

echo repetition/mirror



Echo as a method splinters into related but slightly differing notions of mirroring or repetition. This alone is not necessarily a prerequisite for suspense – but functions more as an underlying method to many of the other methods.

The most conventional use of echo is repetition – the simple repeating of a visual element or sound throughout the larger narrative. The impact of echo is seen when it functions as a strategy alongside clues- that is, without repetition clues cannot be set up or recognized by the audience. It is only through the strategic repetition of an element that it becomes imbued with some significance.

A less conventional use of echo is mirroring. Mirroring implies an asymmetrical echo – an inverted repetition of elements in a narrative system. This is a common device in film and novel narrative.

Literary Echoing; James' *The Turn of the Screw*

The mirror structure is applied to the narrative structure of James' "*The Turn of the Screw*". James works with what could be described as a mirror structure in his novella – "This "basic structure," is presented to us "framed" in a "mirror structure"- - reflecting dichotomies suggestive of reflections in a mirror." Critics like Huntley and Bontly pick up on the mirroring between characters in '*The Turn of The Screw*', the way in which the Jessel/Quint relationship mirrors the relationship between the governess and her employer, or the mirroring of Miles and the employer. "...*The story's origin is therefore not assigned to any one voice which would assume responsibility for the tale, but to the deferred action of a sort of echoing effect, produced-- 'after the fact'--by voices which themselves re-produce previous voices.*"⁸⁶

Uneven Repetition via Editing; Homicide

The notion of repetition can be applied as an editing technique to heighten the tension of what was otherwise an ordinary sequence. The technique known as jump-cutting was used in the television series “Homicide” to create a unique sense of pace and intensity within the overall flow of the narrative. As the editor described, “*We do it here...the next time you do it, you move everybody a little from where they were. So that when you cut, they’re somehow slightly off position, just a little bit, just to make the cut even more. That’s how the scene is going to be stronger, because we get extra emphasis. We’ll even back up on a line and say it again...*”

This use of repetition creates a jarring but intensifying effect on the scene. The fact that the repetition is uneven is key; the three times we see the scene we see it slightly differently. This does more than create emphasis – it destabilizes the action by drawing the viewer’s attention to the shot composition, the camera angle, and the dramatic performance.



Jump-cutting; “Homicide: Life on the Streets”

Mirroring in Film Noir

Mirroring was a staple of film noir – both a visual and storytelling device to create the often labyrinthine worlds and plots of these films. The visible mirroring in Welles’ “The Lady From Shanghai” hinted at undercurrents of an ever-present deceit and duplicity. Who is the real Lana Turner?



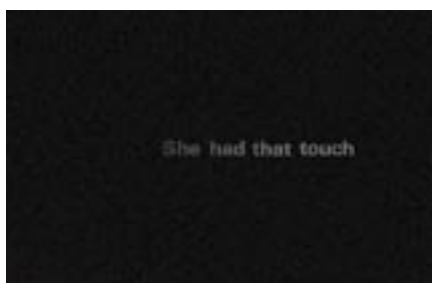
Orson Welles’ ‘The Lady From Shanghai’

mirror 'voice/type'

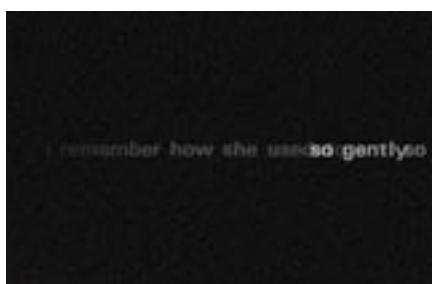
What happens when two elements initially echo each other – but gradually deviate and begin to echo asymmetrically? In a simple sequence I created the visual equivalent of a syncopated tune - exploring what effect can be created when voice and type mis-align. I kept the variables very simple; taking a short narrated story and repeating it over and over again. In the opening of this sequence; the type on screen is aligned with the voice-over, which echoes the words. Gradually the voice and type mis-align; with one phrase of the type repeating while the voice-over completes the story, or the reverse; with the voice-over repeating over one phrase as the type completes the story. I did not want this to turn into a purely technical exercise – and considered the story itself being told and the tonal qualities of certain words and phrases. I learnt one can add a poetic resonance to a story through simple repetition. I also realized the mirroring technique brought in the strategy of juxtaposition. By mis-matching the voice and type elements of this sequence, odd juxtapositions created new nuance and inflection in the original story. The techniques of mirroring and juxtaposition allowed me to truly 'adapt' and transform this source story – and beyond that, play with the tension in mis-aligned elements.

[See DVD: 'Voice/Type']

Type matches voice



Overlapping type and voice



Gaps; voice and no type

