

The structuring of time.

Causes and their effects are basic to narrative, but they take place in **time**. As we watch a film, we construct story time on the basis of what the plot presents. For example the plot may present events out of chronological order, where the viewer must build up chronological or ordered sequences to established events preceding what is taking place in the narrative. Alternatively the plot may present only certain periods of time: the viewer thus infers some story duration has been skipped over. Still another possibility is to have the plot present the same story event many times as when the character repeatedly recalls a traumatic incident. This means that in constructing the film's story out of its plot the viewer tries to put events in chronological **order** and to assign them some **duration and frequency**

Temporal Order - relates to the order of story events presented in the film. From the plot order the audience infers the story order-

E.g. Foster - leaves his car on the freeway - makes a call to a woman who has a child/ doesn't speak, therefore woman hangs up. The audience infers (even though events are presented out of chronological order) that Foster has been separated, incurring long before his situation on the freeway and his disturbance links with events that have already taken place. Much of the order of the film then takes place during the course of the day- however there are some sequences where he recounts flashbacks -revealing his relationship with his wife and child. - Through video footage

Temporal Duration - The plot of both *Falling Down* and *Duel* take place over the course of one day, but both stories stretch back far before that, since information about their past is revealed in the course of the plot

In general, a film's overall plot duration consists of highlighting certain stretches of story duration. This could involve selecting a short and relatively cohesive time span as is used in *Duel* and or by presenting significant stretches of time from a period of many years- *Falling Down* - through the use of video footage of Foster's family life: and Prendergast's photo of his deceased daughter.

A third duration involved in narrative film is **screen duration**. The relationship among story duration, plot duration and screen duration are complex, where a filmmaker can manipulate screen duration independently of the overall story duration and plot duration. Example *Falling Down* has an overall story duration of 5 years, a plot duration of 6 hours and a screen duration of 2 hours.

Screen duration can select from plot duration- from the plot duration in *Falling Down* of 6 hours, scenes are selective and purposeful to manner in which the filmmaker defines their importance. Some scenes highlighting actions can be structured through time to have emotional impact, suspense and drama -

Time can be manipulated to **extend** time - beyond real time- or **condense** time

The production element of **Editing** is important in how a filmmaker structures time in a film

Temporal Frequency. A film's plot may change story frequency in several ways. If a story contains a habitual action that happens several times the plot will present one or a few occasions and let these sum up the rest

Sometimes a single story event may appear several times in the plot treatment. If the audience sees an event early in the film and then there is a flashback to that event later on, we see that same event twice. Some films use multiple narrators, each of whom describes the same event: The plot may also provide the audience with more information, so that we understand the event in a new context when it reappears.

The various ways that a film's plot may manipulate story order; duration and frequency illustrate how the spectator must actively participate in making sense of the narrative film. The plot provides cues about chronological sequence, the time span of the actions, and the number of times an event occurs, and it is up to the spectator to make inferences and form expectations.

Often the audience must motivate manipulations of time by the all-important principle of cause and effect. For instance a flashback will often be justified as caused by some incident that triggers a character recalling some events in the past. The plot may skip over years of story duration if they contain nothing important to the chains of cause and effect. The repetitions of actions may also be motivated by the plot's need to communicate certain key causes to the audience.

Falling Down –the film's plot is unified and comprehensible by the use of selective events within a strict time frame-over the course of one day.

Foster is travelling across town to make his daughter's birthday. Prendergast is on the final day of his job as a policeman.

Both films use a similar structuring of time - The audience is introduced to the central characters in the morning: The narrative establishes the conflict - the characters must continue their journey - scenes are structured in a hierarchical form where the drama intensifies until the climactic scene in late afternoon- where each character must confront his antagonist. Upon the resolution of the conflict the film through the use of time manipulation and production elements leave the audience to reflect on the outcome of the main characters.

Foster must resolve their conflict over the course of the film's plot- one day

The stylised use of timing can be contested in the opening of Falling Down the opening creates heightened rhythm - commences almost statically- and build to a climactic intense pitch.

Falling Down uses conventions such as the radio, telephone, the Burger Chain breakfast/lunch Menu, Narrator, Characters-"I'm no longer economically viable*."

FURTHER USES OF TIME. Production elements can also be used to manipulate time

CAMERA- The Opening of Falling Down- One continuous tracking shot- camera composition is also important here- The scene commences with a slow rhythm, emphasising the heat, congestion, nothing is moving - as the scene progresses the camera work changes- the timing of shots accelerate to match Foster's anxiety - the rhythm has heightened- the editing is rapid, sounds, radio dialogue and non-diegetic music fuse to an urgency- from which Foster abandons his car and walks away. **SOUND-** The rhythm, pitch, timbre and volume of sound, music and non-diegetic music also impact on time in a film.

EDITING- The duration of shots - long sustained shots, which may be used for emotional impact-anxiety, tension: - sustain time:

Rapid shots accelerate time: also have an emotional impact- drama, excitement

Crosscut editing is also used to show different settings within the same time frame-