

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.

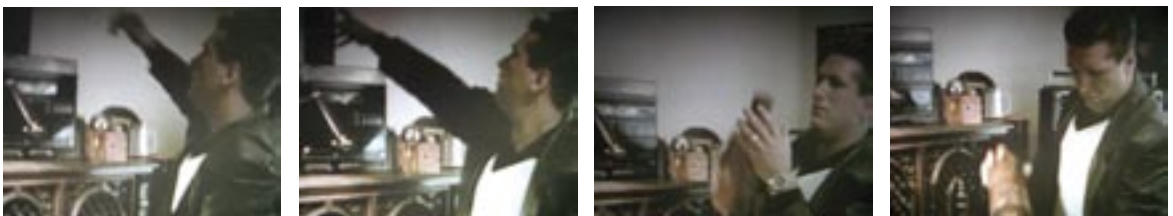
Literary Echoing; James' *The Turn of the Screw*

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’

echo 'wen fu'

I started with the most literal interpretation of method of echo, which was a quick way of observing how this strategy plays out pragmatically. How can the deliberate echoing of visual elements on the page create emphasis and nuance, rather than become redundant repetition?

The source text was a chapter from an ancient Chinese book; my chapter was called 'On Originality'. Echoing a letterform seemed an apt solution for visually rebutting the very premise of originality – a way of visualizing that everything repeats and everything has a precedent. It was through literal echoing of form that gradual change can be observed by the viewer. This was a simple application of this method, yet one that builds sequence in what could otherwise be a stagnant form. This is story!

