Film Analysis

Analyzing a film allows the audience to delve deeper into the subject matter of the film and also the techniques that different films utilize. When analyzing films, there are various aspects that should be considered. The film *North by Northwest* is excellent for this process because of the many different elements that the film offers. The main points that were analyzed in this film include the meanings of the film, parts of the story that were not part of the plot, verisimilar consistencies, and the specific genre of the film.

The explicit meaning is the main summary of the film. The following is an explicit meaning of the film *North by Northwest*. In this film, an easy-going New York business man, Roger Thornhill, is mistaken for a government agent, George Kaplan. A group of spies go on a chase after Thornhill where along the way he meets Eve, a beautiful woman working with the spies yet also the CIA. Thornhill’s love for Eve motivates him to finally bring the spies to justice so that she won’t have to leave and they can be together. On the other hand, this film is also filled with implicit meanings. One implicit meaning that describes the entire film is that no one is ever as they seem. Another implicit meaning that fits this film is that love comes when you least expect.

This movie is also filled with parts of the story that are not part of the main plot. The first one that was noted was the fact that Mr. Thornhill was so concerned about not being able to make it to theatre after he is kidnapped. He complains to his kidnappers repeatedly that he has tickets to the Winter Garden Theatre. This fact is exaggerated yet it does not further the plot. Another example of the story but not the plot is that fact that Mr. Kaplan’s suit showed that he was short in stature. This piece of information is not valuable to the story line of this film seeing as how you find out later on that Mr. Kaplan does not even exist. Another example of the story goes along with the appearance of Mr. Kaplan. When Mr. Thornhill goes into his bathroom he notes that Mr. Kaplan has dandruff, which is not important to the plot. Later on in the same scene, Mr. Thornhill asks the maid what her name is and she replies that her name is Elsie. This is yet another example of the story but not the plot. Also, when Mr. Thornhill goes back to the Townsend home, Mrs. Townsend mentions that he must have borrowed Laura’s Mercedes. The fact the Mercedes belonged to a woman named Laura is not part of the plot of this film.

*North by Northwest* has many verisimilar consistencies that make the world of the movie believable to the viewer. This film was created in 1959 and there are many instances throughout the movie that create the sense of that of that year. One instance that creates the time period of this movie is when Mr. Thornhill wants to send a wire to his secretary during the beginning of the movie. For viewers past and present, this creates the time period for this film.
Also, the scene where Mr. Thornhill is driving drunk also helps with the believability of this film. First, the car that he is driving is a 1950’s model which sets the time period. Next, the driving is very realistic along with the scenery such as the other cars and rocks. Finally, his drunkenness is very believable to the viewer. All of the train scenes in this film also create verisimilar consistency. The style of the train fits the time period perfectly and the way the train shakes and makes noises makes it seem even more realistic.

When it comes down to the specific genre of *North by Northwest*, there are many different opinions about where this film fits. This film is unique because it is both a comedy and a drama. There are many comedic events in this film that gives the viewer a light hearted feeling about what is going on in the plot. The relationship with Mr. Thornill and his mother is an excellent example of the comedy in this film. Their dialogues are full of dry humor such as when his mother laughs during court when they say that Mr. Thornhill is a sensible man. On the other hand, this movie has many dramatic moments that can classify it as a drama. One of these scenes is when Mr. Thornhill and Mr. Townsend are speaking with each other and Mr. Townsend is killed unexpectedly. Another dramatic scene occurs towards the end of the film when Eve is hanging off of the edge of Mt. Rushmore. This scene, however, jump cuts to Eve and Mr. Thornhill leaving together on a train. A viewer might also place this movie as a romance. Many of Mr. Thornhill’s actions are motivated by his love for Eve, which creates the sense of romance in this film. The comedy in this film is much more related to that of *Dr. Strangelove* than it is to *Clerks*. The humor in this film is very dry and mature just as it is in *Dr. Strangelove*. On the other hand, the drama in *North by Northwest* is closer to the drama in *Memento* than it is to *Reservoir Dogs*. The reasoning for this is, is that this film is very suspenseful and somewhat mysterious as it is in *Memento*.

Overall, *North by Northwest* is a classic film that demonstrates many different elements of film making. Analyzing this film allows the viewer to have a much better understanding of not only the meaning of the film, but also the techniques that the film makers take advantage of to make this film more entertaining.