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Assignment 10
Due Wed, April 21, 2004

Groundhog Day Harold Ramis -1993

The film *Groundhog Day* diverts from traditionally linear films for many reasons. First, the story takes on a repetitive nature that would normally be considered annoying and uneventful, but the reason for this repetition is the heart of the story and becomes the framework in which events unfold throughout the film.

The film stars Bill Murray as Phil Connors, an ego-centric weatherman on assignment in Punxsatony Pennsylvania for the big Groundhog Day celebration on February second. The conceited, cynical protagonist begins to reassess his values when he miraculously wakes up day after day on February second and relives the same day's events over and over again. Incredulous, he goes to a psychiatrist and a doctor to seek help but the phenomenon continues to occur. He experiments with this miracle and learns that there would be no long-term consequences to his actions. He goes through stages of recklessness, followed by several suicide attempts, endeavors to woo women, and finally the realization that he could do a lot of good by knowing what will happen that day.

Therefore, because of its fantastical nature, the repetition of the same day's overall dialogue and sequence of events adds another dimension to the film. It creates what Janet Murray terms a "procedural" framework. It is a film that has a procedural set of rules that resets the same day's events over and over. However, Phil's actions each time create the variation within the framework that defines the film. In addition, his experimentation tests the limits of the film's structure. Janet Murray mentions that one of the pleasures of a computational medium is testing the limits of what it can do. Similarly, the film's limits are tested by Phil's actions.

In addition, as a member of the audience, you are also trying figure out what he has to do to make the repetition of the same day stop. The structure of the film becomes so second nature to the audience that when the repetitious sequence is finally broken, we are startled (as is Phil). Therefore this framework was also powerful in that it brings the audience into the plight of the protagonist and makes us feel like him.

I feel that the parallel, or repetitious nature of the film, while at first annoying, created a wonderful set of limitations with which to play with throughout the narrative and thus enriched the message of the film.