

PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY AND ARTISTIC UNDERPINNINGS

Eren Yeager: The Antihero's Journey

Introduction

Visual storytelling has a unique power to engage viewers, drawing them into imaginative realms. The impact of "Attack on Titan" is significant. Viewers are plunged into a world of fear, survival, and existential contemplation as colossal Titans break the barriers of human civilization. Eren Yeager is the central character in this compelling story, whose development reflects the core themes of the series. Eren, born amidst sorrow, is driven by an unwavering desire for revenge against the Titans, which drives the storyline forward. His evolution from a distressed young person to a resolute combatant symbolises the show's investigation of human resilience. This part of the essay examines Eren's character development as an antihero. Analysing his decisions, inner turmoil, and philosophical concepts present in "Attack on Titan." Furthermore, it analyses the pursuit of individual freedom and the search for meaning in a disorderly world, drawing on existentialist ideas from Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

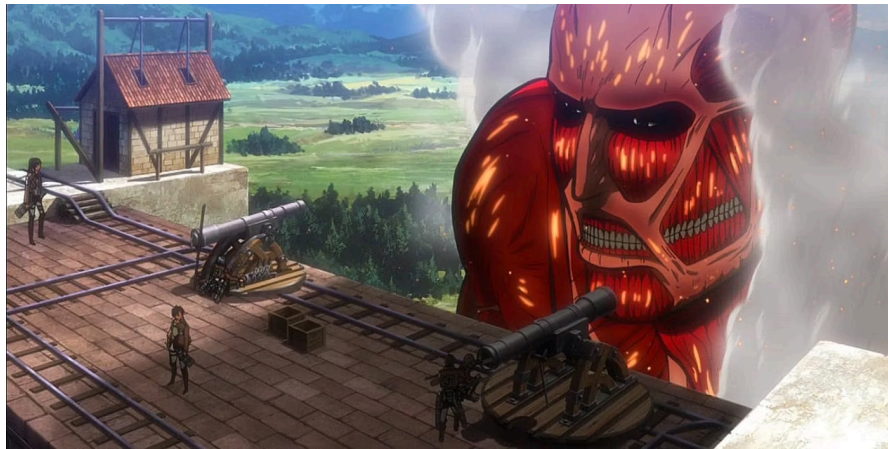
Visual Storytelling and Symbolism

Visual storytelling is a versatile narrative technique that goes beyond language barriers to convey intricate concepts and emotions using visual components including graphics, photos, and videos (Keleher, 2021). "Attack on Titan" combines these aspects to form a complex web of symbolism and cinematography, enhancing the storyline to a profound level.



The use of symbolism in "Attack on Titan" is crucial for communicating profound layers of meaning. The Survey Corps are a specialised military unit that battles Titans. Their symbolic gesture of placing their hands over their heart represents their commitment to freedom and their

curiosity to venture beyond the walls. This gesture symbolises Eren and his companions' tenacity and the overarching theme of liberty.



Furthermore, the series employs cinematography to amplify emotional impact and enrich storytelling. Strategic camera angles, lighting, and framing intensify the suspense in crucial scenes like Titans breaking through the walls or characters confronting their fears. The cinematic approaches used in "Attack on Titan" serve to deeply engage the audience in the story's environment and enhance the emotional resonance of its themes.

In addition, editing techniques are essential for defining the narrative framework and character development, alongside symbolism and cinematography. Fast edits, contrasts, and scenes from the past offer a deeper understanding of the characters' reasons and moral conflicts, enhancing the narrative experience.



Analysing particular instances from the series highlights the complexity of visual narrative. The flowers on the Stationary Guards' crest represent characteristics like honour, wisdom, and dedication, as well as suggesting concealed secrets within the walls (Lindwasser,

2018). This symbolism enhances the narrative by encouraging viewers to explore the mysteries of the universe shown in "Attack on Titan."

The series challenges conventional war stories by depicting humankind as a disadvantaged group battling against formidable challenges. This narrative decision encourages viewers to sympathise with humanity's challenges against the Titans, as well as delving into political and philosophical concerns like the pointlessness of conflict (Lindwasser, 2018).

The conceptual foundations of visual storytelling in "Attack on Titan" can be analysed through the notion of semiotics, as explained by Roland Barthes. Barthes' analysis of symbol interpretation aligns with the series, as each visual element has several interpretations (De Burgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan, 2008). Semiotics is used to decode the philosophical themes conveyed through the symbolism of "Attack on Titan," enhancing our comprehension of its narrative complexity.

Eren Yeager as an Antihero

The antihero archetype challenges traditional heroic values by portraying individuals with flaws, ambiguity, and a tendency towards self-interest, in contrast to the virtuous and altruistic heroes seen in classic stories (Callaghan, 2022). Eren Yeager in "Attack on Titan" embodies this complex archetype perfectly. Antiheroes such as Eren deviate from traditional hero characteristics by prioritising their own interests, frequently defying societal conventions while remaining the central character. Audiences empathise with the deep motivations of characters, despite their actions may be morally problematic.



Eren's character development progresses through crucial moments that influence his growth. Eren's search for independence, first driven by a desire for vengeance against the Titans, initiates the plot. However, in season 4 his path deviates from conventional heroics as he adopts

more sinister tactics, representing a notable decline in reputation (Attack on Titan, 2020). His quest reaches its peak when he decides to initiate the Rumbling, releasing Titans to unite humanity against a shared adversary – a sacrifice seen as terrible yet essential (Attack on Titan, 2020).



The visual aspects in the series emphasise Eren's role as an antihero. Close-up shots depict his conflicting feelings, as his eyes reveal inner struggle, blurring the distinction between heroism and antiheroism. His body language, which transitions from vulnerability to resolve, reflects his internal conflict with moral concerns. Eren is depicted against apocalyptic backgrounds in a cinematic way, highlighting his function as both a saviour and a destroyer.

When analysing the philosophical foundations of Eren's character, the impact of prominent thinkers is apparent. Fyodor Dostoevsky, known for his morally intricate characters, offers a perspective on Eren's inner struggle similar to figures such as Raskolnikov in "Crime and Punishment," who struggle with the tension between societal benefit and personal consequences (Morson, 2024). Joseph Campbell's monomyth, commonly linked to hero journeys, can also be used for antiheroes such as Eren. His path into darkness mirrors the hero's decline before finding redemption. Eren's journey as an antihero in "Attack on Titan" is a detailed examination of human nature and moral ambiguity when viewed through these perspectives.

Philosophical Themes in Eren's Journey



Eren Yeager's storyline in “Attack on Titan” explores fundamental philosophical concepts related to existentialist beliefs, morality, and nihilism.

Eren's character is defined by his unwavering quest for freedom and independence. This quest aligns with Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy, which focuses on radical freedom and the accompanying responsibility (Daniel, 2020). Eren's rejection of predetermined destinies and his resolute determination to create his own path mirror Sartre's idea that individuals can shape their essence by their acts. Eren's voyage symbolises the existentialist struggle, where the quest for freedom is both freeing and challenging, breaking away from predefined roles.

As Eren encounters ethical challenges, it prompts viewers to consider the moral difficulty of his decisions. Contemplating sacrificing innocent lives for strategic advantage prompts inquiries about the ethical validity of methods used to reach a specific goal. These ethical dilemmas compel viewers to confront their personal moral principles, reflecting the existentialist investigation of individual morality. Eren's decisions have far-reaching effects on the story, highlighting the intricate relationship between individual choice and the larger moral ramifications of one's behaviour.

Eren's journey is characterised by nihilistic undertones, especially when conventional ideals are questioned or dismissed. Eren's confrontation with the futility of established standards and societal systems reveals Friedrich Nietzsche's impact on nihilism (Magnus, 2024). The series delves into the idea that conventional moral principles could weaken when confronted with existential dangers, leading people such as Eren towards nihilistic views of the world.

Eren's exploration of existentialist themes such as freedom, ethical difficulties, and nihilism in "Attack on Titan" prompts viewers to contemplate their beliefs and ideals during existential crises.

Editing Techniques and Narrative Ambiguity



Cinematic editing is vital in constructing the narrative of "Attack on Titan". The series strategically uses cuts, transitions, and pace to generate tension, emotional effect, and thematic depth. Rapid cuts intensify the excitement in fierce battle scenarios, while slow transitions between scenes let viewers digest important information. The pace, whether fast or slow, influences our emotional connection with the characters and their challenges. Sergei Eisenstein's notion of montage, focusing on the juxtaposition of images to elicit strong emotions (Duignan, 2024), is reflected in the energetic editing of "Attack on Titans."



"Attack on Titan" benefits from narrative ambiguity, prompting viewers to ponder various interpretations and questions. Visual storytelling techniques purposefully encourage conjecture. Characters such as Eren, Mikasa, and Levi frequently hide their true motivations behind enigmatic expressions. The changing loyalties, mysterious symbols, and unanswered enigmas – like the Titans' beginnings, or the secrets within the walls – captivate our interest and provoke speculation. The series encourages audience engagement by avoiding simple solutions, which enables viewers to delve into themes and character developments on a personal level.

The show's editing choices align with Sergei Eisenstein's concepts of montage. Just as Eisenstein argued that the collision of images could evoke emotions beyond their individual meanings (Hellerman, 2021), "Attack on Titan" employs juxtapositions and rapid cuts to intensify the emotional impact. Postmodernist theories are in line with the narrative ambiguity present in the series. Postmodernism questions single interpretations and welcomes diversity (Mitry, 2024). "Attack on Titan's" refusal to neatly tie up plot threads or portray characters in simplistic terms reflects a postmodern sensibility. Viewers are urged to question, speculate, and participate in a dialogue with the narrative, reflecting the intricacies of our world.

Conclusion

The analysis of Eren Yeager's character in "Attack on Titan" seamlessly integrates with the series' visual storytelling and profound philosophical themes. Eren's evolution into an antihero is demonstrated through the deliberate use of visual elements like symbolism and cinematography, enhancing the depth of the narrative. Eren's journey for freedom, ethical dilemmas, and nihilistic themes highlighted the existentialist ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre and Friedrich Nietzsche as significant concepts that illuminated the intricacies of his journey.

The complex storyline of "Attack on Titan" goes beyond conventional storytelling, leading viewers to face existential questions. The series intertwines visual storytelling with philosophical concepts to offer a stimulating exploration of human nature and the quest for significance.

This section of the essay prompts readers to delve into the enduring themes of individual freedom and the continuous formation of meaning, emphasising their importance beyond the current analysis. The complex narrative and profound themes of "Attack on Titan" encourage exploration of its storyline, highlighting the enduring influence of visual storytelling and philosophical investigation.

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APPLYING PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS IN PRACTICE

Introduction



“Attack on Titan”, the well-known anime series, delves deeply into existential themes that connect with the human experience, going beyond the simple narrative of titans and humans. The series explores the depths of existentialism, a philosophy famously advocated by Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's existentialism asserts that humans possess complete freedom and accountability for their choices, and attributing one's actions to excuses or external circumstances is considered an act of 'bad faith.' This section of the essay will investigate the existentialist themes present in “Attack on Titan”, specifically focusing on the character Eren Yeager. Eren's journey, choices, and acceptance of responsibility reflect Sartre's existentialist philosophy, providing viewers with a detailed insight into freedom, responsibility, and the human condition.

Sartre's Existential Philosophy

Jean-Paul Sartre, a famous existentialist philosopher, argued that humans are 'condemned to be free' (Sartre, 1946). He believes that humans have the distinctive capacity to make choices and influence their own existence, a concept encapsulated in this provocative statement. Nevertheless, this freedom comes with its own set of responsibilities. Sartre contended that freedom entails a significant responsibility for our actions and decisions, a responsibility that we cannot avoid or pass on to others (Sartre, 1946).

Sartre introduced the concept of 'bad faith,' which is a type of self-deception where individuals avoid acknowledging their freedom and responsibility by adhering to societal norms or embracing false beliefs (Sartre, 1943). Individuals in a state of 'bad faith' give up their freedom by opting to define themselves through external roles or labels. Sartre argues that engaging in self-deception is a betrayal of our true selves and our innate freedom (Sartre, 1943).

Eren Yeager's Monologue



In the aftermath of the Battle of Trost in Season 1, Episode 5 (Attack on Titan, 2013), Eren Yeager, the main character, is in the ruins, struggling with the consequences of his newfound power and the consequences of his decisions. The previously recognisable scenery now serves as a poignant symbol of the price of liberty and the duty it entails.

Eren's monologue may sound like this: "I find myself here, surrounded by destruction and casualties, a symbol of the harsh interplay between liberty and duty." I am no longer a passive observer, a pawn controlled by the forces of destiny. I am the tide. I am liberated. This freedom is a significant responsibility. The burden of the world, the burden of responsibility. The understanding that each decision and every behaviour leads to an outcome. I am the creator of these outcomes. I selected this. I selected freedom. I selected responsibility. Did I contribute to this devastation? Is this the cost of freedom? Or is this... insincerity?"

In this monologue, Eren grapples with Sartre's existential themes. He faces the concept of 'bad faith' by refusing to deny his freedom and responsibility, and by not attributing his actions to fate or destiny. He recognises his autonomy, his capacity to make choices, and the inherent accountability that accompanies it. He grapples with the moral dilemmas and existential anguish that arise from such freedom, represented by the stark imagery of the destroyed landscape and fallen comrades. The narrative of "Attack on Titan" provides a poignant exploration of Sartrean existentialism through the internal struggle and confrontation with the existential realities of freedom and responsibility.

Reflecting on the Creative Response

The constructed monologue serves as a creative response to Sartre's existential philosophy, effectively communicating its core ideas through the character of Eren Yeager. A close reading of the monologue reveals how it encapsulates Sartre's concepts of freedom, responsibility, and 'bad faith.' Eren acknowledges his freedom and the resulting responsibility by stating, "I am the tide." I am liberated. The statement reflects Sartre's view on human freedom and the associated responsibility (Sartre, 1946).

The design decisions made in creating the monologue, such as the tone, language, and imagery, serve to strengthen these existentialist ideas. The tone is introspective and sombre, mirroring Eren's internal conflict with his newfound freedom and responsibility. The language is straightforward and poignant, reflecting Sartre's clear expression of existentialist concepts. Lastly, the depiction of 'ruins and the fallen' acts as a vivid reminder of the repercussions of Eren's decisions, reflecting Sartre's focus on the burden of responsibility that accompanies freedom.

The monologue offers profound insight into Eren's character and his existential journey. Particular phrases like 'Is this the cost of freedom? Or is this... insincerity?' exemplifies Eren's confrontation with freedom and responsibility and his struggle against 'bad faith' is exemplified in this. The moments in the monologue emphasise Eren's existential angst and his determination to face it, reflecting Sartre's existentialist philosophy.

Conclusion

This section of the essay has examined the existential themes in "Attack on Titan" by focusing on the character of Eren Yeager and their relationship to Sartre's existential philosophy. The monologue was created as a creative response, incorporating Sartre's concepts of freedom, responsibility, and 'bad faith' into Eren's character. Exploring these themes in visual storytelling, like in "Attack on Titan," highlights the medium's ability to examine the intricacies of human existence. The piece prompts us to contemplate our personal freedom, accountability, and decision-making, serving as a reminder of the existential truths that characterise our human existence.

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THE POWER OF PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS IN FILMMAKING

Introduction to Wittgenstein's Quotation

Ludwig Wittgenstein's quote, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent," is highly relevant in the realm where philosophy, filmmaking, and communication practices intersect. This statement, rooted in the philosophy of language, acts as a guiding principle for comprehending the constraints and opportunities of conveying intricate philosophical ideas through the medium of film. Wittgenstein's quote emphasises that silence can be a potent tool when words are insufficient to convey complex concepts, influencing our comprehension of philosophical narratives in filmmaking and communication strategies (Huzo, 2021).

Summary of the Quote

Wittgenstein's quote "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" implies that when faced with concepts or experiences we cannot express, it is advisable to remain silent, serving as a philosophical principle (Kemerling, 2011). This concept is especially important in filmmaking and communication practices, as philosophical ideas can often be too intricate to be fully expressed verbally. Therefore, silence serves as a powerful instrument, enabling the unexpressed elements of these ideas to have a deeper impact on the audience.

Analysis of the Quote

After analysing Wittgenstein's quote, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent," I identify two main components for discussion. The inability to express specific experiences and the resulting need for silence. The phrase "Whereof one cannot speak" implies a restriction in our language and communication skills in articulating intricate philosophical ideas. This limitation is not a failure, but an acknowledgement of the profound nature of these concepts that often go beyond verbal expression.

The latter portion of the quote suggests that silence is not just a natural reaction to our inability to articulate, but a deliberate decision that recognises the profound and intricate nature of these ideas. Silence can be a more effective form of communication when words are insufficient, particularly in filmmaking where visual and auditory components can express what words cannot.

Wittgenstein's quote has significant implications for filmmaking and communication practices. It prompts us to reconsider our dependence on spoken language and motivates us to investigate alternative forms of communication. Silence is highlighted as a potent

communicative tool that can convey intricate philosophical concepts that words may struggle to express. This viewpoint provides new opportunities for comprehending and analysing philosophical ideas in filmmaking, enhancing our cinematic encounters.

Relevance to Argument

The quote by Wittgenstein, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent," is closely connected to the argument in this essay. The quote's ideas align with the discussion about the constraints and opportunities of conveying philosophical concepts through filmmaking and communication methods. The quote highlights the significance of silence as a means of communication, which aligns with the examination of philosophical ideas in storytelling. It highlights the idea that philosophical concepts can be effectively conveyed through non-verbal methods, like the visual and auditory components of film. This viewpoint supports the argument of the essay, emphasising the importance of investigating different methods of conveying philosophical ideas in filmmaking and communication strategies.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Wittgenstein's statement, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent," is a crucial framework in my examination of philosophical ideas in filmmaking and communication methods. It prompts me to reassess my comprehension of expression and communication, highlighting the significance of silence when words are inadequate (Wittgenstein, 1922). This quote has implications that go beyond philosophy and influence the creative process of filmmaking, affecting how I understand and analyse philosophical stories. As I explore the connection between philosophy and film, Wittgenstein's words prompt me to consider how silence can effectively communicate the intricacy of philosophical ideas.

(573 words)

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