

Aesthetics in David Lynch's Cinema: A Visual Narrative Analysis of Blue Velvet

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Abstract

The aesthetic and narrative integrity of a cinematic work is shaped by the director's conscious combination of cinematographic elements. Cinematography is more than just a visual tool; it is a fundamental building block that constructs the narrative's world of meaning. Technical components such as camera angles, lighting, colour palettes, and spatial arrangements play an active role in conveying the characters' inner worlds, emotional transitions, and the subtext of the narrative to the audience while constructing the film's atmosphere. This study analyses David Lynch's 1986 film *Blue Velvet* within the framework of cinematographic narrative elements. The elements of camera usage, lighting design, composition, and editing in David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*, selected as a sample, have been examined as fundamental components supporting the narrative's ambiguous and multi-layered structure. The aim of this study is to analyse the narrative of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*. To achieve this aim, camera movements, composition, lighting, editing, and sound themes identified within the framework of descriptive analysis were examined in detail. The cinematographic elements used in *Blue Velvet*, while being the product of aesthetic concerns, become a functional narrative tool that supports the thematic depth of the story.

Keywords: David Lynch, Art, Aesthetics, Narrative, Cinematography.

JEL Code: Z10, Z11

1. Introduction

Film is an art form that produces meaning through visual and auditory elements, beyond being a storytelling tool. Cinematic narrative elements encompass components such as camera movements, composition, lighting, editing, and sound elements, directly influencing how the audience perceives the story. These elements are consciously arranged to reinforce the psychological states of the characters, the

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atmosphere, and the emotional tone of the narrative. This study aims to analyse the narrative of David Lynch's 1986 film *Blue Velvet*, based on the use of cinematographic narrative elements. The visual and auditory elements in the film are systematically observed, presenting a comprehensive assessment of the technical and aesthetic choices that support the narrative. Thus, the function of cinematographic elements in shaping the narrative and their importance in film language will be revealed. Using a descriptive analysis method, the narrative analysis of the film is examined within the framework of camera movements, composition, lighting, editing, and sound themes. The study reveals how the film's aesthetic and narrative function is visually supported through cinematographic elements (camera movements, lighting, composition, editing, and sound). Furthermore, by going beyond thematic and philosophical interpretations, it may contribute to the lack of analysis in the field by revealing how Lynch's visual and auditory aesthetic elements shape the narrative.

2. Literature Review

Narrative Elements of Cinema

Cinema is not merely a visual entertainment medium; it is an art form as a means of producing narratives. In this context, the word 'cinema' is etymologically derived from the root 'cinematograph'. This French-origin word is based on the Greek words *kinema* (movement) and *graphein* (to write/record) (Brown, 2005). The defining feature of cinema is its reliance on the element of movement. Unlike other art forms, cinema constructs its visual narrative through motion. This makes the form of communication it establishes with the audience unique (Pembecioğlu, 2005). Cinematography emerged as a technical invention and is essentially a structure consisting of moving images recorded and displayed in sequence. In this context, cinematography can be defined not only as an aesthetic form of expression but also by its technical infrastructure. This visual form of expression, made possible particularly by the invention of the camera, encompasses all technical parameters related to the imaging process, such as light sensitivity, lens selection, aperture settings, focus, framing, and camera movements (Yıldız, 2014).

Visual narration serves to conceptualize emotions, thoughts, movements, and forms of communication that cannot be expressed solely through words, using images as a medium (Brown, 2014). In this context, cinematography offers a narrative possibility that provides directors with unlimited creative opportunities by offering an expression space so broad that its boundaries cannot be defined, consisting of a combination of moving images and sound (Bresson, 2012). This potential plays a critical role in shaping the director's narrative world, establishing thematic depth, and creating the aesthetic or emotional impact they aim to achieve on the audience. The conscious and functional use of cinematographic elements determines not only the formal structure of the film but also its perspective, the construction of reality, and the meanings the audience attributes to the narrative (Hund vd., 2012).

Cinematography is a structural arrangement that encompasses the fundamental components of visual narrative and functions as a sign system. This system encompasses technical elements such as camera movements, shot scales, framing, composition, depth of field, and lens usage. These elements are not merely aesthetic choices but also functional tools in the meaning-making process of film language. The conscious and appropriate use of these techniques plays a fundamental role in constructing the semantic dimension of cinematic narrative. Therefore, the creation of cinematic meaning becomes possible within the framework of the semiotic possibilities offered by film language (Mükerrem, 2012). While the story forms the basis of a film, how this story is told also constitutes the formal characteristics of the film. Elements such as framing, camera angle, shot scale, lighting, sound, and editing are effective in conveying the story to the audience (Toprak, 2012).

Editing

Editing involves selecting images that enhance meaning from the available footage, arranging scenes sequentially in a manner consistent with the plot, and constructing a cohesive structure by considering the relationship each image establishes with others within the contextual framework. Thus, editing functions as a fundamental artistic tool that shapes the narrative, beyond being a technical process (Özön, 1984).

Editing plays a decisive role in shaping the cinematic narrative and creating an aesthetic or emotional impact on the audience. Editing not only arranges scenes sequentially but also directly influences the audience's perception and interpretation processes by establishing the narrative's rhythm, tension, and coherence of meaning. Therefore, editing choices constitute one of the important elements in ensuring the film's permanence in the audience's memory and in effectively conveying the narrative (Bordwell & Thompson, 2012).

The editing process is regarded not merely as a technical procedure in the art of cinema, but as a creative act possessing aesthetic and narrative depth. Mascelli compares film editing to shaping a rough diamond. Just as a diamond must be cut at the right angles, polished and carefully set to achieve its true value, a film must also be selected, organized and restructured during the editing stage from disjointed raw footage in the early stages of production to transform it into a meaningful narrative whole. In this process, leaving out certain scenes, much like the cuts made in shaping a diamond, ensures that the narrative achieves a more refined form. The remaining pieces form the fundamental building blocks that carry the story (Mmascelli, 2002).

Lighting

Lighting, one of the fundamental components of visual storytelling, plays a critical role in achieving aesthetic integrity and enhancing the narrative in cinematic language. Lighting not only illuminates scenes but also comes to the fore in determining the depth of the in-frame composition, creating atmosphere, and conveying the emotion of the story to the audience. In this respect, lighting is

considered one of the most effective tools of cinematic narration at both technical and narrative levels (Brown, 2018).

In the art of cinema, light is essential for objects in front of the camera to be visible at a certain light level. For the camera to detect an object and make it recordable, a specific level of illumination must be achieved. Light both ensures the visibility of the object and allows it to gain volume and depth in its physical environment. In this context, the presence of light emerges as an indispensable requirement in the formation of a cinematographic image (Kılıç, 2003). One of the main factors shaping the visual aesthetics of a film is how light is applied to the scene. The appropriate and creative use of lighting techniques plays an important role in enhancing the aesthetic impact by supporting the visual integrity of the cinematographic narrative (Millerson, 2007).

The Basic Principles of Composition

A cinema film is a visual structure formed by bringing together various scenes and sequences according to a specific narrative order. This structure becomes a meaningful composition on the cinema screen as a result of the conscious positioning of all elements, objects, characters and spatial arrangements that enter the camera frame (Mükerrem, 2012). Creating an effective frame in cinema requires not only technical knowledge but also a theoretical and aesthetic background in the language of visual expression. It is important to have a good understanding of the structural rules, narrative forms, and conceptual vocabulary of this visual language to correctly use and interpret the unique forms of expression of the art of cinema. Developing a profound interpretation in successful film production or film analysis is directly related to mastery of the grammar and means of expression of this narrative language (Ankaraligil, 2016).

Depth of field, the rule of thirds, triangles, head and eye space, balanced and unbalanced composition, frame within a frame, shooting scales, and camera angles are among the fundamental principles of composition.

In cinematography, the concept of ‘depth of field’ refers to the range of the image that can be perceived as sharp. This is directly related to the camera's optical system. This area of sharpness is formed by a combination of various technical variables (Vardar, 2012). The focal length of the lens used, the distance between the camera and the subject, and the aperture level affect the depth of field. Appropriate control of these three elements enables the desired level of sharpness and successful cinematographic narration in the image (Brown, 200).

Brown considers the rule of thirds to be a simple yet effective guiding tool in terms of visual composition. This principle is achieved by dividing the frame into three equal parts along horizontal and vertical axes and placing important objects or focal points on these lines or at their intersection points. This usage aims to create a more balanced and aesthetically pleasing image for the viewer (Brown, 2018).

In visual narration, triangular composition is often preferred to convey a sense of power, dominance, and stability to the viewer on a psychological level.

This type of arrangement is also used as an effective method for directing attention to specific points and creating a visual hierarchy (Ankaralığıl, 2016). The use of the triangular form in composition stands out as an effective method for directing the viewer's attention to the focal point of the visual narrative. It also contributes to filling the frame in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing manner and is preferred to add visual movement to the scene in static shots (Sijll, 2013).

When leaving empty space at the top of the frame, care must be taken to ensure that the subject's head does not touch the upper edge of the frame. This is important both to ensure visual balance and to enable the image to be perceived naturally. On the other hand, the gaze not only leaves a physical space in the direction the character is looking but is also used to add depth to the narrative by implying an unseen element. While establishing visual balance within the frame through this space, an indirect emphasis is also placed on the person or object opposite the character (Seçmen, 2020).

In visual composition, the physical dimensions of objects, their directions of movement, their distances from the camera, their spatial arrangements, and their lighting patterns are among the decisive factors in achieving a balanced frame structure. Every element within the frame has a function that directly influences the viewer's perception. In this context, no object included in the frame is placed randomly. Each is selected and positioned to serve a specific narrative purpose (Mascelli, 2002). Every visual element conveyed to the viewer in cinema is included in the frame in accordance with a specific purpose and function. In this context, for visual narration to be effective, it is crucial that the composition is aesthetically powerful, meaningful, and functionally organized. When the frame is not formally balanced and correctly constructed, both the visual power of the narration weakens, and the viewer may experience perceptual discomfort (Arnheim, 2010). The use of balanced and unbalanced compositions is designed according to the film's narrative. Unbalanced compositions are deliberately created to disturb the viewer and support the narrative.

The frame-within-a-frame technique is a cinematographic method used to make visual narration more compelling and add depth to the scene. This method ensures that the viewer's attention is directed away from environmental elements and focused directly on the narrative's focal point. Thus, the fundamental element of the narrative is brought to the fore and the impact of the visual composition is enhanced (Brown, 2018). To increase the emphasis and aesthetic depth of the narrative, it is common practice to create a secondary frame within the main frame in cinematographic composition. This practice both facilitates the organization of the visual structure and increases the narrative effect by directing the viewer's perception (Wineyard, 2010).

The relative size of an object within the frame on the screen is fundamentally based on its proportional relationship with the screen area, and this ratio is one of the basic elements that determine the scale of the shot. The extent to which an object occupies the image varies depending on its distance from the camera and the focal length of the lens used (Hunt vd., 2012). Shot scales are examined under nine

headings: long shot, general shot, full-length shot, knee shot, waist shot, chest shot, shoulder shot, head shot, and detail shot.

Ankaralığıl examines camera angles in two fundamental categories: ‘the camera's approach angle to the subject’ and ‘the camera's viewing height and plane relative to the subject.’ The first category determines the viewer's position within the narrative. That is, it concerns whether the viewer experiences the scene as an outside observer or as an internal character, part of the plot. The second category refers to the physical point from which the camera views the object or scene, i.e., the height and tilt plane at which the camera is positioned (Ankaralığıl, 2016). The camera's approach angle to the subject is divided into two categories: objective and subjective (Gökçe, 2012). In scenes where the camera is used objectively, the viewer acts as an external observer who does not intervene in the events, while in subjective camera use, the viewer is included in the character's perception world and experiences the events directly from the character's point of view (Avlar, 2024). The camera's height and plane relative to the subject are examined under four headings: eye-level angle, low angle, high angle, and oblique angle. Camera angles not only provide visual variety but also evoke specific emotional responses in the viewer, thereby enhancing the psychological depth of the narrative. Through these angles, the meaning loaded onto the scene diversifies, and the position, power, or emotional state of the characters is indirectly conveyed to the viewer. Therefore, camera angles contribute significantly to the narrative language not only aesthetically but also in terms of meaning and emotional intensity (Güngör, 2014).

3. Methodology

This study analyses David Lynch's 1986 film *Blue Velvet* within the framework of cinematographic narrative elements. In David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*, selected as the sample, elements such as camera usage, lighting design, composition, and editing are examined as fundamental elements supporting the narrative's ambiguous and multi-layered structure. The aim of the study is to deconstruct the narrative of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*. To achieve this aim, camera movements, composition, lighting, editing, and sound themes identified within the framework of descriptive analysis were examined in detail.

Descriptive analysis is a method of examination that aims to systematically observe and detail a work of art, film, or any text. Adopting an objective approach, descriptive analysis method systematically presents all visual, auditory, structural, and content-related features of the work. The elements within the work are first described, then classified to reveal their fundamental characteristics. Thus, the data obtained within the scope of the study is both organized and summarized in a manner appropriate to the purpose of the research. Descriptive analysis provides the researcher with the opportunity to conduct the analysis on a clear, understandable and systematic basis (Öztürk, 2024). In this analysis process, the scenes in the film were observed and evaluated in detail. During the research process, a review of the relevant literature was conducted to establish the theoretical

framework of the study and support the analysis of the film. In this study, narrative analysis of the film was examined using the descriptive analysis method within the framework of camera movements, composition, lighting, editing, and sound themes. The data obtained under these headings has been summarised and interpreted. Descriptive analysis assists in the interpretation of the film's narrative and the systematic explanation of the findings, in accordance with the subject and purpose of the research. This method contributes to the interpretation of the film's narrative by enabling a detailed examination of the visual, auditory and content-related features of the film. Scenes in which lighting, color, camera movement, and framing are particularly prominent have been selected. Such scenes most clearly illustrate Lynch's visual narrative strategy.

4. Findings

Analysis of the Film Blue Velvet

Blue Velvet centers on young Jeffrey Beaumont, who, after stumbling upon a severed ear in an empty field, is forced to confront the reality that his seemingly innocent town is not as pure as it appears. Jeffrey's curiosity draws him towards Dorothy Vallens, a performer at a nightclub, and Frank Booth, the dangerous criminal at the centre of the dark relationships surrounding her. The film uses its cinematic narrative to reveal that an American town, which appears peaceful and safe from the outside, harbours a structure woven with violence, obsession and crime beneath the surface.

Camera Movements

Jeffrey Beaumont, who has been away from home for some time, returns upon learning of his father's heart attack and discovers a severed ear near his house. When the police show little interest in the case, Jeffrey takes it upon himself to investigate, finding himself entangled in a complex series of events.

In David Lynch's Blue Velvet (1986), the camera's perspective serves to reveal the unusual and dark realities hidden beneath the surface of normality. In the film's opening sequence, a pan reveals white picket fences, colourful flowers and a clear sky to the viewer. However, immediately after this peaceful frame, the camera moves down towards the grass, revealing the insect life beneath the soil and hinting at the thematic depth of the story. This visual transition points to the presence of suppressed, primal urges and a chaotic structure beneath the surface normality of Lynch's narrative universe. Through this contrast, the director uses visual narrative tools to make visible the conflicts woven with violence, deviance, and desire behind the images on a thematic level. The slow camera movements used in the film compel the viewer to look beneath the surface. The downward-moving camera in the opening scene reveals not only physical depth but also the hidden layers of the economic structure. This technique suggests that the apparent stability of the economy of that era was, in fact, a fragile structure (Harvey, 2005).

In Blue Velvet, the camera occasionally employs a subjective viewpoint, enabling the viewer to participate directly in the character's experience. Particularly

in the scene where Jeffrey (Kyle MacLachlan) secretly enters Dorothy's flat, the camera adopts the character's perspective, drawing the viewer directly into the narrative. This subjective camera technique not only heightens the tension but also erodes the viewer's ethical distance, compelling them to identify with the character's decisions and actions. Thus, the viewer transcends the role of an external observer and becomes immersed in the story. In Lynch's aesthetic, the "gaze" is not merely a visual technique but also an ethical and psychological issue. Jeffrey's secret surveillance of Dorothy draws the viewer into the role of a voyeur. McGowan notes that at this point, Lynch removes the viewer from the position of a passive observer and places them within the realm of desire (McGowan, 2007). The viewer transforms into a subject who not only observes but also desires and feels discomfort from that desire.



Figure 1: Subjective camera usage

Low-angle shots, frequently employed throughout the film, are particularly prominent in scenes focusing on the character of Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper). Through these angles, the camera frames Frank from ground level upwards, creating in the viewer both a sense of his powerful presence and a threatening atmosphere. The use of low angles reinforces the character's dominance and uncontrollable nature on stage on a visual level, emphasising his psychological dominance and potential for violence, thereby creating a conscious sense of unease in the viewer. This type of framing choice goes beyond representing power relations in the narrative, formally determining the distance the viewer establishes with the character. In classical cinematic language, low-angle shots typically serve as a tool to emphasize a character's superiority, authority, and dominance. In contrast, David Lynch transforms this established visual code, turning the low-angle shot into a multi-layered narrative element that generates uncertainty, threat, and psychological tension (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013). This approach demonstrates that Lynch's aesthetic sensibility establishes an alternative visual language that, rather than reproducing established representational patterns in cinema,

deconstructs them to create a sense of unease and alienation in the viewer (Nochimson, 2003).



Figure 2: Use of the lower angle.

In scenes where Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan) becomes vulnerable or powerless in the face of events, high-angle shots are used to visually emphasise the character's situational weakness. When the camera is positioned above the character, his physical and psychological loss of control is conveyed to the viewer in a more striking manner. David Lynch uses such framing specifically to reinforce the character's passive or threatened position, thereby increasing the viewer's level of identification and encouraging emotional involvement. High-angle shots function as an effective cinematographic tool in conveying the power dynamics within the narrative. High-angle shots not only portray characters as powerless figures in David Lynch's films but also play a functional role in transforming them into subjects who have lost their inner integrity and are psychologically fragmented (McGowan, 2007).

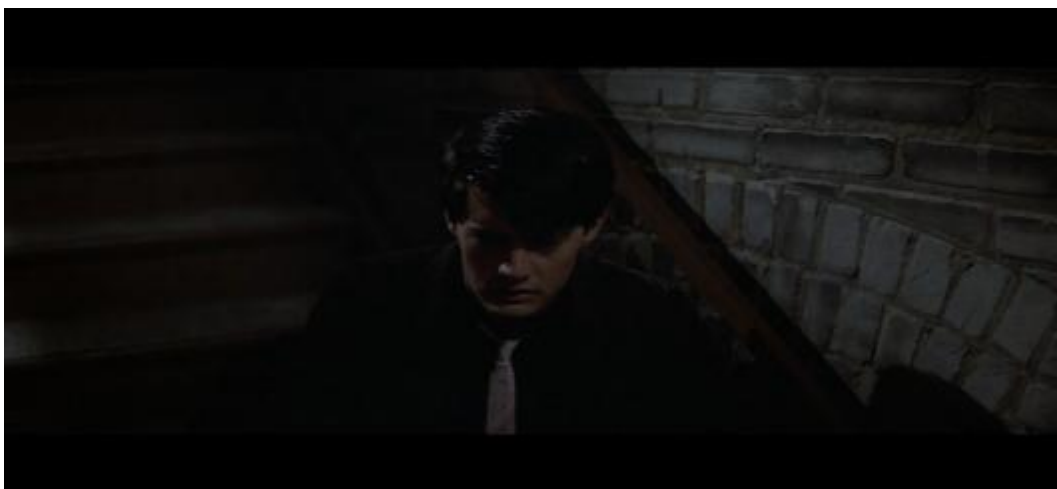


Figure 3: Use of the top angle.

The film *Blue Velvet* stands out for its intense and functional use of close-up shots. In particular, the detailed shot featuring the severed ear in the opening sequence directly confronts the viewer with visually disturbing elements. Such scenes demonstrate Lynch's deliberate aesthetic choice to create unease and discomfort. Close-ups not only create visual tension but also directly convey the characters' psychological breakdowns and emotional unravelling to the audience, making the narrative's internal dimensions visible. This cinematographic strategy also allows for the establishment of an emotional and cognitive closeness between the audience and the characters. Additionally, the severed ear placed at the center of the frame symbolizes the breakdown of the economic order. These objects represent violence and fragmentation lurking beneath the flawless surface of the suburban economy.



Figure 4: Close-up shot.



Figure 5: Close-up shot of the face.

In *Blue Velvet*, the fixed camera angles favoured in certain scenes present a static and orderly visual composition on the surface, while simultaneously nurturing an underlying atmosphere of menace within this static structure. This formal stillness represents a visual reference to the monotony and normality of life. However, the small and seemingly insignificant movements within the frame point to a dark and disturbing reality hidden behind normality. Such camera arrangements used in the film serve both as aesthetic choices and as important structural tools that reveal the psychological and thematic layers of the narrative. The camera angles and framing choices used unsettle the viewer, drawing them into the heart of the tension. In David Lynch's films, details and close-ups detach everyday objects from their familiar contexts, repositioning them with new and often unsettling connotations. In *Blue Velvet*, the presentation of the severed ear through a close-up confronts the viewer directly with an unsettling reality. This object serves as a symbolic threshold opening onto the film's dark and repressed world (Nochimson, 2003).

Composition

The film *Blue Velvet* begins with an image of red roses, white fences and a clear blue sky. This idealized visual composition is soon replaced by a disturbing and grotesque setting. This narrative transition is constructed not only at the level of content but also through visual composition. Characters are mostly placed at the center of the frame, emphasizing their spatial and social relationship with their surroundings. This positioning and visual balance is deliberately disrupted, particularly in scenes featuring the character Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper). In these scenes, the balance is disrupted, pushing the character to the edge of the frame and evoking a disturbing sense of spatial unease in the viewer. This composition also serves to heighten narrative tension.



Figure 6: Use of unbalanced composition.

David Lynch effectively utilizes visual depth by creating a multi-layered structure in his scene compositions. The foreground, middle ground, and background elements are significant not only in terms of spatial arrangement but

also in terms of narrative meaning production. By consciously arranging these planes, the director dramatizes the characters' relationships with their physical environment and with each other on a visual level. The use of foreground and background draws attention to the power balance and emotional distance between the characters. This spatial distinction shapes the visual composition, directing the viewer's perception and deepening the psychological dimension of the narrative.



Figure 7: Use of foreground/background.

In his films, locations function as visual representations of the characters' inner worlds. In this context, Dorothy's flat in *Blue Velvet*, with its narrow corridors, limited field of vision and pronounced light-shadow contrasts, presents a claustrophobic atmosphere that reflects the character's psychological confinement and inner conflicts. Lynch constructs the setting not as a passive background element but as an active component of the narrative, almost like a character. The composition within the frame is designed to imbue the setting with narrative meaning, supporting the dramatic content. The composition in the film is used not only to capture aesthetics but also to reinforce the thematic depth of the narrative.



Figure 8: Use of light and shadow.

David Lynch aims to focus the viewer's attention on specific characters or narrative focal points by utilizing classic framing techniques such as framing within a frame, the rule of thirds, and triangular forms when composing his visuals. These formal strategies direct the viewer's gaze and lend the scene an aesthetic unity. The application of the rule of thirds contributes to visual balance, while framing meaningfully structures the characters' relationship with their surroundings. The preference for triangular forms functions as a visual organizational tool that supports both the structural stability and narrative dynamics of the composition. Lynch's methods enable scenes to be not only visually organized but also reinforce the emotional intensity of the narrative and the psychological depth of the characters.



Figure 9: Using frames within frames.



Figure 10: The rule of thirds.



Figure 11: Use of the triangular form.

Lynch's symmetrical framing and orderly compositions also reflect the structure of suburban life, which is built on control and order. The aligned structure of the houses and the flawless order of the gardens serve as a visual embodiment of the Reagan-era ideology of property ownership. These frames also imply that economic stability is presented as an illusion. The areas pushed outside the frame, meanwhile, represent the classes excluded by the economic system (Jackson, 1985). In David Lynch's approach to cinematic composition, while symmetrical and orderly frames are frequently employed, this order often serves to create a sense of temporary balance rather than to produce a stable meaning. While this aesthetic structure presents a harmonious and controlled visual order on the surface, it is deliberately dismantled as the narrative progresses, giving way to a fragmented and unsettling visual atmosphere. The idealized suburban imagery presented in the opening sequence of *Blue Velvet* creates the impression of a regular and flawless living space through its balanced compositional structure. However, this visual integrity breaks down as the narrative unfolds, giving way to an increasingly darker and chaotic aesthetic structure (Nochimson, 2003). Additionally, Lynch employs the "frame within frame" technique by positioning characters primarily through architectural frames, doors, windows, and corridors. This compositional strategy emphasizes that the characters are physically confined to a limited space while simultaneously creating a sense of psychological entrapment and confinement (Rodley, 2005).

Lighting

Cinema, the art of conveying a story through visual language, utilizes unique cinematographic tools to construct meaning production and narrative structure. Among these tools, the use of light is of central importance due to its aesthetic and narrative function (Avlar, 2025). The blue tones used in *Blue Velvet* stand out as a visual element representing both the emotional turmoil of the characters and the mysterious and threatening atmosphere that prevails throughout the film. Blue lighting and shadows point to the characters' repressed desires and internal conflicts. These colour choices are used not only as an aesthetic element but also as

a meaning-producing tool that supports the psychological depth layer. The light-shadow arrangement is designed to make the spiritual dimensions of the narrative visible.



Figure 12: Cameo lighting.

Cameo lighting technique stands out as an aesthetic method frequently used to increase dramatic intensity in visual storytelling. In this technique, the primary focus is directed onto the main figure or object on stage, while the surrounding details are deliberately left in darkness. Thus, the viewer's attention is directed solely to the central element of the narrative, and the effect of distracting elements in the visual composition is minimized (Ankaraligil, 2016). This form of lighting is used as an effective narrative tool, particularly in scenes that seek to reflect the character's psychological state in an isolated manner. In *Blue Velvet*, night scenes are fundamental narrative spaces that reveal the film's dark structure hidden beneath its surface pastoral tranquility. The frequent partial illumination of characters' faces, in addition to being an aesthetic choice, symbolizes their internal conflicts and ethical ambiguities. Particularly in the scenes where Jeffrey secretly enters Dorothy's flat, the use of low-key lighting and the dark areas created with minimal visual direction create a conscious sense of disorientation and tension in the viewer. Sudden transitions between light and dark create not only a spatial but also a mental sense of imbalance, visually supporting the dilemmas the character faces.



Figure 13: Silhouette lighting.

Silhouette lighting creates a dramatic contrast between light and dark, adding depth to the subject, with the object within the frame remaining as a silhouette (Vardar, 2014). Silhouette lighting was achieved by illuminating the subject with a light in front of the camera, creating a contrast between light and dark. In the scene composition, a harsh light source from the background was effectively used to increase spatial depth and create a visual distinction between the figure and the ground. This type of lighting created a dramatic atmosphere on stage by providing a high-contrast image. The application of backlighting alone has made the character's silhouette more distinct, concealing the figure's details but emphasizing its contours. This has both reinforced the sense of mystery in the narrative and produced an aesthetically striking and meaningful visual composition.



Figure 14: Use of backlighting.

David Lynch's use of lighting transcends the mere function of illuminating scenes, evolving into a deliberate aesthetic choice that emphasises the fictional nature of the narrative. The director often employs artificial light sources clearly visible within the scene table lamps, streetlamps, projectors to make it apparent that

lighting is not a 'natural' element but a constructed, fictional one. The lamps positioned between the two characters serve as background lighting, significantly enhancing the perception of depth in the scene. This lighting arrangement contributes to the creation of a three-dimensional perspective in the visual composition by partially separating the character from their spatial context. Thus, it both directs the viewer's attention to the character and allows for a clearer perception of the spatial organization within the scene and a sense of balance within the frame. This type of lighting strategy enriches the visual volume and intensifies the dramatic effect of the scene, deepening the emotional tone of the narrative.

The saturated colors used in the film's opening sequence (particularly the vibrant red roses and the bright blue sky) represent the idealized visual codes of suburban prosperity during the Reagan era. High-key lighting creates a sense of a safe and sterile living space. This aesthetic choice reflects the bright face of consumer culture. However, as the camera descends below ground, the light dims and darker tones take over. This transition symbolizes the invisible labor and inequalities underlying economic prosperity (Nochimson, 2003). Furthermore, the sharp contrast between the film's bright suburban scenes and its dark interiors represents two distinct economic systems. On one hand, there is the orderly, consumption-driven suburban economy; on the other, the economy of violence and crime embodied by the character Frank Booth. Scenes employing low-key lighting emphasize the invisibility and threatening nature of the underground economy (Wood, 2003).

Narrative and Sound

The film begins in accordance with the classical narrative structure. The story takes shape with the return of the main character, Jeffrey, home after his father is taken to hospital, and the plot thickens with the discovery of a piece of ear. Although this introduction initially evokes a Hitchcockian suspense structure, as the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that the conventional linear structure of the timeline is deliberately stretched. Using cross-cutting, the director creates a transition between Jeffrey's comfortable suburban life and Dorothy Vallens' inner world, surrounded by violence and trauma. This editing choice goes beyond showing the simultaneous existence of two different realities, revealing two levels of existence that seep into each other, even corrupting each other. Furthermore, the duration of the cuts between scenes is noticeably longer than the classic Hollywood norm. This usage slows down the rhythm of the narrative, turning the viewer not only into a witness to the events but also into a mental commentator. The silences and rhythmic pauses in the film actively involve the viewer in the production of the narrative rather than assigning them a passive role.

From the development section of the film onwards, the plane of reality experienced by Jeffrey undergoes a transformation with Dorothy's inclusion in his life. This transformation manifests itself both at the narrative level and in the rhythm of the fictional structure. After this stage, the narrative progresses at a pace that reflects a mental collapse. Instead of dynamic editing techniques such as jump cuts, scene transitions are deliberately slowed down and often structured with a surrealist aesthetic. Particularly in scenes featuring the character Frank Booth, these

transitions transport the viewer to a subconscious plane. Frank's first appearance is constructed not so much to serve the logical and chronological flow of events narratively, but rather as an ontological moment marking the beginning of a nightmare. From this moment on, time is treated in a more subjective and distorted manner, proportional to the character's mental disintegration. Thus, the narrative renders visible not only what is happening in the external world but also the character's internal fractures through the temporal structure.

There is a striking formal symmetry between the beginning and end of the film. The opening scene presents an image of pastoral tranquility, accompanied by white fences, red roses and quiet suburban landscapes. A similar visual composition is presented to the viewer again at the film's conclusion. However, rather than producing a sense of closure in the classical narrative sense, this visual cycle demonstrates that the film's cyclical structure shows that the traumatic has not been resolved over time but merely suppressed beneath the surface. This narrative strategy shows that the narrative is based not on a linear development and conclusion, but on a repetitive psychological cycle. The mechanical bird scene in the finale carries particular significance in this context. Representing a simulated normalization rather than genuine peace, this scene suggests that the return of the repressed is merely postponed, creating a cyclical narrative that offers the viewer a false sense of order.

In the film *Blue Velvet*, sound functions both as a supporting element of the visual narrative and as a decisive element in the construction of the dramatic structure over time. The sound element in the film is approached on two levels: diegetic sounds within the narrative and non-diegetic atmospheric sound design outside the narrative. This sound organization in the film is designed to provide the viewer with not only a physical but also psychological and emotional experience. The deep, rumbling background sounds heard in scenes involving the character Frank Booth create a soundscape that reflects the character's violent tendencies and unstable mental state. These sounds dramatize the character's mental state while also creating a constant sense of threat in the scene.

5. Conclusion

David Lynch's film *Blue Velvet* is a prime example of how cinematic elements can be brought together in a cohesive manner to create a unique narrative language. In the film, camera movements serve to reveal the violence and corruption hidden behind the seemingly ordinary suburban life, while sound design plays a central role in constructing the atmosphere and reflecting the inner worlds of the characters. Composition and framing choices can also be evaluated as narrative strategies that structure the thematic depth of the narrative from a visual aesthetic perspective. The narrative tools Lynch employs in this film transcend the classical narrative structure, creating a stylized and original expressive space in film aesthetics.

The compositional arrangements used in *Blue Velvet* become a functional narrative device that supports the thematic depth of the story. The deliberate

disruption of symmetry within the frame, the creation of layers of meaning by matching colors to the emotional states of the characters, and the construction of spatial-psychological tensions using depth of field clearly reveal Lynch's strategy of directing the viewer towards a visual unconscious experience. *Blue Velvet* is a striking example of visual composition merging with narrative and demonstrating cinema's potential to bring together the aesthetic and the intellectual.

David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* film constructs the use of light not merely as an aesthetic element, but as a thematic tool integrated into the formal structure of the narrative. Throughout the film, light not only sets the scene's atmosphere but also visually represents the dualities at the heart of the narrative (light/darkness, innocence/deviant behavior, surface/depth). Lynch's lighting strategies are particularly evident in the contrast between the idealized daytime images of suburban life and the shadow-filled night scenes of the underworld. In this context, light becomes an internal representation that reveals the psychological fragility of the characters, while also metaphorically expressing the suppressed, unseen aspects of society. Therefore, the lighting in *Blue Velvet* should be considered a functional cinematographic element that reveals the ideological and emotional layers of the narrative.

The camera angles chosen in David Lynch's film *Blue Velvet* go beyond purely aesthetic considerations, emerging as narrative tools that support the structural integrity of the story, reveal the inner worlds of the characters, and transform the viewer's perceptual position. Through these visual strategies, Lynch exposes the repressed violence, sexuality, and psychological turmoil hidden beneath the surface of suburban life, which appears ordinary and peaceful. In this context, the camera does not merely function as a passive observer recording the external world; it also becomes an active subject within the fictional universe of the narrative, directing the viewer's gaze and placing them at the center of ethical, psychological, and aesthetic issues. In David Lynch's cinema, composition, camera angles, and lighting function not as independent technical elements, but as complementary components of a holistic aesthetic system. Composition structures the sense of tension and imbalance within the narrative; camera angles redefine the subject's position within the spatial and narrative framework, transforming this position from a fixed one into a constantly shifting field of perception. Lighting, in turn, intensifies this visual fabric atmospherically and emotionally, reinforcing the narrative's psychological depth. Through this holistic approach, Lynch redefines cinema not merely as a narrative form based on the transmission of events, but as an aesthetic experiential space that transforms and reconfigures the viewer's perception.

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