

Terms:

MISE-EN-SCENE: A term used in the theater to refer to the staging of a scene, in relation to the setting, the arrangement of the actors, the lighting, etc. In film, the term is used to describe the arrangement of elements within the frame of a single shot.

MONTAGE:

1. French: The joining together or splicing of shots or sequences - in a word, editing.
2. American: A rapid succession of shots assembled, usually by means of super-impositions and/or dissolves, to convey a visual effect, such as the passing of time.
3. Russian: The foundation of film art. "The building up of film from separate strips of raw material," or "An imagist transformation of the dialectical principles, montage as the collision of ideas and cinematographic conflicts." (Quoting Pudovkin and Eisenstein, respectively.)

EXAMPLES OF THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

BECKETT AND "WAITING FOR GODOT", MONTY PYTHON

"What do I know about man's destiny? I could tell you more about radishes."

-Samuel Beckett

"This genre of theatre took quite some time to catch on because it used techniques that seemed to be illogical to the theatre world. The plots often deviated from the more traditional episodic structure, and seem to move in a circle, ending the same way it began. The scenery was often unrecognizable, and to make matters worse, the dialogue never seemed to make any sense."

<http://dana.ucc.nau.edu/~sek5/classpage.html>

NIHILISM – ABANDONING VALUES AND KNOWLEDGE

Nihilism derives its name from the Latin root nihil, meaning nothing, that which does not exist. This same root is found in the verb "annihilate" – to bring to nothing, to destroy completely. Nihilism is the belief which:

labels all values as worthless, therefore, nothing can be known or communicated.

associates itself with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism, having no loyalties.

The German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), is most often associated with nihilism.

THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS AND THE ABSURD HERO:

Camus has argued that the absurd hero sees life as a constant struggle, without hope. Any attempt to deny or avoid the struggle and the hopelessness that define our lives is an attempt to escape from this absurd contradiction. Camus's single requirement for the absurd man is that he live with full awareness of the absurdity of his position. While Sisyphus is pushing his rock up the mountain, there is nothing for him but toil and struggle. But in those moments where Sisyphus descends the mountain free from his burden, he is aware. He knows that he will struggle forever and he knows that this struggle will get him nowhere. This awareness is precisely the same awareness that an absurd man has in this life. So long as Sisyphus is aware, his fate is no different and no worse than our lot in life.

HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE JEFF LEBOWSKI?

At the beginning of the film, when the Dude tells his story of how his rug was 'defaced' to Walter, he keeps repeating the same thing over and over to Walter "What's the point?" Often times, you are caught wondering is the 'Dude' speaking directly to Walter or to the audience? Is this a preface, a foreshadowing of things to come?

The point is the Dude's lot in life as it is with most everyone's is to make the best of his or her burden.

WHY IS THERE A COWBOY NARRATING THE FILM?

As part of the theatre of the absurd he is a figurehead for the classic hero in America: the cowboy. Independent, against all odds, the western hero overcomes situations that are used stacked against him. This figure is juxtaposed against the backdrop of the 'Dude.'

WHY IS MAUDE DRESSED LIKE A VALKYRIE IN THE DREAM SEQUENCE?

The Valkyrie in Nordic Folk stories carries the fallen hero to Valhalla and becomes his servant. It relates to the absurdity of using the "dude" as the archetype for heroic feats.

WHAT IS THE NAME AND THE ASSOCIATION WITH THE DUDE HAVE TO DO WITH A HERO?

The dude in western stories was a city slicker, or a dandy who usually is the opposite of heroic. Yet in the modern surfer, drug, slacker culture the term is used as an everyman, the average joe, person on the street or a friend. The role of hero is not the classic Greek hero that is carved in marble but rather the hero depicted by the Artist Auguste Rodin, when he carved The Burghers of Calais. everyday ordinary people thrust into extraordinary circumstances where they rose to the occasion to do good things.

IS THIS MOVIE FORMULIST, CLASSIC OR REALISTIC IN NATURE? FORMULIST

Though it is a hybrid in many ways. The story uses many techniques which draw attention to it being a movie similar to 'French New Wave.'

The scene when the Dude is at Jackie Treehorn's place, there is a direct reference or homage to a scene in the Hitchcock film *North by Northwest* as the Dude takes a rubbing from the notepad from where Treehorn previously writes a note. There is also the narrator that speaks directly to the camera telling us that he liked the story that was told. Much like French New Wave films, the directors, the Coen Brothers, let us in on the fact that they know that we know that they are making a movie.