
116. LOGOPOLIS

MISE-EN-SCENE AS A NARRATIVE FORCE

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Does entropy actually drive the storytelling in *Logopolis*? Entropy certainly provides the excuse for the Doctor to travel to the planet — and to leave. The universe itself has fallen victim to entropy. Yet, for all the talk about entropy in the story, it only provides a dash of spice to the real forces at work. The mise-en-scene — the staging of the actors and camera within the story — provides the real momentum for the tale.

From the beginning, the camera zooms in on important plot points, characters stride from background into foreground as they move the plot and the camera mimics (or tracks) character movements when they're delivering an important plot point. All this character and camera staging particularly helps out studio-bound Episode Three. Not much happens in the episode: the TARDIS — having been shrunk due to a mathematical error — regains its proper size, the Master kills off Logopolis, and the two Time Lords join forces to save the universe from destruction. In between, there's a lot of searching through only four distinct locations. The episode could have been fairly tedious, an obvious 23-odd minutes of padding. The mise-en-scene, however, keeps things moving.

The camera-zooms for attention happen a great deal in Episode Three. Oh, look! The Logopolitans have sonic projectors that will stabilise the TARDIS! Yay! Nyssa knows what's going on! Oh, wow, it's the TARDIS really small and close-up as Tegan wonders if the Doctor's alive. Uh-oh, the Monitor says "Interfering with the works of Logopolis: the most dangerous crime in the universe!" Ooh! What's that bracelet the Master just slapped onto Nyssa's wrist? *We'd better take a closer look!* All of these plot-point details could have been done by cutting to close-ups, but that would have lost the illusion of momentum the zoom-in provides.

Momentum also comes from character blocking. No matter who is roaming around, he or she enters the shot from the background and glides into the foreground, from where he or she usually imparts words of wisdom (or at least plot). The Monitor sallies forth to score the machine code printout; he takes Adric along for the ride as he plows through both the Central Register and Logopolitan streets to find the mathematical error. Nyssa wades through the shot to find out what's up with Adric; Adric joins her moving forward to look for the Master. Tegan drags the Monitor into the computation room to complain about alleged slavery. The Master leads Nyssa into prominence as she wonders about the mission her "father" is on. Nyssa hovers in the foreground to comment that Logopolis has stopped; the Doctor joins her to confirm. The Doctor and the Master meet up in the foreground to

agree to work together. In each case, these movements push the plot along.

What really frosts the cake, though, is the combination of character movement with camera movement. Only Time Lords are worthy of this combo, and it's only used when they're involved (even if only obliquely). The Doctor only gets a taste of this combo, since he spends a good chunk of the episode stuck inside the TARDIS. Once he breaks free, however, he swoops through the scene, the camera gliding with him.

The camera warms up to the Doctor as he puts an arm around Tegan in an awkward attempt to console her for her Auntie's death... but follows him as he pushes her and her grief out of the shot and crosses over to the Monitor to plot the next move. As the Doctor stomps through Logopolis, the camera continues its dance: tracking backwards as the Doctor pushes forward, then pausing for him to fill the screen as he changes direction, then rolls after him so, when he spins back around, he overtakes the shot with his presence. But... why is the Doctor running around the planet? Because — like everything else involving the character/camera movement combo — it's all about the Master.

The Master dominates the episode, and not just because of his gleeful cackling as he launches his evil plan du jour. Early on, the Monitor and Adric comb the Logopolitan avenues — with the camera in full retreat/pause/advance mode — looking for the Master's computational trap. The camera dances again when, slightly later, Adric and Nyssa search for the Master. Actually, it outdoes itself, riding on a crane down from an aerial overview to an intimate two-shot as Adric leaves the scene. Then, as the Master calls Nyssa, Nyssa's retreat into the back of the set brings the camera along, so she stays mostly the same size in the shot. Oh, all right, the last bit was more zoom than track, but Nyssa isn't important enough (unfortunately) to merit a lot of 3D camera movement...

Once the Master reveals himself, there's none of the zooming business, none of the stepping-into-the-foreground business, it's all the Master and the camera in the same minuet. The camera tracks after the Master as he (in disguise) stands up and follows the Logopolitans hauling the sonic projectors away. As the Master reveals his plan, the camera tracks into a tight shot of the Master and the Monitor as the Monitor declares "There will be no future; you are eroding structure, generating entropy!" The camera then rolls back to allow a worried Monitor to emote in the foreground while the Master demands to know why they built a copy of the Pharos Project. The camera tracks with the Master as first he tells Nyssa, "But his body remains useful," then twirls her out of the way so he can cross to the Doctor to taunt him with "Without it I could not have conquered Logopolis." The camera then tracks right, to allow the Monitor to be seen as well as the Master gloating, before tracking back to better show the Master striding into the centre of the records room to declare, "Logopolis is not the centre of the universe." The camera slides back further to better frame the Master as he moves forward, enjoying using his control over

Nyssa's arm to strangle Adric. The camera continues to track with him as he brags about his Logopolis-controlling device. Once the Master finally runs into the streets to figure out why there's no Logopolitan noise despite his device being switched off, the camera makes one last 3D move: on a crane, it glides down from high above the streets to a spot where we can see the Master dominate the frame, panicking as he declares "You've done this deliberately to deprive me of my prize!"

From then on, the Master no longer drives the story, and the camera basically retires from its 3D movement. The Master is reduced to walking into the foreground of the shot while the camera stays still, like everyone else. It's now circumstances, not planning, that propels the tale forward.

But that's all right, because character movement, combined with both 2D (zooms) and 3D (tracking) camera movement, not only pulls the viewer through the rest of the episode, it also sets things up for the more-involved following (and final) episode. Oh, sure, most of Episode Four is running, ducking and covering, with the audience observing the action like it was some wacky track and field event. However, the moment the Doctor plummets off the telescope and the companions run to him, the *mise-en-scene* pulls us in again.

From the instant the camera drifts down and around a support beam to observe the Doctor lying broken at the bottom of the Pharos Project telescope, the audience effectively becomes the fourth companion. Nyssa, Tegan and Adric kneel down around the Doctor as the camera settles down near the Doctor's feet. We see the Doctor then, in close-up, slightly looking down at him, as if we too were on our knees, worried about the Time Lord. Although we see former companions in flashback as the Doctor does, these sightings don't intrude on the feeling that we're part of the overall action. Like the other companions, we're saying "Doctor!" too, if only in our heads! Once the Doctor announces his final line, we return via camera position to the Doctor's feet, back to fully being the fourth companion. We see the regeneration from the same angle Adric does; we remain on the ground with the others as the new Doctor sits up. We have been swept into a new Doctor's era, fully vested in the change because the *mise-en-scene* made us participants instead of neutral witnesses.

It's the end, but the moment has been prepared for.