonymity to the host: the costume looks more like a uniform than a personal outfit. It resembles smart office clothes which gives a connotation of authority, seriousness and intelligence (Bignell, 2008, p. 90). When it comes to the figure behavior, the brown desk hides half of the host. The body isn't exposed and vulnerable but rather hidden and safe. In addition it raises the host slightly above its interview object, creating both a physical and psychological distance: the host is taller, looking slightly down, creating a position of authority. Without being familiar with the specific host, the viewer would be able to identify the leader of the interview with just a glimpse. This is a sharp contrast to daytime talk shows, where the guest and host melt together in a seemingly mutual conversation on equal grounds.

All of the three elements of mise-en-scene examined so far in this assignment (colors, costume and props) create two distinct connotations when looking at daytime and night time



talk shows. While the first connotes a conversation between two friends, the second creates a connotation to a news broadcast (REF). While the first seems like a calm “chitchat” with little other intension than amusing, the other seem like an interview with characterized by actuality, significance and intellectuality.

The two subgenres have in other words a lot of stylistic differences, with some of them being mentioned above. When analyzing the differences between them it is however hard to ignore that all the daytime hosts are female while all the night time hosts are men. It seems therefore plausible that the different conventions are attached to the hosts’ gender and not to the subgenre. If this is the case, the different use of mise-en-scene draws upon representing the gender of the hosts in dissimilar ways.

The representation of female hosts in daytime talk shows is characterized by many aspects. First of all, the female host seems less authoritarian than the male host. As previously mentioned, she is placed in the same height as the guest – signaling an equal relationship. The host does not automatically imply to have more knowledge or a given authority over the situation. This makes the overarching impression of a conversation rather than an interview. Second, the setting (colors and props) emphasizes this conclusion; the colors are warm and pastel, there are flowers and plants and the seating is comfortable. The frame depicted in daytime talk shows images implies that the host is friendly, compassionate, warm and listening. When further taking a look at the host herself two interest aspects emerge. As previously written her clothing personalizes her. The hosts’ personality – or the viewers attributed personality – shines through. She denotes herself and not immediately a talk show host (Bignell, 2008, p. 90). Second, her whole figure is depicted in the shot. She is fully exposed which makes her seem more vulnerable. These aspects mirror the often expected gender norms in the society: that the woman should be weaker than the man, having less authority.

In contrast, the representation of male hosts in night time talk shows is quite different. Through the setting and his clothes, the male host gives an immediate impression of authority and importance. As previously written, the color scheme gives connotations to a news broadcast emphasizing the host as important and intelligent. The backdrop display an imitation of a city. The city might also create a connotation: actuality and a hectic atmosphere made up by smart people going to work.

He is further placed above the guests, behind a brown desk. In addition he wears smart office clothes. These elements give connotations to a news broadcast, the principal's office, a job interview etc. He does not only denote a talk show host but also authority, formality and intelligence (Bignell, 2008, p. 90). The clothing also depersonalizes the male host, which makes *him* (the person behind the character) less exposed and hence less vulnerable.

With that being said, it is possible that these representations are connected to the subgenre itself and not the gender of the host: as being subjected to different conventions the use of mise-en-scene would exist regardless of the hosts' gender. The setting and clothing might just, for instance, represent the time of the day. A show sent during the day will harmonize with airtime by using light colors. The opposite will be true for a night time show. The differences therefore might represent *time* and not *gender*. If that were the case, a male daytime host would operate under the same conditions as a female host, and the opposite for a female night time host.

Even though the night time talk show is almost exclusively reserved male hosts in America, female exceptions does exist (Lewis, 2016). One of them was Chelsea Handler, which had a night time show for 7 seasons (Lewis, 2016). Handlers' use of colors mirrors to a large extent the night time shows mentioned above (even though she sometimes used a pink instead of brown/orange). There is however a big difference: she is never placed above her guests – regardless of sitting behind a desk or interviewing in chairs (see Picture 1 and 2 in the reference list). This implies that this certain figure behavior is connected to gender and not the subgenre: a man is raised above the interview object; a female is placed in the same height.

This is further supported by the new daytime show with Steve Harvey, where the brown desk is an important prop (see Picture 3 and 4 in the reference list). It should be mentioned that Harvey *sometimes* is arranged in the same height as his guests. This might imply that the egalitarian seating is intentionally used when the conversation is better suited in an informal setup – and that this setup is connected to women to a larger extent.

In addition Harvey outweighs this decrease in authority with using the same color scheme as the one in night time show: still giving connotations to authority, actuality, intelligence etc. – even though he is seated in the same height as his interview objects.

Is it possible to apply this television genre in other mediums such as the cinema? Television images often make up the impression of realism (Bignell, 2008, p. 89). We accept that the image we see denote certain people: the person on screen is someone living in the real world and not a fantasy figure (Bignell, 2008, p. 89). The talk show offers a peek into the private sphere of a public person; hence bridging the gap between public and private, outside and inside (Bignell, 2008, p. 103). The talk show has in other words roots in reality. When taking these aspects into account, it is hard to imagine the genre being successful in for instance the cinema. When a person is shown in a movie we immediately expect them to be in character (or acting) – even when the person denotes themselves (like for instance Mike Tyson in *Hangover*) (Carpenter, 2012). A talk show portrayed in a movie would therefore probably be seen as an *imitation* of the genre and not the genre in itself. This thin line between reality and imitation was however challenged by Joaquin Phoenix in his movie *I'm Still Here*. The actor participated on the Late Show with David Letterman in character, acting the whole time. The interview was first sent as a normal talk show episode, and later appeared as part in the movie (Child, 2010).

It seems further plausible that the talk show genre can transcend its television medium and be implemented in a certain genre: the documentary. Many documentaries apply conventions similar to the talk show: a host which interviews someone, often a well-known person or an expert. The role of the host is however smaller and there is not a studio audience – applying a *version* and not the “full” talk show genre.

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Picture 1. Retrieved from [http://www.leerosedesigns.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/roundtable-4\\_1280px.jpg](http://www.leerosedesigns.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/roundtable-4_1280px.jpg)

Picture 1. Retrieved from [http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2014/04/28/article-01D6CEF3700000578-133\\_634x404.jpg](http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2014/04/28/article-01D6CEF3700000578-133_634x404.jpg)

Picture 3. Retrieved from [https://cdn.voxcdn.com/thumbor/XaDnoUhe75DrPtTjfCvb4x3Yz1A=/0x0:1000x530/1200x800/filters:focal\(395x204:555x364\)/cdn.voxcdn.com/uploads/chorus\\_image/image/56763489/Steve\\_.0.jpg](https://cdn.voxcdn.com/thumbor/XaDnoUhe75DrPtTjfCvb4x3Yz1A=/0x0:1000x530/1200x800/filters:focal(395x204:555x364)/cdn.voxcdn.com/uploads/chorus_image/image/56763489/Steve_.0.jpg)

Picture 4. Retrieved from  
[https://steveharvey.imgix.net/public/img/shows/edad43a7ee2520b83ef66201d9afae1\\_keyart.jpg?auto=compress](https://steveharvey.imgix.net/public/img/shows/edad43a7ee2520b83ef66201d9afae1_keyart.jpg?auto=compress)