

STUDENT: KW

ASSIGNMENT: FILM RESPONSE 2

Film Response 2: *Never Weaken & Romance of a Fruit Peddler*

When introduced to the films we watched Monday, *Romance of a Fruit Peddler* and *Never Weaken*, I was familiar with one of the actors, which was Buster Keaton. Watching early silent film for me is a bit conflicting. On one end body language and action can tell more a story sometimes than dialogue, but being from a generation of dialogue, this can tend to not interest me. However with both films, there were many great moments of descriptive storytelling to keep my interest. For example, *Romance* tells the story of a Chinese fruit stand seller who tries to woo the doctor's daughter. He goes to an extreme to get her to marry him by hurting others to bring the doctor some patients to make money. Slapstick being obvious, I'm sure in 1921 this came off as cruel, but in 2014, it is simply silly and farfetched. In *Never Weaken*, it has similar but a different storyline from *Romance* where Buster Keaton almost dies himself trying to save his girlfriend's job. *Never Weaken* has a chivalrous tone where *Romance* has a devious tone, but nonetheless both stories being silent, it is very descriptive for the viewer to follow. Finally, the most obvious thing I noticed was the quality of film and its preservation. *Romance* has been preserved poorly where *Never Weaken* is in impeccable condition for reasons that have to do with Keaton, which makes watching *Never Weaken* easier to watch and enjoy for generations to come.

Comments: I'm giving this response a 2 for a couple of reasons:

First, it's pretty vague. You mention a couple of times that things are "obvious," which is something I want you to try to avoid doing going forward. If something is obvious to you, it might not be obvious to me, so instead of saying it's obvious and moving forward, take some time to describe what comes of as so obvious to you. Give me specifics.

Second, connected to the first, some of your sentence structures are a little off. For example, I don't really know what you mean in this sentence: "Slapstick being obvious, I'm sure in 1921 this came off as cruel, but in 2014, it is simply silly and farfetched." That sentence is confusing because the different parts separated by commas don't actually relate to each other. You're saying that because slapstick is obvious, you're sure it seemed cruel in 1921 but just silly and farfetched in 2014. Some questions that can help tease out the issues with the sentence: what is obvious about slapstick? How is its obviousness related to how audiences view it? Why would people in the 20s find it cruel but people today find it humorous? That statement implies that a lot of movies we call "silent comedies" today were seen as cruel at first, but are now being understood by people as comedies. Do you see how that's a bit condescending to people of the past? I'm not saying that's what you were stating, but I'm going a bit in depth on that sentence to illustrate the importance of sentence structure.

The main point being that sentences like that really zap all the strength from your writing. And I'm really far more interested in getting your writing stronger overall, so there can - hopefully - be benefits across all your classes.

One final note, the film starred Harold Lloyd, not his contemporary, Buster Keaton.

nice work. And as I mentioned in class, I hope you don't take these comments personally. They are aimed at the writing, not at the person. :)

STUDENT: KW

ASSIGNMENT: FILM RESPONSE 3

When introduced to the films we watched Monday, *Romance of a Fruit Peddler* and *Never Weaken*, I was familiar with one of the actors, which was Buster Keaton. Watching early silent film for me is a bit conflicting. On one end body language and action can tell more a story sometimes than dialogue, but being from a generation of dialogue, this can tend to not interest me. However with both films, there were many great moments of descriptive storytelling to keep my interest. For example, *Romance* tells the story of a Chinese fruit stand seller who tries to woo the doctor's daughter. He goes to an extreme to get her to marry him by hurting others to bring the doctor some patients to make money. Slapstick being obvious, I'm sure in 1921 this came off as cruel, but in 2014, it is simply silly and farfetched. In *Never Weaken*, it has similar but a different storyline from *Romance* where Buster Keaton almost dies himself trying to save his girlfriend's job. *Never Weaken* has a chivalrous tone where *Romance* has a devious tone, but nonetheless both stories being silent, it is very descriptive for the viewer to follow. Finally, the most obvious thing I noticed was the quality of film and its preservation. *Romance* has been preserved poorly where *Never Weaken* is in impeccable condition for reasons that have to do with Keaton, which makes watching *Never Weaken* easier to watch and enjoy for generations to come.

Comments: I think I see 2 major observations you keep going back to throughout this response. The first is how the film makes us feel sympathy for the protagonist. The second has to do with similarities between Chinese and Hollywood films. They're both really great ideas to develop, but I think they keep getting entangled throughout the response. You keep going back and forth between them and connecting them together within the same sentence. The two ideas could use two separate paragraphs devoted to each of them.

I think you should consider trying to do that as a writing exercise: Re-write

your ideas in this response as two separate paragraphs. One devoted to how the film makes us sympathize with her, and the other on similarities between Hollywood and Chinese storytelling. And watch out for those commas!

I'm giving this one a 2. But if you try the exercise above and think that it comes out better that way, email it to me, I'll change it to a 3.

good work

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ASSIGNMENT: FILM RESPONSE 5

Film Response 5: Drunken Master II

Watching this film of a Jackie Chan classic I thought of a couple of things. One was how much I have appreciated the movements and martial arts training of Jackie Chan. That was until I was told by our professor he was not trained in martial arts but Chinese opera movements called four skills and five methods. Four skills apply to vocal and dramatic training and five methods apply to body parts exclusively. I did not know this about Jackie Chan and for me he lost a little of that aura of his awesome skills on screen, however when reflecting back on *Drunken Master II*, I became more appreciative of the movements, frenetic pace, and editing these moves take to pull together. The final scene with Fei Hung, Henry, and John watching the hand and foot movements I counted at least thirty editing cuts from those scenes which is mind blowing (I probably missed at least ten more). What makes this even more amazing is Jackie Chan and his team are doing these stunts without sometimes a net or protection. This creates that proper element of danger for the audience to enjoy the action. The second thought was realizing Jackie Chan is very hilarious. His drunken master movements throughout the film, his campy deviousness in the beginning train scene were Chaplain-esque and goes back to his opera roots of four skills and five methods. So I ask this question, Jackie Chan may not have been the first to create martial arts comedy, but did he influence the modern films of comedy today such as Kung Fu Hustle and Kung Fu Panda? Overall, I can say that even though I felt that disappointment about Jackie Chan this film was not only funny but unintentionally funny for the film's attempt to have proper English subtitles to Fei Hung's mother being the Jerry Lewis to Dr. Wong's Dean

Martin. I can say even though it is not a favorite of mine from Jackie Chan (my favorite is Twin Dragons), I would watch it again if it was on TV on a Sunday afternoon.

Comments: This is a big improvement! Your ideas are carried through much more clearly and logically. I still think splitting them into paragraphs would be even more helpful so you can more visually see where your different ideas are. For example, when you start with "the second though was..." is the perfect place to start a new paragraph because you're starting a new idea.

good work.

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STUDENT: KW

ASSIGNMENT: FILM RESPONSE 6

Film Response 6: *In the Heat of the Sun*

In the Heat of the Sun (1994) have a few complications that I thoroughly enjoyed. The film has a blurring effect of what is authentic and what is artificial. The narrator, Ma Xiaojun is constantly telling stories of events that have happened only to tell the viewer it did not really happen. For example, this happens with a couple of scenes. The first is with the table scene with Mi Lan and Liu Yiku. Xiaojun and Mi Lan are enjoying birthdays with friends and Xiaojun's jealousy reaches a breaking point to the point of stabbing Yiku. However, Xiaojun finally tells the audience this scene did not happen only wishing it did happen. So the audience is constantly questioning the authenticity of his stories or maybe his hurt showing through his passive aggressive behavior. Another scene is the swimming scene where the scene has reality but did not happen. The scene of him swimming and being prevented from coming out of the water I pondered, "Is this the narrator's way of saying drowning is an oppressive way of looking at that period of China's Cultural Revolution?" After the scene ends, it goes to modern day China and shows the guys he grew up with in a limo celebrating and enjoying each other. So the question begs, "Did he really not want to recollect the real thoughts of what happened or is the film itself a collection of stories of fabrication that the audience would enjoy to watch?" I would love to watch this again to ponder the answer.

When talking about the film after with our guest speaker Jing Zhang, she brought a theme that I analyzed but did not say. She speaks about the overexposure of lighting in the film with sun as the theme in a majority of the scenes. I was thinking she brought this to our attention as a way of showing oppression with Mao being the sun and also having brighter thoughts of a period of dealing with that oppression. She brought that thought as open ended perspective which I

enjoyed. The other thought I consider was this film is a feeling of a psychedelic trip with the narrator. He says even in the prologue, "Change has wiped out my memories. I can't tell what's imagined from what's real." He speaks about this from a point of view rooted in a real time period which makes the film hold my interest. American films that are similar but are more fantasy driven that does this are Inception (2010) and Alice in Wonderland (1951). Overall, I loved this film because I love films that have many analytical meanings and make me watch again to catch aspects that I initially miss. I would watch this film again to answer some of my questions, the questions Jing asked, and because the film is so damn good.

Comments: Nice work! Your ideas are flowing very clearly in this response. On a purely writing level, this is a big improvement from your previous responses. Nice points too!

The only thing I would add is that I think it's ok to not have all the answers some times. Ambiguity is not such a bad thing...

STUDENT: KW

ASSIGNMENT: FILM RESPONSE 7

To Live

The film *To Live* by Zhang Yimou has many fights that the viewer can speak or write about. I will write about the fight on the family front and Yimou's view of the Cultural Revolution from Xu's point of view. The film does a great job of intertwining how a lifetime of struggle and pain can make a family stronger. The film shows Xu gambling his money away and Jiazhen, pregnant and with a young daughter, would rather leave than continue to be unhappy with Xu's gambling problem. Also showing as time goes by when he returns from the war, he has matured enough to fight for his family again but now his daughter is mute. I love how Yimou throughout the film has Jiazhen be the constant strength throughout the film to hold the family together. From the loss of Youqing at a young age, to the refusal of seeing his dead body, to the death later of Fengxia later in the film, Jiazhen I believe was the glue to keeping the family from falling apart and I believe Yimou uses this very well to move this story forward.

The other fight that Yimou highlights is how the Cultural Revolution fucked his family. From Xu having to burn his puppets, Youqing working like a grown up at a young age to the death of Fengxia from a ridiculous doctrine of doctors being overeducated, I see why this film was banned in China. The viewer could surmise that if these practices were carried out during that time, the PRC looks like inhumane pricks. Yimou shows in the film hints of remorse and anger. Example was when the death of Youqing by the District Chief and his attempts to pay the family, Jiazhen tells him he owes her a life. This shows a human aspect of how death has many emotions and everyone is not composed dealing with it. Later when the District Chief's wife commits suicide, Jiazhen still states he owes her a life. Overall, I would say this film is the type of films I love and ultimately the ones I want to make.

Comments: Very nice. I think your writing has improved dramatically since the first responses. Your ideas are presented clearly and flow logically. You keep each paragraph focused on a specific idea that's clearly set up by the topic sentence. great work

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STUDENT: KW

ASSIGNMENT: FILM RESPONSE 10

Film Response 10: *Still Life*

The film tells a story of journey and another story of pain, but *Still Life* when initially watching I thought was a documentary. The film does not have "name" actors which is the calling of Sixth Generation directors of China, hence the the documentary- like feel of the film but with fantasy-like effects. The story globally has relatable content and metaphorical about a man who is looking for his wife during a deconstruction and a woman dealing with a cheating husband during deconstruction. Let us start with the husband looking for his wife over a long period of time and working and waiting to find information on his wife and daughter. One could loosely (very loosely) compare this to Homer's *The Odyssey* with Odysseus trying to get back to his and son through a difficult journey back home. The director Zhangke does a great job a journey of showing pain of Sanming trying to reconnect with his family and it fuels him. Sanming's fuel of finding his family along with the director showing the town and what "progress" has done to his old neighborhood just like the progress in *Meishi Street* did to the Beijing Olympics makes the story dramatic and progressive for the people in China that have to deal with these issues. What I enjoyed is that the director showed the last third of the film without it having a happy ending. Even when Sanming found his wife and daughter, they were indebted to someone and we do not know what happens after because of the film's abrupt end with someone walking the tightrope. I also wondered was that final scene metaphorical for something? Maybe, who knows. Does it matter?

The story in the middle of a wife looking for her husband who left to create a successful business. When she finds out he was having an affair during this period, the parallels of

crumbling marriage and Fengjie going through its deconstruction. She says something at the end that is metaphorical and honest to use with progress when her husband tries to chase after her after she says she loves someone else and he says who and she says, "Does it matter?" Again no happy ending just more questions. This feels the same as destruction of Fengjie and the process of the city being gone for progress and a person from the city asks why and the mayor gives that same answer. It does not matter to the nurse or the government officials it just gone for "progress" sake. The director wants to evoke emotion of seeing a city being taken apart and allowing the audience to ask questions and formulate their own opinions similar to *Meishi Street*. The scene where he looking at used to be a home and goes it sails off like a spaceship is to get the audience to see that all progress sometimes is not for the best for all parties involved and the film asks more questions than it has answers.

Comments: nice work

STUDENT: KW

ASSIGNMENT: FINAL META RESPONSE

Entangled was the theme of my beginning writing responses, so my journey was to untangle those responses. So the early responses were an entangled door of constant mess because of understanding of what culture I am embarking on. The first response of *Shadow Magic* and other responses after *Shadow Magic* I believe were a reflection of that. My natural response to the films were to compare what I saw on the screen to what I am used to watching from an American perspective. I said in the first response about Raymond wanting to understand Chinese culture instead of always having an imperialist attitude is my revolving thoughts of the culture. I will look into how some of my writing weakness evolved into clarifying and expounding my thoughts until my last response.

After *Shadow Magic* response, I looked at the responses of the next three responses of films and thought about how the ideas were presented and it was indicative of my mouth saying the thought but not clarifying the thought properly on paper. The *Romance* response was my first blank I shot because of overthinking the response and also not separating the thoughts of both films similarities and differences. The *Goddess* also has issues of entanglement of a good description, but were entangled in one paragraph. Those issues stopped after *Red* because of finally speaking to Professor Reazie and then looking at the critiques to improve on those ideas. *Drunken Master* starts the process of still untangling my thoughts into more than one paragraph.

When the class started to go into more modern films, those first responses still were to try to compare these films to American films, but when I started to write *Heat*, that was beginning of comparing Chinese films to the previous films we watched. I still used some Western films, but the events we learned in class started to permeate the responses and I wanted to create more rhetorical responses. When I wrote the response *To Live*, I saw the completeness in my writing

and less entanglement because of simple change of having a good topic sentence to set up the paragraphs. Sometimes I wrote the responses to show variety of different conflicts or thoughts I observed from different films. Entanglement happens briefly again to *Hero* response but the descriptive thoughts come back in my best response, which was *Meishi Street*. This response of *Meishi Street* comes from my thorough enjoyment of documentary films and the emotions the film evokes. My response to *Still Life* was as if I was watching a documentary inside of a drama it was my favorite time of my responses because of that documentary style and writing about these films felt free.

The final two responses were reflection of my writing, which was China's evolution as a whole country, even though the censorship is loosening it is still strong in some of the images and scenes in the final films we watched. Especially in *Inseparable*, we see this convergence of Western influence and censorship being blurred slightly with certain causes the main character confronts. My final response was the antithesis of this entanglement with the final film we watched. The final response showed not only the improvements of my earlier responses, but also an understanding of less is more and not always having to overthink every film.

Evaluating my previous responses from the semester made me realize that the more I write, the better my writing becomes. I enjoyed this type of assignments because the proper handling of the leadership by Professor Reazie was great. He was like a great racecar driving a difficult racetrack. He knew when to speed up (giving positive reinforcement), when to slow down (constructive criticism), and when to pit stop (no necessary overloading of information). This kind of assignments are like twelve to fourteen new papers and each thought feels fresh as compared to a long research paper that can sometimes feel redundant. The pro of these assignments was the feedback that was given was his way to expanding the thoughts that was

already written, the other positive was the critique had no grandstanding of ego. This means that he did not give a critique of what “he” would do, but ways to improve your writing for future endeavors. The only downside was when grading, it was a cut and dry 2 or 3. Maybe a 2.5 would not have been so bad sometimes. But I believe this made me proofread my papers also for proper context and making sure the content was in order.

In closing I can truly say I have taken many classes in film that require writing of all kinds, but I can say I loved the mixing of film and English my the Professor that made the learning in class enjoyable and someone I would highly recommend to take as a film major. I want say thank you for untangling my thoughts and bring clarity to my responses.

Comments: Trends and Changes: Good discussion here. I was confused at first when I saw the document titled "Entangled," but I really enjoyed the way you wrote about your writing in those terms.

Evaluation: Good discussion here. I'm glad you took my responses in those three different ways, which was definitely my intention. I'm torn about the idea of using half-points. I used it a couple of times the last time I taught the class, and it just made things way more complicated since I was then basically looking at twice as many performance categories. I think this section could have used a little more analysis of the learning objectives of the assignments themselves.

And thank you for your kind words!

Grammar: There are definitely still some grammatical and writing issues here, but it's such a huge improvement from your first responses that you should be really proud of yourself.

Good work. I know I put your writing through a lot this semester, but I'm glad you are able to see a change in it yourself. It was a pleasure having you in my class. Thank you for adding so much to our discussions and always bringing so much joy with you. Best of luck to you as you continue your studies!