Film Analysis

Higher Media: Analysis

Core Skill

HOUR   MINUTE   SECOND

12.   42.   31.6

DATE   01. 03. 2009.

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Aims

To illustrate & apply basic critical methodology of film analysis:

- **Signs**: denotation, connotation, motivation

- **The shot**: distance, angle, movement; their motivations and connotations

- *Mise-en-scène*: analysis; lighting

- **Editing**: types of edit; types of editing

- **Sound**: types of sound; sound and image; music

- ***Bull's Eye Model*** of analysis

- **Narrative**: plot, story, diegesis; genre conventions & hybridisation; conflict, structure and resolution, codes

- Film as **construction** of *meaning*, *mood* and *representation*

Signs: *Connotation & Motivation*

Sign: any unit of meaning (graphic, aural, verbal)

Denotation: the description of a sign

Connotation: the meaning associated with a sign

Motivation: the reason a film element is included:

1. **Realism**
2. **Narrative**
3. **Intertextuality**
4. **Artistic**

A sign can **connote** **and/or** be **motivated**.

Bonus Round!

There are 12 films used to illustrate the following concepts…

How many can you name?

Extreme Long Shot (ELS)

▷ Shows location

▷ Often used as an initial establishing shot in a sequence

Long Shot (LS)

▷ Shows location/relationships

▷ Often used as an initial establishing shot in a sequence

The Shot: Camera Distance 1

Medium Long Shot (MLS)

▷ Shows location/relationships

▷ Often used as an initial establishing shot in a sequence

Medium Shot (MS)

▷ Waist up

▷ Focus on character(s)

The Shot: Camera Distance 2

Medium Close Up (MCU)

▷ Chest up

▷ Focus on character(s)

Close Up (CU)

▷ Head of person

▷ Conveys character's state of mind

▷ Involves spectator

The Shot: Camera Distance 3

Close Up (CU)

▷ Can be of objects

Extreme Close Up (ECU)

▷ Part of face

▷ Often used at climax of dramatic scene

The Shot: Camera Distance 4

The Shot: Camera Angle 1

9

10

Straight-on Angle

▷ Connotes equilibrium (normality) and makes spectator feel comfortable

Canted Angle

▷ Connotes disequilibrium (physical or mental) and produces sense of unease in spectator

The Shot: Camera Angle 1

High Angle

▷ Motivation can be point-of-view (POV) shot

▷ Can connote lack of power

Low Angle

▷ Motivation can be POV shot

▷ Can connote power

The Shot: Camera Angle 2

Pan: *(panorama)* camera swivels left or right on axis. Used for:

▷ Showing scene

▷ Following movement

▷ Show POV as head turns

▷ Guiding attention

The Shot: Camera Movement 1: Pan

Whip Pan: very rapid pan. Used for:

▷ Rapid head-turn POV

▷ Style

▷ Transitions from one scene to another (aka whip-pan transition)

The Shot: Camera Movement 2: Whip-Pan

Tilt: camera swivels up or down. Used for:

▷ Showing scene on different levels
▷ Following movement
▷ Show POV as head moves up/down
▷ Establishing shot e.g.

```
ext: tilt up high
building/CUT/ int:
room in building
```

The Shot: Camera Movement 3: Tilt

> **Track** (dolly): camera on wheels. Can track in/out, left/right, slow/fast.

> **Crane**: camera on crane so can move in/out, up/down space

> **Aerial** shot

The Shot: Camera Movement 4: Track, Crane, Aerial

Handheld: portable camera so get jiggling image. Used for:

▷ Realist documentary look
▷ Convey dynamism of action

The Shot: Camera Movement 5: Handheld & Steadicam

The Shot: Camera Movement 5: Handheld & Steadicam

GoodFellas
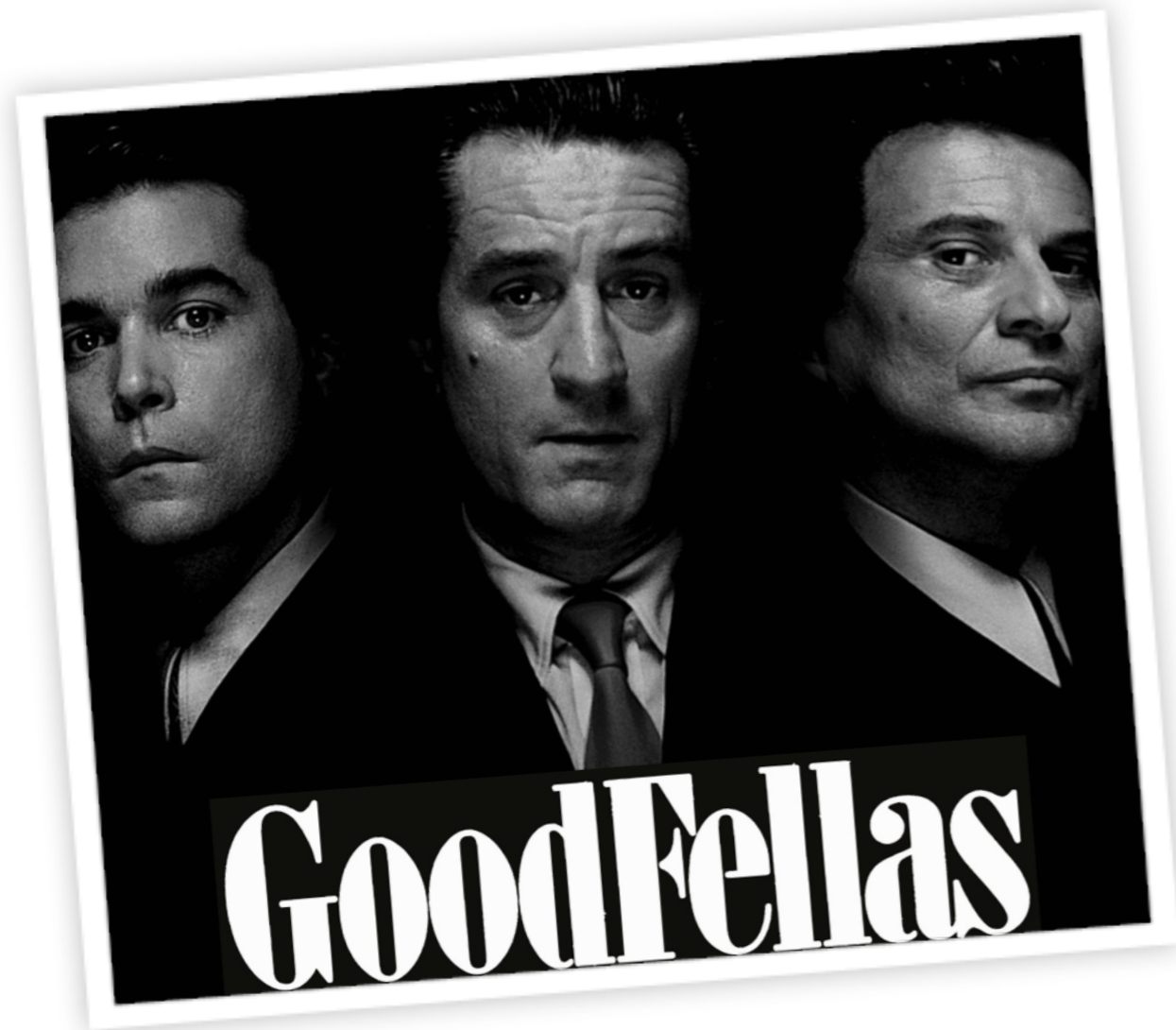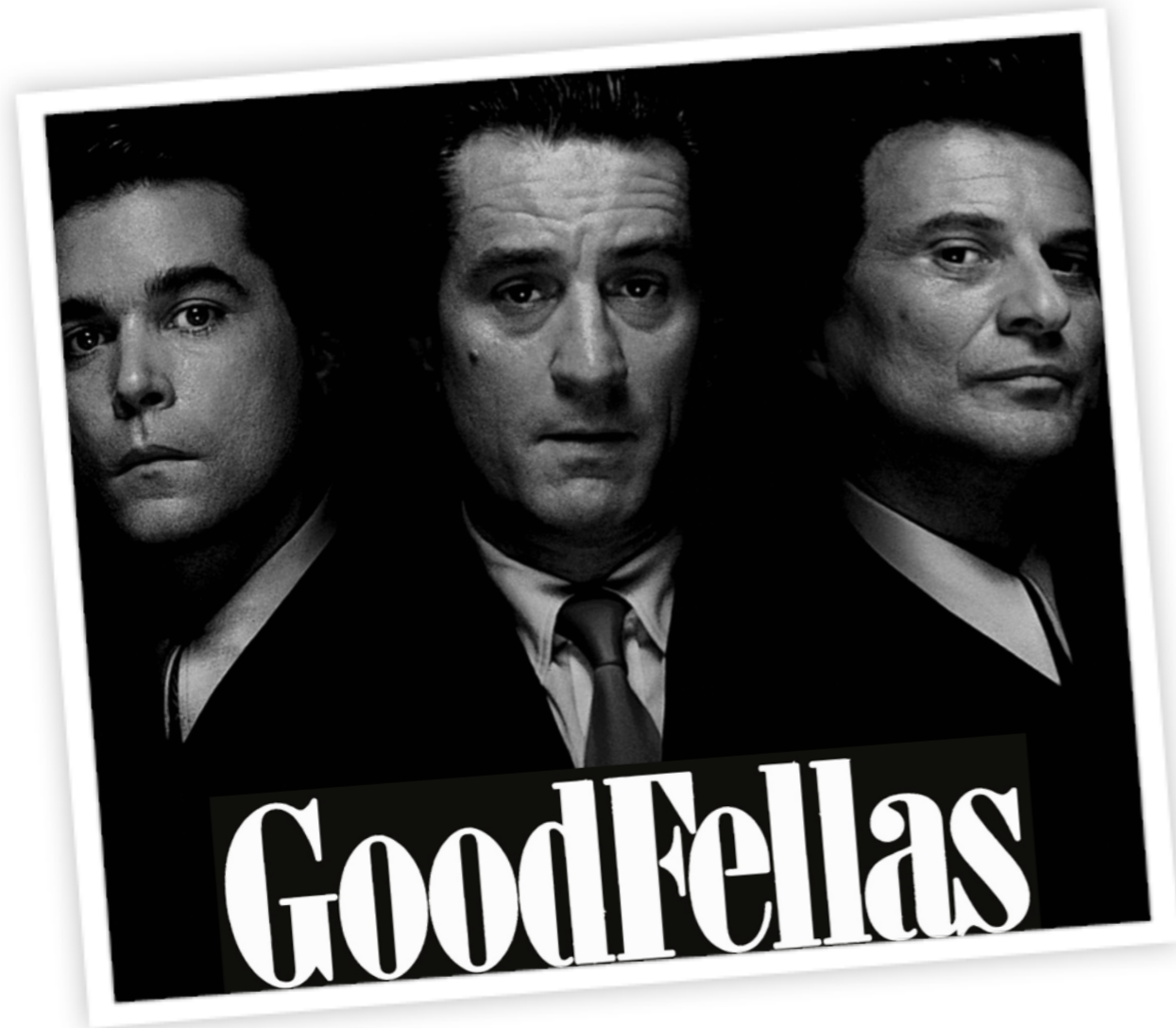
Steadicam: portable camera with weights which is 'worn' by camera operator. Used to:

▷ Steady image
▷ Film scene without multiple takes
▷ Allow freer camera movement/follow the action

The Shot: Camera Movement 5: Handheld & Steadicam

Touch of Evil,
(dir. Orson Welles, USA, 1958)

Long take using handheld and crane

The Shot: *Camera manipulation*

There are a number of 'effects' that can be achieved by manipulating the camera lens.

The two most common are **zoom** and **focus**.

Example: Wide Angle Lens (24mm f/2.8)

Example: Normal Lens (50mm f/1.4)

Example: Telephoto Lens (85-200mm f/4)

Each picture is taken with the same camera body fixed on a tripod and using the same settings. All that has been changed is the lens.

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The Shot: *Zoom*

Zoom: zoom lens can create illusion of camera moving in/out; can zoom in/out. Used to:
- Pick something out of a larger scene
- Suggest action/ movement
- Lead the audience
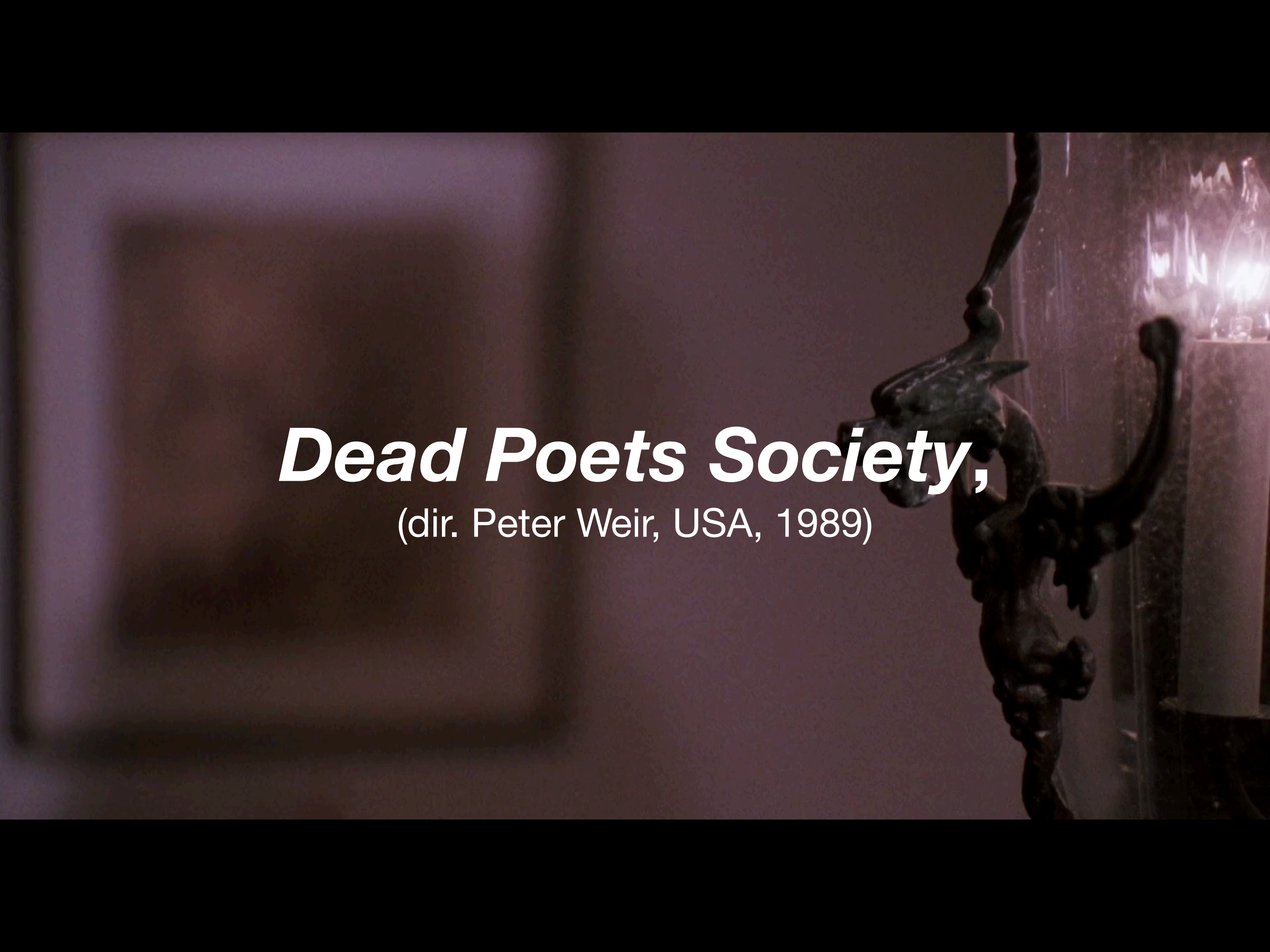
The Shot: *Rack Focus*
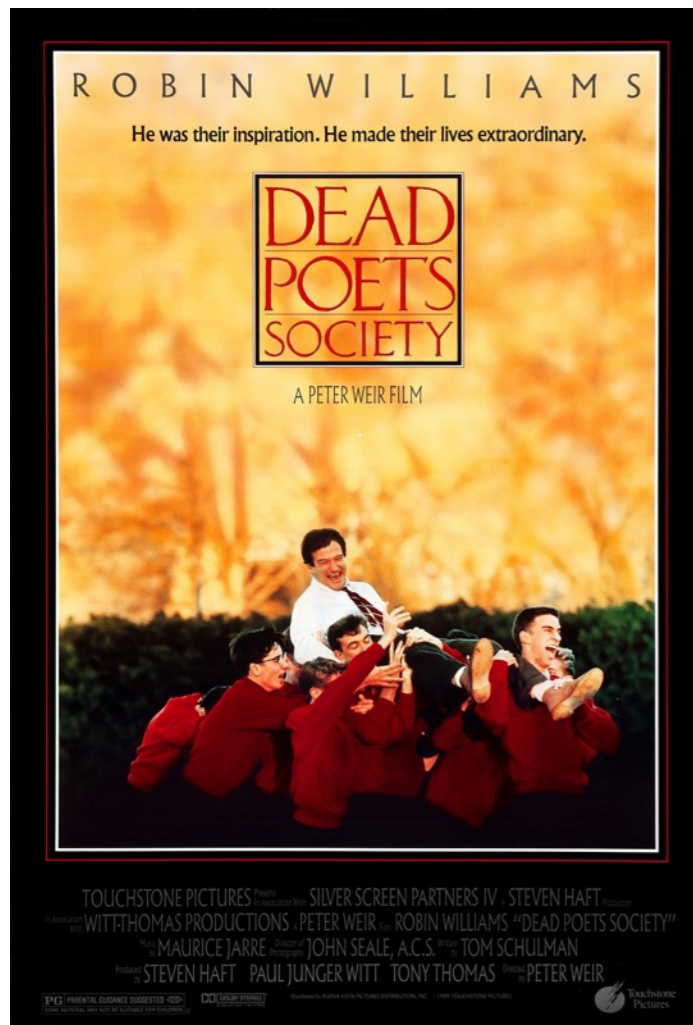
Rack focus: the focus point of the image is changed. This is a manual process… real filmakers don't use '*Autofocus*'! Used to:

▷ change focus in scene to **new point of interest**

▷ can add to the **narrative** by leading/manipulating the audience's attention

Dead Poets Society,

(dir. Peter Weir, USA, 1989)

The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert,
(dir. Stephan Elliott, Australia, 1995)

The Shot: *Depth of Perspective*

Depth of perspective shot (aka. Dolly Zoom): there is a particular effect that can be achieved by combining camera movement with a camera zoom. In the following sequence, Spielberg uses a **dolly track** to move the camera closer to Chief Brody *(Roy Scheider)* while simultaneously **zooming out**. This has the effect of keeping Chief Brody roughly the same size on the screen — and therefore the focus of interest — but **watch the background** as it happens. Consider the following:

▷ What is suggested by the shot?
▷ Why has Spielberg used it?

Jaws,
(dir. Steven Spielberg, USA, 1975)

The Shot: *Homework* (be still, my beating heart!)

Shot Analysis: Analyse the camera work used in the 2014 **John Lewis** Christmas Advert.

Can you identify some of the **shots**/**camera movement** and **camera positioning** used, and, *speculate* as to some of the **decisions** likely taken with regards these shots.

John Lewis Christmas Advert,
(dir. Dougal Wilson, UK, 2014)

Mise-en-scène

Hold on to your hats,
and pay attention...

Mise-en-scène

is really, really

important...

Mise-en-scène

Mise-en-scène: is French for 'put in the picture' and covers **everything** that is put into a scene. For example…

- ▷ setting
- ▷ objects (props)
- ▷ people
- ▷ make up
- ▷ costumes
- ▷ composition *(ie: figure arrangement and movement)*
- ▷ lighting
- ▷ …

Mise-en-scène

Mise-en-scène can be **motivated** by *realism* or **symbolise *themes*** or ***comment on action*** *(e.g. excess)*

Setting

Objects (props)

Props: In practical terms, a prop is considered to be anything movable or portable on a stage or a set, distinct from the actors, scenery, costumes and electrical equipment.

People

People

People: a director will populate a set in order to help create the desired setting against which the action is to be played out.

In terms of *mise-en-scène*, people are used in the same way that the setting and props are used.

Make up

Make up: used to transform a character, as well as to make them appear 'natural'.

Make up can also be used to suggest **character traits**: eg. scars to suggest a villain, 'cheap' make up to suggest a character with low values, …

Make up

"Natural": Emmanuelle Beart in *Manon des Sources* (dir. Claude Berri, France, 1986)

Make up

"villain": Donald Pleasance in *You Only Live Twice* (dir. Lewis Gilbert, UK, 1967)

Make up

"medical": John Hurt in *The Elephant Man* (dir. David Lynch, USA-UK, 1980)

"horror": Doug Bradley in Hellraiser (dir. Clive Barker, UK, 1987)

Costume

Costume

Costume: is an essential part of creating the 'reality' of a text.

There are certain **conventions** of costume that are used to make a text immediately accessible for an audience…

Introducing the man with no name!

He's going to trigger a whole new style in adventure.

This man with no name is played by Clint Eastwood.

A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS is the first motion picture of its kind. It won't be the last!

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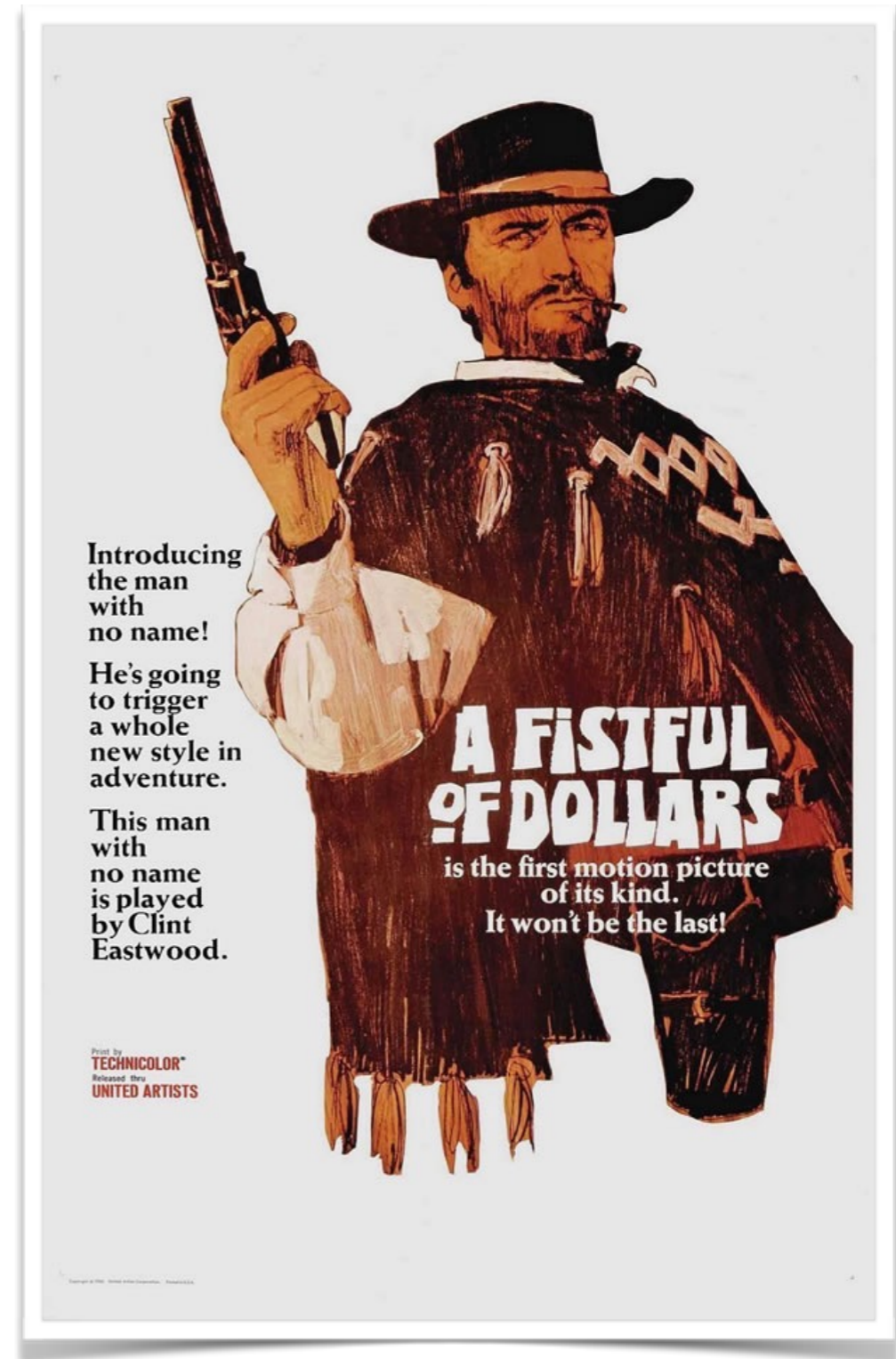
Composition

Composition: refers to how the actors and extras are arranged and moved on the set.

The Fisher King,
(dir. Terry Gilliam, USA, 1991)

Composition

Lighting

The 'classic' system of lighting for films is know as the **Three point system of lighting**.

▷ #1 **Key light**: main source of light

▷ #2 **Fill light**: softens shadows from key light

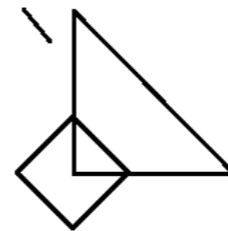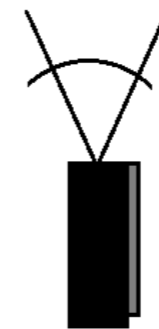▷ #3 **Backlight**: adds highlights and differentiates actor from background
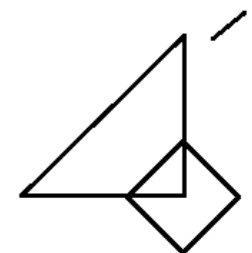
#3
Back Light
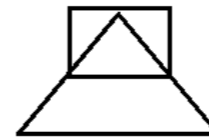
Subject

#1
Key Light

#2
Fill Light

Camera
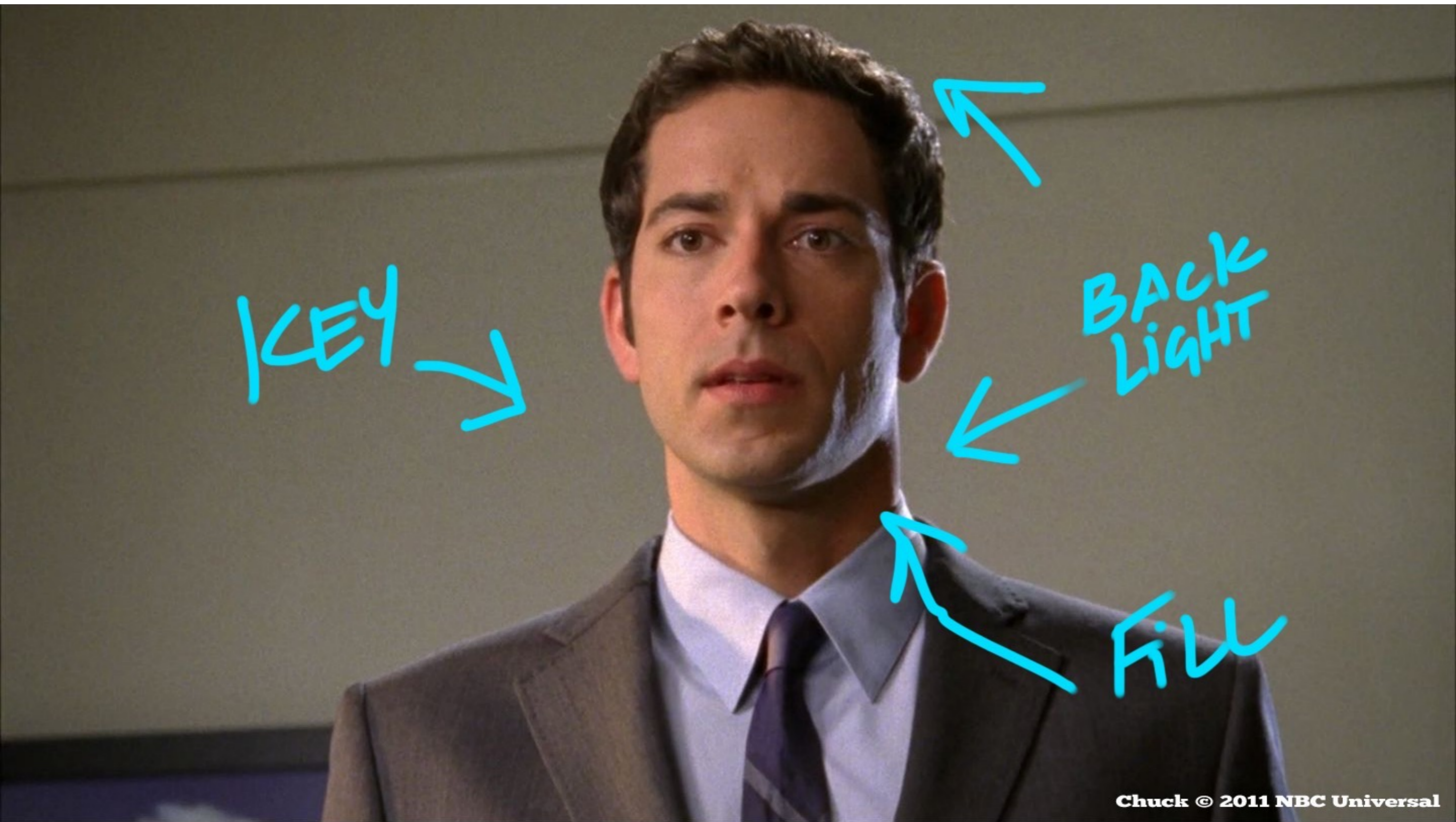
Lighting

High Key Lighting
Low Key Lighting

There are many variations on this, but the two most common ones are **high key lighting** and **low key lighting**.

High key lighting:

▷ Bright lighting with little shadow

▷ Attractive faces

▷ Connotes normality

Lighting

Low key lighting:

▷ Key light dimmed *(may be moved – kick light)*
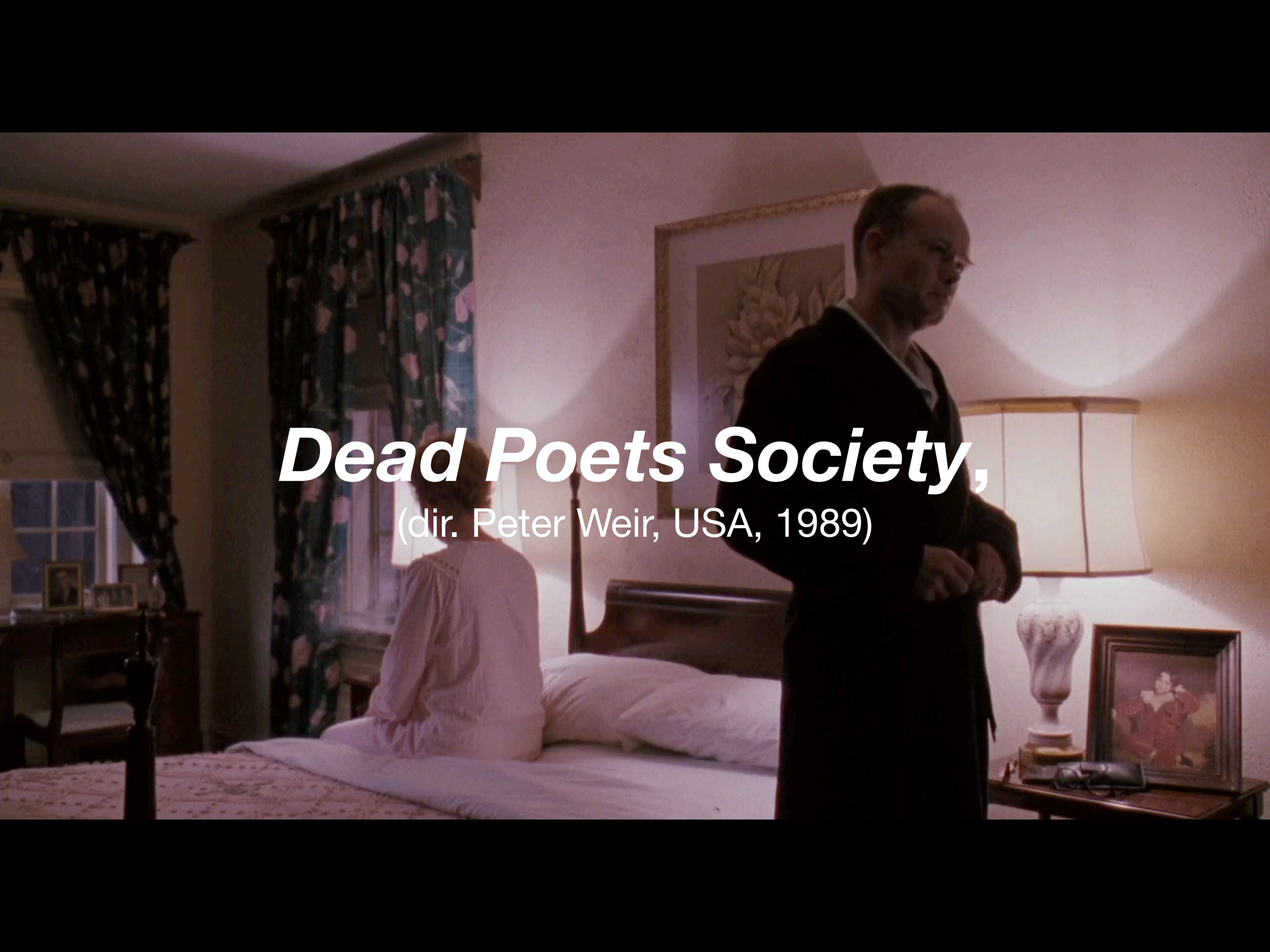
▷ Shadows

▷ Connotes unease, evil

▷ Feature of 'film noir'

Mise-en-scène

Pulling it all together

You will now be shown an extract from *Dead Poets Society* (dir. Peter Weir, USA,1989). As you watch it, try to analyse the *mise-en-scène*, and you should also try to be aware of how *mise-en-scène* can be:

▷ motivated by realism

▷ symbolise themes

▷ comment on action

Dead Poets Society,
(dir. Peter Weir, USA, 1989)