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Film Literature

April 25, 2022

In the film *Blade Runner*, multiple cinematic techniques were utilized for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from direct emotional impact, to subtle symbolism that could be received by the viewer. While these reasons may seem different, all of them came together in accomplishing the primary goal of the director, which was to increase enjoyment of the film for its recipients. In addition to this goal was the similar intent to maximize the film's coherence as a story, adding purpose to what would otherwise have been scattered and aimless.

One of the main cinematic elements in *Blade Runner* was the extremely choreographed lighting used in almost every scene, which served not only as a mood indicator, but as a vessel for symbolic messages. In general, most of the lighting scenarios relied on artificial fluorescent lights or even just spotlights from exterior sources. For example, in JF Sebastian's building, the only illumination for the sets comes in through the skylight of the main hall and the boarded-up windows of his apartment. This gives the set a very cold and decrepit feeling to the set, possibly symbolizing Sebastian's loneliness, while also adding a sense of danger. The artificial blue light used here also appeared many times throughout the film, and is evocative of the noir movie genre. There were very few cases when natural light ever did appear in a scene, but one example was when Deckard visited Tyrell's office, with the warm light of the setting sun casting elongated shadows on the floor. The lighting in this scene created a huge amount of contrast with other scenes, and the hazy air quality combined with the pyramid-shaped building in the background creates an ancient theme; far different from the usual tone of the movie. One idea for

what this could symbolize is how Tyrell built a kingdom, making himself a god of biblical proportions, a metaphorical and literal creator of the replicants. This ties in perfectly with the questions of morality that the film raises, showing that lighting was a valuable tool the director used to increase meaning.

Another extremely important cinematic technique used by the director of *Blade Runner* is camera movement in each scene, specifically tracking and dolly shots through an environment. These types of shots are featured more in this film than what is typical, with the establishing shot as a prime example. In the shot, a dark and dystopian cityscape is shown, with oil refinery funnels burning off gas in the foreground. The camera tracks towards the scene at this instance even though there is no specific object being “tracked”. Though this does not have any apparent symbolic connection, the independent camera movement in this shot helps to establish for the viewer a sense of loneliness in the setting, despite overpopulation. The same type of shot reoccurs many times throughout the film, with another prime example being when Deckard takes off in the flying police cruiser. A pan of the cityscape is shown, possibly representing a POV shot. This again establishes the setting, showing the loneliness in overpopulation.

Moving on to the principal theatrical elements of *Blade Runner*, two closely intertwined examples are the script and the props. Both elements hold great symbolic significance in the plot, helping to reinforce the final message. One good instance of this is the dialogue between Roy Batty and Deckard at the end of their fight scene. When Deckard has finally been cornered and it seems as though all hope is lost, Roy Batty gives an emotional speech addressing his sadness and confusion at the thought of his own death, a huge contrast from the unrestrained anger that he felt just moments before. He addresses Deckard, “I’ve seen things you people wouldn’t believe... All these moments will be lost in time, like tears in the rain.” This quote reveals that he has now

gained a greater awareness and appreciation for his life in his final moments, at last uttering, “Time to die.” These are the exact same words that he used to threaten Deckard several minutes before, and again, shows the huge change he has undergone in his last moments on Earth. As he dies, the dove he was holding flies up into the sky — a not so subtle metaphor for the “soul” of the replicant leaving his body and ascending to heaven. While representing his soul, the dove may possibly represent the reconciliation that Roy Batty felt towards Deckard and the human race in general. Literally on the other hand, the nail going through his palm may have contrastingly represented his confliction and pain felt over the short time he was given to live, as well as his resentment of humanity.

In the end, all these features help the viewer to better understand and appreciate the film. Without them, *Blade Runner* would be far more shallow and meaningless, and this is what distinguishes an art form from the mere conveyance of information.