

Cinematic Objects, Events and their Predications:
An Analytic-Cognitivist Theory of the Viewing Experience

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Abstract

**Cinematic Objects, Events and their Predications:
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This thesis addresses a recurring question throughout the history of discourses about film watching, including in film studies and cognitive film theory (henceforth, cognitivism). Namely: by what theoretical propositions and explanations are we to convey the cognitive, perceptual and affective experience of film going? Cognitivism has made the most decisive inroads, while falling prey to occasional lacunae, as part one (chapters one-two) of this thesis make plain. Cognitivist authors, while ameliorating the claims of previous schools (e.g. canonical contemporary film theory) err in their choice of terms and/or theoretical models. By contrast, ideas inherited from analytic philosophy are invoked to advance an alternate approach, albeit one consistent with cognitivist principles and aims (e.g. schema theory). This thesis's contribution to knowledge is thus to posit an abstract model of the interpretive actions occasioned by the experience of film texts, such that all potential viewing experiences (of all potential film texts) are covered.

Following analytic philosophy's ontology of individuation and eventhood, the thesis posits objects and events as the two fundamental categories informing the viewing experience of films. The argument is augmented with subject-predicate logic, whereby objects and events are jointly identified and predicated. Objects are predicated alternately new or old, while events are short or long – predication-types borne out by analytic philosophy, as well as film and art criticism. Part two (chapters three-four) delineate the operations whereby objects are identified and predicated within film texts. Part three (chapters five-six) pursues the same explanatory account for cinematic events. The analysis culminates in part four (chapter seven), in which joint predications of objects and events complete the range of interpretive categories fundamental to the viewing experience.

In concluding, the broader reaches of the preceding work are articulated. Divergences in the philosophy of science point to research projects for cognitivism, with emphasis accorded to either empirical research and corroboration, or conceptual analysis, coherence and parsimony. The latter priority – conceptual analysis – is invoked to urge film scholars to analytic philosophy. The expectation is that further study of this oft overlook tradition will yield novel, unexpected insights into the experience of cinematic artefacts.

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More concretely, professors teaching courses, or directed readings, in which I was enrolled – at Concordia, and before that, at the University of Alberta – were tremendously receptive to my research interests and supportive of my work: among them, Martin Lefebvre, Catherine Russell, Thomas Waugh, William Beard, and Jerry White. Fellow students throughout my coursework also played a no less significant role in tolerating my interventions and sharing with me much food for thought in their ripostes. At the very least, there's a lot to be learned on the virtues and benefits of open-mindedness when someone who nominally ought to disagree with you acquiesces to hear you out all the same. I have done best to assimilate and reciprocate these lessons.

In addition to studying, I also had the good fortune of teaching and completing several assistantships. Rosanna Maule and Catherine Russell offered instructive feedback on my syllabi – granting me confidence as a lecturer. John Locke was especially sympathetic and understanding when it came to my interests in formalism and aesthetics, as well as such far flung topics as Nelson Goodman, Pauline Kael and all things Bordwellian (!). My many students, most of all, endured what must have seemed to them like intellectual flights of fancy and, though I hardly could have suspected so much at the time, what would ultimately become the preliminary speculations for an eventual thesis.

As a teaching assistant and grader, I benefited from the continuous support and sometimes enthusiastic praise of Anthony Kinik, Liz Clarke and Ezra Winton. I treated the occasion to become a student anew, reacquainting and even acquainting myself with canonical

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As the vagaries of academic life go, my examination committees shifted in membership throughout. Warm thanks to Luca Caminati and Luc Faucher for their sympathetic and supportive presence. Marc Steinberg, as well, graciously agreed to step in and fill a vacancy, with no professional nor personal gain, when I was foolish enough to book an exam while an expected faculty member was unavailable. Catherine Russell, in addition to providing me more than once with letters of support, also voiced critical yet constructive feedback, requesting that I explicate just how and why my fascination with philosophy connected to fundamental epistemic questions within film studies. Such comments vigorously challenged me to sharpen my arguments and tether my findings to more concretely identifiable knowledge claims – surely, intellectual *discipline*, and the *disciplinarity* of a scholarly field, are not just equivocal uses of the same root word!

The defense was an invigorating and rewarding three hours, and I had the good fortune to benefit from the generous praise and constructive insights of my committee members. I owe an intellectual debt to Professors Richard Neupert, Roberto G. de Almeida, David Davies, Catherine Russell, and, of course, my supervisor, Professor Martin Lefebvre. Throughout the entire session, Professor Ira Robinson proved to be a patient and courteous chair.

Special gratitude and acknowledgement go to Martin Lefebvre, my thesis supervisor. He offered unstinting support and never gave up when, on more than one occasion, all hope seemed lost and I was more than ready to give up myself (as a rationally prone cognitivist, I had to make a lot room for faith!). He defended my work and saw to it that I received a fair hearing, when so many others could not even be bothered to listen. He bestowed on me publishing and speaking opportunities, in peer reviewed forums and conferences, as well as much needed subsidies in the form of professionally rewarding assistantships. He also saw this project through its multiple brainstorming and dead ends, while patiently sifting through pages and hours of second-guessing and especially recondite meandering.

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Glossary

*Terms defined in the glossary are marked in **bold** on their first appearance in the original text.

Clustered: Relations of varyingly approximate similarity or synonymousness between entities and their predication. See also **CONJUNCTIVE**, **CONTINUOUS**.

Concise: An object-event jointly predicated old and short. See also **OBJECT**, **EVENT**, **OLD**, **SHORT**.

Conjunctive: Predicate terms that can be experienced as approximately similar or synonymous. See also **CLUSTERED**, **CONTINUOUS**.

Conscious (processes): Operations of the mind/brain of which the subject is aware. See also **PRECONSCIOUS** and **PHYSIOLOGICAL**.

Constructivist: The approach in cognitive theory that knowledge and percepts are not reducible to (mind-independent) phenomena, but instead significantly derive from a sentient individual's mental operations, include innate ideas/concepts. See also **UNDERDETERMINED**.

Continuous: Mental operations and/or interpretive activity experienced as relatively uninterrupted or unimpeded. See also **CLUSTERED**, **CONJUNCTIVE**.

Correction: A revised or rejected interpretation concerning an object or event as experienced during the viewing of a film text. See also **DISCONTINUOUS**, **DISJUNCTIVE**.

Decree: An intuitively made interpretation as to the film text and its attendant content and/or screen phenomena.

Descriptive adequacy: Any theoretical account of an entity that covers or summarizes the entity in a sufficiently detailed capacity. See also **EXPLANATORY ADEQUACY**.

Discontinuous: Mental operations and/or interpretive activity experienced as interrupted and/or impeded. See also CORRECTION, DISJUNCTIVE.

Discrete from: Two entities that do not share the same content. See also OVERLAP.

Disjunctive: Predicate terms that can be experienced as relatively dissimilar or antonymous. See also CORRECTION, DISCONTINUOUS.

Event: A transformation enacted as relative to an object. See also OBJECT.

Explanatory adequacy/explanatorily adequate: Any theoretical account pertaining to a domain of study that covers or summarizes the domain in a sufficiently generalizable capacity. See also DESCRIPTIVE ADEQUACY.

GLOBAL: A decree that relates to the film text in its entirety. See also LOCAL.

Identification types: A fundamental interpretive category, whereby an entity is conceptually delimited as either an object or an event. See also EVENT, OBJECT, PREDICATION TYPES.

Interpretation/interpretive: Any construction of meaning or signification as occasioned by a film, starting minimally from the most literal designations of screen phenomena.

LOCAL: A decree occasioned by the film's images and sounds, irrespective of the film text in its entirety. See also GLOBAL.

Long: One of the two predication-types for events, whereby an event is predicated continuously with prior and later transformations. See also EVENT, CONTINUOUS, SHORT.

Macro composed: The constitution of an object or event of several parts. See also MACRO WHOLE, MICRO PARTS, MEREOLOGY.

Macro placing/placement: Focusing one's interpretive attention onto an object and/or event. See also MICRO PLACING/PLACEMENT.

Macro whole: An object or event that is composed of parts. See also MACRO COMPOSED, MICRO PARTS, MEREOLGY.

Mereology: the theory of parts-whole relations, as initiated in early twentieth century logic and subsequently developed in later analytic philosophy. See also MACRO COMPOSED, MICRO PARTS, MACRO WHOLE.

Micro parts: the parts composing an object or event. See also MACRO COMPOSED, MACRO WHOLE, MEREOLGY, MICRO PARTS.

Micro placing/placement: Retaining tacit or intuitive awareness of objects and event as one focuses one's interpretive attention to another aspect of the film text. See also MACRO PLACING/PLACEMENT.

New: One of the two predication-types for objects, whereby an object is decreed to be appearing in the text for the first time, or in terms discontinuous from its prior predications. See also OBJECT, DISCONTINUOUS, PREDICATION-TYPE, OLD.

Object: Any conceptually delimited entity that retains its identity across transformations. See also EVENT.

Old: One of the two predication-types for objects, whereby an object is predicated in terms that are conjunctive with its prior predications. See also OBJECT, CONJUNCTIVE, PREDICATION-TYPE, NEW.

Overlap: The process whereby two entities share the same content, including two parts of a whole. See also DISCRETE.

Physiological (processes): Operations of the mind/brain executed automatically. The subject is not aware of these operations and cannot accede to them via conscious introspection, although their effects can be felt: e.g. percepts of primary, secondary or tertiary qualities. See also CONSCIOUS and PRECONSCIOUS.

Preconscious (processes): Operations of the mind/brain executed by force of habit. The subject is not aware of these operations but can retroactively accede to them via conscious introspection. See also CONSCIOUS and PHYSIOLOGICAL.

Predication types: Fundamental interpretive categories, whereby an entity is predicated, as distinct from another entity of its type. See EVENT, IDENTIFICATION TYPE, OBJECT.

Prolonged: An object-event jointly predicated old and long. See also OBJECT, EVENT, OLD, LONG.

Reidentify: The act of identifying an object as the same as a previously identified object.

Schema: The conceptual *a priori* for constructing content and interpretations from screen phenomena.

Short: One of the two predication-types for events, whereby an event is predicated disjunctively from a prior continuity of transformations. See also EVENT, PREDICATION-TYPE, LONG.

Sudden: An object-event jointly predicated new and short. See also OBJECT, EVENT, NEW, SHORT.

Sustained: An object-event jointly predicated new and long. See also OBJECT, EVENT, NEW, LONG.

Token events: An individually identified event. See also IDENTIFICATION-TYPES, PREDICATION-TYPES, TOKEN OBJECTS, TOKEN PREDICATIONS.

Token objects: An individually identified object. See also IDENTIFICATION-TYPES, PREDICATION-TYPES, TOKEN EVENTS, TOKEN PREDICATIONS.

Token predications: An individually predicated object or event, habitually in terms of its affective qualities. See also IDENTIFICATION-TYPES, PREDICATION-TYPES, TOKEN EVENTS, TOKEN OBJECTS.

Underdetermined: The extent to which one's interpretations are not significantly determined by mind-independent phenomena. See also CONSTRUCTIVIST.

Viewer's activity: The operations of the mind/brain whereby viewers interpret films – albeit, as limited to acts of ratiocination and comprehension. See also VIEWING EXPERIENCE.

Viewing experience: The perceptual, affective and cognitive operations informing the viewer's interpretation of a film text. See also VIEWER'S ACTIVITY.

Preface

As an analytic-cognitivist intervention in film studies, the current thesis is at once estranged from, but also aligned with, various currents in the discipline. The thesis is estranged from film studies because the emphasis on philosophy and cognition may seem at an incommensurable removal from the knowledge claims put forth within the framework of cultural theory and culturally delimited historical research. The removal may seem so considerable as to raise doubt as to whether the thesis – its soundness notwithstanding – is even germane or non-trivial. As I hope to outline in this preface, such criticisms of philosophy and cognitive theory, both within and beyond film studies, are neither novel, nor especially robust.

Inversely, the thesis is consistent with theoretical and scholarly antecedents, both within and beyond film studies, in which as much analytic philosophy and cognitive theory have determined research. Determined means not only supplying answers, but more fundamentally, raising questions, as well as discovering gaps or misconceptions, judged crucial to the study of film, and/or pertinent disciplines. The implication is that both cognitive theory and analytical philosophy – either separately or jointly – do not so much answer, much less refute, historical excavation and/or culturalism. Instead, these fields which have marked, but are not limited to, film studies – i.e. philosophy and theories of the mind/brain – point to the shortcomings of more culturally minded approaches.

While cultural theory and proximate history inquiry enjoys multiple guises and zones of internal disagreement, these methodologies, as pertaining to film, operate within a defining set of boundaries. Research is confined, as the very etymology of “culture” conveys, to human-made artifacts, with the emphasis on “made.” The scholar need not be concerned with the human determinants or even antecedents of cultural constructs. That people can and do make and experience artefacts is taken as a matter of course. The priority is to understand these artefacts, according to specifiable processes of production, transmission and reception, that are not exhausted by insights gleaned from the sciences, or vague and even sophistic appeals to so-called “human nature.”

The above priority, identifying the social and cultural determinants in the making and experience of artefacts, dovetails with the historian’s task. Since the objects of inquiry – society, culture – are extraneous to natural phenomena, they cannot be defined in terms of universal constancies, much less nomological strictures. On the contrary, the scholar must underscore the

impermanence and contingency of the object of study. Delimited entities – themes, ideologies, filmgoing habits, even styles – emerge at identifiable junctures in history, due to extraneous forces, and remain no less liable to vanish. There are no universals, any more than individual people, and their societies, last forever. Even for critics of periodization, the recourse is to posit the broader conceptual regularities – according to which individual trends or even epistemes and paradigms inevitably come and go.¹

At first glance, the above research approaches would seem to rule out any putatively universal perspectives, including work in cognitive theory and philosophy. The primacy accorded to historical impermanence cannot admit the abstract models and concepts frequently associated with philosophy. The culturalist’s emphasis of external determinants, as well as focus on the innumerably incommensurable contexts of production, distribution and reception, leaves little to no room for among cognitive theory’s most cherished tenets: that biologically rooted human capacities cut across all other boundaries and contingencies. Yet, from the standpoint of cognitive theory, such biological capacities prove significant and fundamental even to cultural and historical phenomena. The ability for humans to create and engage with cultural artefacts, including films, is at once species-specific² (i.e. to humans), yet not exclusive to the variegations of history, society and culture – not withstanding trivial recitations of dates and chronologies. Insofar as this ability requires elucidation, cognitive theory becomes the choice approach – whereas culturalism isn’t.

Similar arguments arise with respect to analytic philosophy. The relationship of conceptual speculation to scientific inquiry remains fraught. The latter’s knowledge claims are typically thought to be reducible to empirical testing. The former’s knowledge claims, by contrast, rely only trivially on the empirically verified, privileging instead rationally defensible inferences. Of course, this distinction – between the empirically verifiable and the conceptually devised – is rarely clear cut in acts of knowledge production. The prospect remains that claims of epistemic import are rarely reducible to corroborating instances.³ The role of conceptual analysis in constructing theories and even unearthing evidence will require further clarification. Suffice to

¹ David Bordwell’s use of the “problem-solution” model for art historiography and style theory is one such example (Bordwell 1997). Outside of film studies, see Stephen Toulmin’s “genealogy of problems” in philosophy of science is another example (Toulmin 1972).

² On the pertinence and priority of “species-specific” approaches to art and aesthetics theory, see Dissanayake 1995.

³ See throughout Hanson 1958, Kuhn 1970 and 1985, Quine 1963: 20-46, and Chomsky 1980.

say for now, within a cognitive approach to film, philosophy will help raise pertinent questions and (provisionally) determine answers, in the absence of stone-cold proof.

Such questions and answers, of import to film studies, will encompass the following. What are the fundamental **interpretive** categories and mental operations according to which viewers – meaning all viewers – experience (all) cinematic textual artefacts? Such questions are certainly not unprecedented within cognitive theory, including its incarnations within film studies. Nonetheless, the expectation in the current thesis is that ideas drawn from analytic philosophy will shed novel light on concerns addressed within the cognitive wing of film studies. Theories of individuation and eventhood, informing select sectors of analytic philosophy, will be shown to be equally promissory in delineating the distinct types of content viewers construct as occasioned by screen phenomena. Likewise, notions such as **predication** point to the role of affect within the **viewing experience**. The scholarly contribution is to advance a universal theory⁴ of the viewing experience. In more technical terms, this theory is a conceptual model covering the viewer’s fundamental interpretive alternatives, as occasioned by the experience of film texts.

I hasten to add that I have focused on the fundamental uniformity of the viewer’s competence – that all viewers share the same cognitive, perceptual and affective hardwiring allowing them to experience film texts. Yet, the arguments informing the thesis can be understood in the opposite direction: in accounting for why there can be so many varied viewing experiences or interpretations of the same film. Viewers are apt to construct different objects, events, or to apportion different significance to the same objects and events, when faced with nominally the same film text. With respect to pluralistic approaches, the thesis equally accommodates culturalist perspectives. A culturalist may opt to delineate different interpretive practices *as per* extra-subjective norms or institutional factors. A cognitivist approach, as advanced here, will trace diverse interpretations back to specifiable mental operations: the theory meets head on what each individual viewer can and will do upon experiencing a film text.

At the same time, it is worth asking: why pursue such a thesis within film studies, as opposed to cognitive psychology? The most obvious retort is that disciplinary and

⁴ This ambition runs counter to Bordwell’s injunction against “Grand Theory,” in favour of piecemeal inquiry (Bordwell and Carroll 1996). As has been remarked, Bordwell’s own forays into narrative poetics and interpretive theory (Bordwell 1985, Bordwell 1989a) are (admirably) far reaching. Earlier analytic philosophers would not have accepted that there need be any contradiction between a project’s inductive reach and purportedly atomistic approaches (e.g. Russell, Carnap, Goodman).

methodological purity are myths. No significant theory or approach that has marked film studies – psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism, semiology, narratology, style theory and poetics, cultural studies – has its origins within film studies. More bluntly, virtually every scholarly breakthrough has some antecedent in a varyingly cognate or remote field: recall that André Bazin, the medium-essentialist *par excellence*, inaugurated his forays into moving image theory and criticism with an essay on photography. Cognitivism, in drawing on apparently extra-disciplinary tenets and traditions, is no different. More to the point, there can be no reason why it ought to be different.

Yet, a cognitive theory of film raises questions that cognitive theory *tout court* – i.e. absent any concern for film, culture or artistic creativity – at best addresses only implicitly. Whatever the rich advances made in, for example, cognitive linguistics, psychology of perception or affect theory, psychological theories of creativity and culture remain a minority concern. Conversely, an analytic-cognitivist account of the viewing experience will not limit its inquiry to more mundane or quotidian cognitions, percepts and affects. Instead, the issues broached will have to encompass such far reaching concerns as ambiguity, metaphor, narration, as well as non-representational art. Work of this kind has been pursued in art historiography, neuroaesthetics, narratology and film studies. The current thesis is part of a minority but vital constellation of disciplines.

Film here becomes of special interest, as it is a significantly visual medium and art-form, whose image track can rarely if never be exhausted by appeals to its literal content. An image of an ocean floor, at the start of Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975), or a flashing light, throughout Tony Conrad's *The Flicker* (1965), activates far richer repertoires of meaning and affect than can be surmised from a description of a visual percept's purported or literal content: e.g. how the naked eye "sees" an ocean floor or flashing light. Part of the challenge is to move from seemingly routine percepts of individual images and sounds, to far richer cognitions and affects. Inversely, even the most apparently straightforward viewing experiences will be shown to be deceptively simple, or more than meets the eye.

To briefly reiterate: the current thesis should prove at once distinct from, but also on a continuum with, prior work in cognitive film theory. My expectation is that the cognitive film theorist will find much to argue and even disagree with, albeit within a sufficiently productive capacity: the arguments and disagreements should arise from a range of compatible and even

consonant priorities and concerns.⁵ There is little doubt at this point in the history of film studies that the precepts and aims of cognitivism constitute a viable and indispensable research project – to deny so is to court ignorance. At the same time, the appeal to analytic ideas and methods within film scholarship, can only serve to sharpen and clarify existing terms and propositions.⁶

By contrast, culturalists and/or historians wary or unaware of cognitive theory, as well as analytic philosophy, may find their own priorities at considerable variance from all that has been said so far, and much of what will follow. One must perhaps allow here for the fractured state of the discipline – film studies, whatever else it may be, is *not* a compact discipline, but rather marked by so-called incommensurable paradigms.⁷ The separation between cognitivism and

⁵ See Smith 2017 – which accords greater weight to neurological findings than this current thesis permits. Smith 2017 appeared just as this manuscript was nearing completion – thus disallowing that I engage with its robust and engaging arguments in more than just passing. I offer here only three qualifications. Firstly, Smith never advocates that empirical testing and related experiments must always trump other means of argument: e.g. thought experiments, conceptual reasoning, even intuition and self-reports. Far from it, by the multiple examples he gives, theorizing fails when it is reductively empirical or positivistic (see his remarks on “neural behaviourism,” 2017: 80-81, to cite only one example). Secondly, insights as derived from the neurosciences remain highly tenuous and even impoverished – particularly when contrasted with work in other naturalist fields (e.g. physics). Take the phenomenon of “auditory splitting” – whereby one has difficulty attending to two disparate sounds at once (e.g. following two separate conversations at the same time). By Smith’s own admission, neurologically based insights into what implications this limitation of the mind/brain has for memory is indeterminate, despite that it is an experience to which any human being can testify (2017: 63-69). Yet, precisely because there exists no conclusive evidence, conceptual analysis becomes even more informing, if not imperative. Thirdly, while itemizing different parts and functions of the brain is indispensable (e.g. the relation of the temporal lobe to auditory stimuli; the occipital lobe, to visual input) such piecemeal procedures hardly suffice more inductive aspirations: constructing a broader theory. A universally applicable model is what animated Smith, if I read him correctly, in one of his earlier interventions: a conceptual system for one’s construction of and engagement with characters in fictional cinema (Smith 1995). Many of its most signal accomplishments – e.g. substituting Brecht’s theory of spectatorship with a more dynamic and layered process – would have been drastically foreshortened if curtailed by the requirements of testing and proof. In advancing theories, one enlists the known data, whenever possible – as opposed to circumventing the range of admissible theories, as premised on data alone.

⁶ Take the nascent field of “neuroaesthetics,” which seeks, as its very name conveys, to theorize aesthetic experience, albeit as premised on knowledge and findings culled from the neurosciences (Ramachandran and Hirstein 1999, Onians 2016, Smith 2017). While many of its early endeavours remain promissory, their advances should not be taken as positing the priority of empirical data over all other protocols of attaining epistemic certainty (or plausibility). For instance, Semir Zeki posits that the purpose of aesthetic artefacts is to accurately render one’s experience of extra-mental and non-artistic phenomena: e.g. Vermeer’s paintings evoke the likeness of their purported subjects, albeit allowing for degrees of interpretive ambiguity. He then marshals impressive neurological insights into the inner-workings of the brain, to explicate the mechanisms whereby people experience visual percepts – both within pictorial and non-artistic contexts (Zeki 1998 and 1999). Unfortunately, the reach of his arguments remains drastically circumscribed by his dubious premise. His emphasis on the representational content of art-works curiously excludes non-mimetic theories of art, whose import and value have long been documented (Carroll 1999b). Yet even within the restrictions of mimetic theories, his acknowledged deferral to Platonism all but sidesteps the prospects that art-works can render their purported subjects (purposively) unfamiliar. That much has been understood by later notions of *ostranenie* or so-called “transfiguration” (see Lapointe 2016b). As such, Zeki’s parochialism, while neurologically detailed, only affirms the import of conceptual analysis to naturalist inquiry: data should serve to animate a conceptually defensible model, not the other way around.

⁷ I have addressed this concern in Lapointe 2016a.

culturalism may even one day come to resemble the so-called chasm between the two cultures of the humanities and sciences.⁸ Even permitting such concessions, the question may arise: when all is said and done, what might the use-value be of cognitive research and insights?

At the most modest level, I would like to advance that universal and cognitive approaches can yield pedagogical benefits. While much of the content that follows will prove recondite to a freshman readership, the impulses animating the project will not. One of the challenges facing any undergraduate instructor of film history or aesthetics is how to transmit, to students, film texts estranged from the so-called canonical storytelling format. Faced with a classroom acclimated to hyper-classical and/or post-classical cinema, what arguments and approaches can be marshalled to stimulate their interest in, for example, avant-garde or art cinema? The usual default, entirely commonsensical and empirically adequate, is to underscore the historical and cultural discreteness of the experimental from the mainstream, or classical narrative films from their more artistic brethren.⁹

The challenge remains that not all students need make the leap. Some will prove receptive to the exigencies of cultural and artistic alternatives to more familiar cinemas; others can resist. While there is no bulwark against recalcitrant ignorance, the cognitive approach presents at least one rhetorically effective advantage. The perceptual, cognitive and affective capacities that lie at the basis of the viewing experience remain the same from one film text to the next. Inversely, they are also species-specific: they set human animals apart from all other forms of life. By stressing the continuum between avant-garde, art and classical traditions or styles of filmmaking, the transition in viewing experiences from one to the next becomes less forbidding. By highlighting the unique human competences required to make meaning of all film texts, the cognitivist approach presents the viewing experience in terms that are demotic and, for lack of a better word, empowering.¹⁰

The final irony of cognitive theory, broadly defined, is that in highlighting the innate mental resources and creative aptitudes of all individuals, it ultimately stands as more progressive, inclusive and constructive than the culturalist's emphasis on historically discrete periods and socially rarefied (if not frankly cliquish) environments and milieus.

⁸ On the oft-cited two cultures, see Snow 2008. See also Smith 2017

⁹ See Burch 1969 and 2007, Bordwell 1985, as well as Metz 1971a.

¹⁰ On the (radically) political implications of cognitive approaches, see Chomsky 1999.

Introduction

Movies, Minds and Methods

A Problem for Film Studies

Kristin Thompson's neoformalist and narratological study of television and film, *Storytelling in Film and Television*, opens with a non-sequitur. From the very first line, Thompson informs her readers that "[p]opular films and television tell stories in an entertaining, easily comprehensible fashion." (2003: ix). Yet the effortless enjoyment with which viewers experience such texts¹ belies the singularly baffling challenge whereby these same "audience[s]" must keep track of several characters, multiple plot lines, motifs, and thematic meanings." (*ibid.*). Not only that – viewers "manage, remarkably, to keep track of not only a single long-running narrative, but [especially in television] often several simultaneously." (*ibid.*) Thompson pursues: "How do film and television writers juggle the need for graspable, enjoyable stories with the many restrictions imposed by their respective commercial formats? [...] Such questions are not often asked by scholars of film and television, yet they seem crucial to a thorough understanding of how [films and] television programs are created and how they affect their viewers."² (*ibid.*)

¹ The use of the word "text" to designate either films or other artefactual entities has been widely debated (see Chatman 1990). Sometimes in film studies, especially in cognitivism and poetics, the designation of films as texts is disputed as reducing all interpretive activity (by viewers) to narrowly defined hermeneutics, and further assimilating the discipline into cognate areas of structuralism and semiotics. See Bordwell 1989a, but also Plantinga 2009. I use the term more capaciously, to indicate the artefactual entity occasioning the viewer's experience. In the cited examples throughout the thesis, a text is usually a film *per se*, though the definition allows for an entire corpus of films, an excerpt of a single film, or mnemonic reconstructions of a single film or variously associated films. Whatever its merits, this approach seems to me consonant with the constructivist wing of cognitive theory (Bordwell 1985 and 1989a), even if it has not been stipulated as such within cognitivism. At the very least, it does not reduce all viewing experiences to hermeneutic activity, nor does it endorse structuralist methods.

² Throughout, I occasionally use "viewers," and more often the "viewing experience," as ideal terms to indicate the mental competences, as occasioned by films. The "viewing experience" follows from antecedent terminology in cognitivism, where theories are concerned with the "viewer's activity" (Bordwell 1985). It is also stipulated as distinct from "audiences," which carries associations of historical research, and "spectator(s)," which recalls canonical contemporary film theory. By contrast, not all cognitivists are so adamant when it comes to selecting and excluding vocabulary (Smith 1995).

Thompson is working within the field of poetics³ – how art is conceived and executed – as applied to film and mainly television narration. Yet poetics in all its variants asks and answers separate questions from what otherwise can be designated the viewing experience – what viewers do, cognitively, perceptually and affectively, when they experience and understand films, both narrational and otherwise.⁴ Such interpretive activity occurs regardless of whether viewers have any conscious insight into how a film might have been conceived or made. This concern – by what mental competences can viewers make sense of and/or affectively experience films – ought to be taken as theoretically paramount to any inquiry into how films are made and/or experienced.⁵ Despite notable exceptions, it is taken for granted, if not neglected, by scholars

³ The tradition of poetics stretches back all the way to antiquity. For its relevance to film studies, see Bordwell 2008: 11-55.

⁴ David Marr makes a distinction between “what” and “how” questions in cognitive theory, following Noam Chomsky’s similar demarcation between competence and performance (Marr 2010, Chomsky 1965). For both Chomsky and Marr, cognitive theory studies competence – the innate ability to activate specifiable operations (acquire a native language; perceive visual phenomena). Competence is distinct from performance: e.g. linguistic utterances as empirically deployed by actual speaker-hearers; percepts as experienced by an actual person. Linguistic competence pertains to the means by which speaker-hearers can acquire a language from infancy to early childhood, despite having only limited, if not impoverished exposure to said language. Perceptual competence holds similar implications: what allows us to perceive motion or depth, following merely the transmission of light from some mind-independent phenomena to our retinas? By contrast, linguistic performance signifies utterances arising in empirical circumstances: e.g. there may be locutionary or illocutionary usages of the same expression. Visual performance likewise applies to delimited perceptual tasks: e.g. how to program a computer to identify colour. (On the latter reference to AI, lest anyone claim that the only value of scientific inquiry is its real-world applications, e.g. studying the mind to design better machines, Marr wisely cautions: “For far too long, a heuristic program for carrying out some task was held to be a theory of that task, and the distinction between what a program did and how it did it was not taken seriously.” 2010: 28). As should be clear, the current thesis is concerned with competence over performance – a priority that resonates with cognitive theory but has too often been neglected throughout film studies.

⁵ The deferral to competence/performance requires some clarification. Historically, the distinction had been associated with a strong modularity thesis. In other words, it made sense, and it perhaps only made sense, to posit innate mental capacities with respect to domain specificity: modular regions of the brain designed for the input (and output) of certain kinds of content. Hence, linguistic competence (in the Chomskyan sense) pertained exclusively to the language faculty, while visual competence was only applicable to (at the risk of redundancy) visual perception. This restriction of competence to modularity was as much a scientific as a methodological stance: if linguistic competence was restricted to a specifiable region of the brain and mental operations, then the advantage (and challenge) for the theorist was to explain this region and its functions in terms that couldn’t rely on commonsensical appeals to general intelligence. See Chomsky 1965, Fodor 1983 – and, more recently, Paradis 2003. This disciplinary stricture was not without interest, but it is worth noting that in later years, cognitive theorists moved away from a strong modular approach, without forsaking their attendant commitments and epistemic claims. Hence, Fodor posited that the mind could not be massively modular, while singling out abductive inference as an identifiable cognitive skill that proved exceptionally far reaching in humans (Fodor 2001). More equivocally, Chomsky reiterated a commitment to modularity (Chomsky 2018), all the while shifting course as to which interpretive actions, and concomitant parts of language, fell wholesale and exclusively within the language faculty, narrowly defined (Hauser, Chomsky and Fitch 2002). Chomsky’s case may prove more vexed, as the computations he has always imputed to language – e.g. recursion – are explicitly drawn from mathematics (and mathematical theory), such that language and mathematics are theorized as being inextricably linked, if not co-extensive, in mental, neurological and even evolutionary terms (for a more recent critique, see Bloom 2000: 213-239). Alongside this insight, his approach to semantics follows from a Cartesian nativist view, such that the mind/brain is born with

within the discipline.⁶

One finds a theoretical void at the heart of film studies, as evinced by the Thompson quote above. It is indisputable to the point of being trivial that film texts can invariably be experienced within some intelligible capacity by humans: that one always responds to and engages with a film, even when the response is boredom and the screen phenomena are misapprehended or yield only rudimentary insights from the viewer. Nonetheless, virtually all sentient viewers experience cognitions, percepts and affects within some capacity upon the occasion of a film text – an elementary competence shared with at best a meagre sliver of non-human life forms.⁷ From this initial intelligibility, more sophisticated and complex interpretations and experiences are generated,⁸ within the course of a single film viewing or over

innate ideas, and the purpose of language (in evolutionary and functional terms) has always been to express thought: see Chomsky 1966 and 2000, as well as Fodor 1975. In these latter instances especially, a purportedly exclusive divide between modular competence and general intelligence appears less than tenable, while allowing that the term “general intelligence” still needs elucidation, and that human thought remains species-specific (i.e. if ideas are innate, then how many do we have and by what procedures do they relate to the lexicon in terms of meaning and use?). His notion of “psychic continuity,” as invoked in this thesis (chapter four, notes 17 and 19), raises similar questions, as it is meant to encompass visual perception as much as linguistic meaning and its derived use: as such, it cannot be modular, yet clearly is restricted to uniquely *human* competence. What’s clearly needed, both in the work of cognitive theory, and what is clearly espoused, in this thesis, is an expanded view of competence, akin to the Kantian *a prioris*. One needs to advance a specifiable set of mental operations and characteristics, whether this be “psychic continuity,” “situational constancy” (Zeki 1999) or, more modestly, macro placing and clustered predication, that, in terms of ideal stipulation, is more explanatorily precise than “general intelligence,” yet not necessarily theorized (for now) as tied to modular faculties. Indeed, insofar as all interpretations, including perceptual judgements, hinge on some form of thought, no matter how embryonic, then it may be that all viewing experiences have some still unexplored connection to language and its possible *modular* competence.

⁶ I intend this criticism to apply to cognitivism, though that there are obvious (if unacknowledged) gaps in understanding in non-cognitivist film studies should go without saying. To cite a random, yet telling, example, the redoubtable Henry Jenkins writes: “Convergence does not occur through media appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs *within the brains of individual consumers* and through their social interactions with others.” (2006: 3, emphasis added). The signalling out of “brains,” prior to any mention of “social interactions,” is Jenkins’s, such that a theory of “convergence” culture would have to proffer insight into the mental processes whereby these cultures converge. It should come as a surprise that the ensuing study scarcely mentions cognitive theory (in film or otherwise), to say nothing of philosophy of mind.

⁷ With some humour, philosopher Ronald de Sousa mocks the quasi-Cartesian pre-occupation dubbed “species-narcissism,” which is: “a kind of childish quest for some special dignity about being human[.]” (1987: 3). The point is well taken, however much de Sousa’s own contribution to the study of emotion – the notion of “paradigm scenarios” (1987: 170-202) – is nothing if not exemplary in specifying the interaction of cognitive competences and select affects as uniquely human. See also Dissanayake 1995: 1-23.

⁸ The use of “generated” is here derived from Chomsky’s concept of a (transformational) generative grammar (Chomsky 1965). Generative linguistic competence is linked to the more fundamental cognitive process of creativity: the (innate) ability for any human to devise or generate infinite linguistic expressions from finite rules or principles, whereby words can be associated to create phrases, clauses and sentences, just as sentences, clauses and even words can be modified or transformed. The term “generative” conveys not just the rules or principles *as per* which words are transformed into other words (e.g. morphological changes), or words into phrases, clauses and sentences (e.g. a noun – “John” – can be transformed into a noun phrase – “John’s car” – and further still: “John’s car is in the garage.”) More importantly, upon hearing nouns, noun phrases and the like, speakers can generate novel nouns, sentences, etc. Having heard “the pen is on the desk,” a speaker might then say: “and the *pencil* is on the desk

multiple film viewings – a competence and generative capacity that excludes almost all, if not all, non-human life forms.

The Current Project

The current thesis attempts to redress this lacuna by developing an **explanatorily adequate** account of what viewers do when they experience films.⁹ By explanatorily adequate, one means that any sentient person can experience cognitions, percepts and affects, as occasioned by a film text. The challenge is to canvass as wide a range of cinematic examples as will allow, to explain that the interpretations and experiences activated by these films reduce to far simpler conceptual or mental principles and fall within the range of delimited parameters or operations.¹⁰ What matters is not the inexhaustible range of individual films or select interpretations, as the more fundamental cognitive, perceptual and affective capacities that enable said interpretations and experiences.¹¹

too.” The implication for film studies is that, while film is not a language, film viewing requires mental competences that are generative: the ability to construct an interpretation as occasioned by a film text, following the example of an antecedent interpretation and film text.

⁹ The terms observational, descriptive and explanatory adequacy recur throughout Chomskyan linguistics, albeit shifting in meaning and application. Earlier on, descriptive adequacy entails that a theory successfully itemizes the relevant features of a given domain or corpus, while observational adequacy merely commands that the domain (or corpus) has been effectively identified and delimited. Explanatory adequacy entails that the descriptively adequate theory is the best suited to scholarly aims and purposes (Chomsky 1967; also, Chomsky 1965). In later work, Chomsky locates a conflict between descriptive and explanatory adequacy. The purpose of the scholar’s explanations, in not just linguistics but presumably all cognitive research, is to provide insight into why people can perform an array of creative tasks (acquire a language; read; write; create art, even of the most rudimentary quality) to a variety and degree that no other living organism can attain. The scholar who inventories the varieties of creative or cognitive performances (e.g. in film, a range of film styles or interpretive habits) privileges descriptive adequacy over explanatory adequacy (i.e. by what processes can any filmmaker potentially tell a story, or by what processes can any viewer potentially comprehend a film, when the same is impossible for a dog, a plant or an amoeba?). The scholar must therefore attend to accounting for fundamental cognitive processes, while accepting that the diversity of individual cognitions, percepts and the like is left implicit (Chomsky 2000: 3-18 and Chomsky 2015).

¹⁰ The theory of principles and parameters is found in Chomsky 1982 and Chomsky 2015, although it can be applied to cognitive research more broadly. It postulates that human cognitive competence is premised on fundamental frames/concepts or principles, and a range or parameter of alternatives and/or operations/scripts. The theorist must therefore explain these frames or principles (i.e. most basically, *what* are the frames/principles?), as well as by what operations they might relate to one another (e.g. one might have frame-*x* or frame-*y* in conjunction with respectively frame-*A* or frame-*B*, etc.).

¹¹ The current thesis is cognitivist, but not explicitly nor restrictively Chomskyan – with some exceptions, it does not draw on Chomsky’s technical work (e.g. deep vs. surface structure, verb/auxiliary raising, governance and binding, digital/discrete infinity, internal vs. external merge, pronominal vs. trace as distinct grammatical sub-categories), but instead is indebted to his philosophy of science (e.g. critiques of empiricist methods and concomitantly the correspondence theory of truth) and methodologically applicable distinctions concerning the mind/brain (e.g. the study of competence vs. performance). For a brief period, film theory attempted to develop a theory of cinematic

Definitively resolving every question and quandary arising from such an enterprise is impossible within the course of a single study. Still, this thesis is premised on what ought to be understood as an unavoidable postulate. Yes, there is a seemingly infinite array of films that have been made throughout history, in addition to an ever-increasing diversity of audiences, who have watched and received these films. However, antecedent to and enabling this film watching and reception is most likely an innate framework, hardwired into human capacity (or constituting our inherent mental competences). That all people, across periods, regardless of identities, and for all different tokens¹² of cinematic artifacts, can watch and experience films coheres with the following prospect: film viewing, as a cognitive, perceptual and affective capacity, activates something that is part of our nature, long before any individual, social or historical viewing act (or performance) is “naturalized” in the domain of nurture.¹³ Zeroing in on what this nature is – i.e. naturalist inquiry – is a worthwhile scholarly endeavour.

More to the point, such an endeavour stems from work in the proximate fields of cognitive theory, understood broadly, analytic philosophy,¹⁴ as well as cognitive film theory

poetics and comprehension as premised on Chomskyan linguistics – see for instance Chateau 1986, Colin 1992 – with mixed results. One difficulty may have been that some authors explicitly sought to bridge the gap between Metzian structuralism and Chomskyan cognitivism (Colin 1992: 47-84), while overlooking that the Chomskyan revolution is widely believed to have rendered obsolete structuralist tenets and methods, at least in studies of grammar and language acquisition. Still, for a sympathetic overview, see Buckland 2007.

¹² The token-type distinction is originally credited to Charles Peirce: “A common mode of estimating the amount of matter in a MS. [i.e. manuscript] or printed book is to count the number of words. There will ordinarily be about twenty *the*'s on a page, and of course they count as twenty words. In another sense of the word ‘word,’ however, there is but one word ‘the’ in the English language[.]” (4.537). “The” in the first sense of *word* (i.e. “twenty *the*'s on a page [...] count as twenty words”) are *tokens*, or token-*the*'s, of the *type* “the,” i.e. in the second sense of *word* (i.e. “there is but one word ‘the’ in the English language.”).

¹³ The assumption that we are formally inculcated, through accretion and time, how to read a film (and like cultural artefacts), is so ubiquitous that there hardly seems to be any point in naming names. Still, Bordwell announces that his narrative theory ought to “spur viewers, critics, and teachers to consider how their activities operate within tacit, conventional frameworks that are social and historical.” (1985: 154). The problem is, he scarcely defines what he means by social and historical. If the point is that, at moments in history, films have been made and watched (e.g. *Citizen Kane* was released in 1941; I re-watched it last year), then his declaration is trivial. If he means that film poetics and viewing are somehow premised, exclusively, on extra-subjective, external determinants, then this strong empiricism, and/or external realism, are antithetical (to the point of oxymoronic) to his constructivist cognitivism, as evinced more consistently in Bordwell 1989b.

¹⁴ Both terms – cognitive theory, analytic philosophy – merit some explanation. Cognitive theory, as deployed here, can unfold research into the neurosciences: i.e. the physical constituents of the brain and their functions (Head and Holmes 1911). However, it also extends to work in the proximate (and often overlapping) field of psychology, which allows for experimental research but can be equally theoretical and speculative: schema theory (Minsky 1975, Schank and Abelson 1977, Arbib and Hesse 1986, Hastie 1981), including work on memory (Bartlett 1961); computational theory (Turing 1950), including accounts of mental reasoning and logic (Johnson-Laird 1983). To this, one can add, explanatory hypotheses and theories of: language acquisition (Chomsky 1957, 1965, 1967, 1982 and 2015); visual perception (Marr 2010, Gibson 1950, 1966 and 2015, Gregory 1971 and 1997, Hochberg 1964, Rock 1995); and affect/emotion (Tomkins 2008, Frijda 1987, Plutchik 1980, LeDoux 1996). As should already be clear, the thesis tends more to the theoretical wing than the hard neurosciences. Although the two are not mutually

(henceforth cognitivism¹⁵). In terms of scope and ambition, analytic philosophy has often set itself the task of devising finite and simple explanations to account for seemingly inexhaustible and infinitely variegated problems¹⁶ – e.g. how to germanely and concisely formulate a theory of the world, in its psychological, physical and artefactual incarnations,¹⁷ and/or of appearances,¹⁸ understood as part of the world. The insight is that apparently manifold and infinite phenomena can be reduced to a parsimonious restriction of elementary principles and functions – a belief shared throughout the natural sciences.¹⁹

exclusive, the priority is towards a robustly parsimonious account that covers the viewing experiences of film texts. Knowing that the basal ganglia retain habits (principally motor habits) becomes less important, in the current context, than postulating distinct mental processes (physiological, preconscious, conscious) and delineating their interactions in executing multiple operations, including but not limited to habit retention. Studies in the basal ganglia, of capital significance to medical professionals, prove unavoidable in comprehending and perhaps treating cases of brain damage or deterioration (e.g. Parkinson's). By contrast, a theory of the viewing experience, as attempted in cognitive film theory, applies to too many parts of the brain worth enumerating. The challenge is to develop a concise and consistent repertoire of processes and functions that adequately covers an inexhaustible range of film texts, and without flying in the face of established scientific insight. For example, by at least one authoritative source, neuroscientific research strongly suggests that no part of the brain is exclusively responsible for emotions and affective activity (LeDoux 1996: 73-103). Therefore, a cognitive theory of the viewing experience that attempts to privilege one single system of the brain – the limbic system – as the site of affective engagement may not be a promissory pursuit (i.e. *pace* Smith 2003: 15-40). As for analytic philosophy, it is far too capacious and unruly as a tradition to be reduced to a uniform discipline or (ironically) to a definition. I have my own thoughts as to how “analytic philosophy” might most adequately be defined, which cannot be developed here. Suffice to say, among the authors relevant to the thesis, one can count: Frege 1997; Russell 1926 and 2010; Whitehead 1920; Carnap 1967; Goodman 1977, 1978 and 1983; Quine 1963; Strawson 2003; Davidson 2001; Putnam 1975 and 1981; Danto 1981; and Lewis 1973 and 1983. My usage of their work is selective, however, and careful readers will note several key areas of disagreement. Equally, I draw on disparate philosophers and theorists only marginally associated to analytic traditions (Chomsky 1980 and 2000, Meinong 1960, Elster 1999), while neglecting to consider other key analytic figures (Wittgenstein, Moore, Dummett, Austin, Ayer, Grice). Finally, this thesis is by no means the first attempt in film studies to align cognitivism to analytic philosophy: see Allen and Smith 1997 for an earlier and important effort.

¹⁵ Cognitivism is again a broad tradition in film studies. Among the thinkers relevant to the current thesis: Bordwell 1985, 1989a, 1989b; Carroll 1990 and 1996; Currie 2008 and 2010; Branigan 1992; Peterson 1994; Plantinga 2009; Smith 1995 and more recently 2017; Smith 2003; Grodal 1997 and 2009; Tan 1996. Relevant as well are the essays collected in Bordwell and Carroll 1996; Plantinga and Smith 1999; and more recently, Nannicelli and Taberham 2014. Cognitive film theory also has significant antecedents in art historiography (Gombrich 1995) as well as precursors (Sternberg 1978, van Dijk 1979, Perry 1979) and parallel practices (Herman 2002, 2009 and 2013) in literary theory.

¹⁶ Such challenges also hinge on the so-called riddle of induction – how to reliably infer universals from particulars – that has been famously (albeit controversially) taken up in analytic philosophy by Nelson Goodman (Goodman 1983).

¹⁷ Carnap 1967.

¹⁸ Goodman 1977.

¹⁹ Consider these reflections by Albert Einstein, as quoted by Chomsky: “I believe [Einstein wrote] that every true theorist is a kind of tamed metaphysicist, no matter how pure a ‘positivist’ he may fancy himself. The metaphysicist believes that the logically simple is also the real. The tamed metaphysicist believes that not all that is logically simple is embodied in experienced reality, but that the totality of all sensory experience can be ‘comprehended’ on the basis of a conceptual system built on premises of great simplicity.” (Chomsky 2015: vii, originally in Einstein 1950: 13). In a reply to Bertrand Russell a few years before, Einstein argued against the logical positivist rejection of metaphysics (Einstein 1946).

In as much the cognitive sciences as in cognitivism (i.e. cognitive film theory), the expectation is that one's capacity to engage mind-independent reality (including film texts) is at once simple and efficacious – at least in terms of what we do, most frequently by instinct and/or by intuition. The task of the theorist, by contrast, is far less simple and more daunting.²⁰ One must explain the viewing experience of film texts, such that the explanation covers the fundamentals of how everyone watches films, from the avant-garde to the mainstream²¹ – or, inversely, from the normative to the counter-normative. What's more, the theory will have to cover not just exclusively cognition, but also percepts and affects.²²

One development that has surfaced in cognitivism is that it has taken up the challenge of addressing emotion and/or affect²³ in its model of the viewing experience. At the risk of biting off more than can be chewed, such efforts will have to be accorded serious attention in the

²⁰ For a similar insight, in literary-narrative theory, see Herman 2002.

²¹ This comment hinges on the distinction between universal and general theories. Universal accounts are, as the term conveys, designed to cover all examples/cases within a sufficiently abstract (albeit informing and non-trivial) capacity. General accounts serve to delineate normative cases, not accounting for deviations, exceptions or alternatives. Noël Carroll signals his preference for generality over universality. See Carroll 1996: 111-113. Christian Metz's *Grande Syntagmatique* is another example (1971a: 95-145; see also 1971a: 211-215). I would argue that there is no guarantee one can infer exceptions, alternative and the like from general accounts. For example, Carroll singles out morality as a recurring feature in general suspense films, and desire as salient to Hitchcockian suspense – but while Carroll presumes to be able to deduce the Hitchcockian exceptions from his general account, the inferential move from morality to desire is far from transparent. For better or worse, universal accounts which can specify preponderant and minority cases, albeit derived from the same primitive terms and a delimited range of operations, are eminently more promissory. See also Andrew Britton's remark on the difficulties of analysing "norms" in the absence of so-called "extreme" cases (2009: 426; 430-434).

²² Bordwell suggested that cognitivism can or should attend only to percepts and cognitions, but not affects: "I am assuming that a spectator's comprehension of the films' narrative is theoretically separable from his or her emotional responses. (I suspect that psychoanalytic models may be well suited for explaining emotional aspects of film viewing.)" (1985: 30). See also Bordwell 1985: 39-40. However, later cognitivists have insisted that the division between comprehension and affect is untenable (Grodal 1997: 1). In film studies, Grodal's distance from Bordwell is consonant with cognitivism's incorporation of affect into its theoretical approach. The view that a cognitivist framework can adequately grasp emotions and affect is also consistent with the philosophical argument against dualistically dividing emotions and rationality from one another (de Sousa 1987). More crucially, Bordwell's suggestion that the study of emotion is best left to psychoanalysis has been challenged by cognitivists and even licensed psychologists: "The most surprising neglect of the primary role of affect is found where one is least prepared for it, in Freud. This was because, for Freud too, the basic biological motive was a drive." (Tomkins 2008: 23). See also Smith 2003: 174-194.

²³ To varying degrees, feelings, affect and emotion overlap and are usually deployed interchangeably. However, for more technical purposes, they can be specified as follows. Feelings habitually pertain to variously defined experiences, sometimes of a vaguely subjective or intangible quality (e.g. "I feel cold," "Something feels off"). Affect in turn hinges on one's encounter with tertiary qualities, i.e. triggered reactions to determined external stimuli (e.g. "My skin is numb from the cold," "the cold affects my mood"). Finally, emotions have definite intentional objects and more narrowly specified content or names (e.g. "I am upset because it is cold," "I am happy because I get to ski"). Cognitivists are aware of these distinctions and explore further nuances (e.g. emotion vs. sentiment; emotion and the sublime; emotion and humour): see the essays throughout Plantinga and Smith 1999. For my own purpose, I take these distinctions and overlaps to be tacit in my stipulation and designation of the "*Affective Turn*," as in fact the AT focuses preponderantly on *emotions*. Consequently, when I write throughout the study of "viewing experience," I mean to enfold within this designation affect, emotion and feeling.

current study. This consideration stems from logical necessity as well as disciplinary relevance. In terms of logical necessity, affect plays a considerable role in the viewing experience of films – delimiting which interpretive operations are premised on acts of affective engagement will become a recurring concern throughout this thesis. These theoretical aims can be traced directly back to prior work done in cognitivism, under the auspices of what in this thesis is dubbed the “Affective Turn” (henceforth, the AT).²⁴

As for disciplinary relevance, the above summary already makes plain the priority of inquiring into affect within a cognitivist theory of the viewing experiences. Cognitivism has endeavoured to extend its explanatory scope, beyond theories of ratiocination, to elucidate how feelings, emotions and the like are most productively understood as arising from mental operations and related interpretive acts. Emotions are no less beyond the reach of cognitive theory than other mental operations and phenomena. To be sure, not all theorists of emotion adhere to theories of the mind/brain as has been argued in the cognitive sciences.²⁵ Be that as it may, the AT has made important advances in its theory of film viewing. A theory of the viewing experience must start by assessing its accomplishments, while equally coming to terms with its limitations.

Chapter Summary

In keeping with the above account, one can offer more detail as to the thesis’s content, both in terms of a chapter breakdown and further methodological arguments. Part one, “The Viewing Experience: Cognitivism, the Affective Turn and Analytic Philosophy,” encompasses two chapters, which address the disciplinary background. In chapter one, “Cognitive Theory and Film Studies,” I argue for cognitivism’s viability as a research program by outlining its more significant methodological approaches: e.g. its constructivist theory of interpretation is more plausible than realist ontologies found in classical film theory, while its emphasis on schema **correction** provides a more germane model for the viewer’s activity than the subject-positioned spectator in canonical contemporary film theory. No school – least of all cognitivism – ought to

²⁴ See especially Carroll 1990, Grodal 1997, Tan 1996, Smith 1995, and Smith 2003.

²⁵ For example, many cognitive theorists have adopted a functional account of the mind (Johnson-Laird 1983), yet such an approach is widely disputed, including among philosophers of emotion: see Wollheim 1999.

be permitted the last word in film studies.²⁶ Still, what ought to emerge is that cognitivism's principles and achievements are at once sufficiently robust yet supple as to guarantee this branch of film studies a still much longer shelf life.

This outline segues directly into the second chapter, "Cognitivism's 'Affective Turn' and Analytic Philosophy," whereby I focus on more recent challenges arising within cognitivism. On the one hand, the move to incorporate affect or emotion within a model of the viewing experience expands cognitivism's explanatory adequacy: it now seeks to account for the interpretive and perceptual activities whereby viewers experience emotions while watching films. On the other hand, what I dub the "Affective Turn" within cognitivism raises problems for the same reason: none of its efforts so far have successfully posited a model that would delimit, in the most parsimonious language available, the range of cognitive, perceptual and affective experiences available to viewers as they watch a film.

Such criticisms cut to the heart of the thesis's commitment to explanatory adequacy. The analysis must cohere with prospectively any viewer's competence in constructing intelligible interpretations (such that these encompass percepts and affective dispositions), as occasioned by virtually any film text. Anyone can watch an avant-garde film, followed by an ostensible Hollywood movie, and in both instances the viewing experience will yield cognitive, perceptual

²⁶ More recently, there have been efforts to advance the view that human activity cannot be significantly explained in terms of properties and functions of the mind/brain, or that these properties and functions remain insoluble. Examples of the former can be found in Tallis 2004 and 2011, among other interventions; for the latter, see Fodor 1998 and 2001. Either view, however thought-provoking, remains far from definitive. Tallis, for instance, divides between what he terms the "intracerebral" – our physiological substratum that precedes our induction into and exposure to social contexts – and said social contexts, which are determined by "frames of reference that have no neurophysiological correlates." (2004: 31). Yet, for "human consciousness" to have been "socialised," there must be something to the so-called "intracerebral" which enabled this – and that remains unique to our (i.e. human) hardwiring (*ibid.*). More simply, when Tallis calls for "a *critical neuro-epistemology*" (*ibid.*), one cannot help but agree: the continuum from the "neuro" to "epistemology" ought to seem incontrovertible, if still barely understood (see also Smith 2017, especially 86-91). This latter point – lack of understanding – brings us to Fodor, whose case proved more vexed. As an eminent figure in cognitive theory (Fodor 1983), he more recently has been led to distance himself from his earlier work. One significant contention is that the modularity of mind thesis, earlier championed by Fodor, cannot account for abductive inference, or why does the mind "know" that it must activate one module (e.g. the language faculty) and not another (e.g. the startle effect, in response to non-linguistic noise), upon hearing a sound (Fodor 2001). This *is* a gap in current understanding, but does it warrant abandoning cognitive theory? Fodor's unstated assertion is that cognitive theory need be extensional – explain how the mind relates to the world – and not intensional, i.e. explain what the mind, in all its modules, can do. The commitment to intensional accounts accords well with the importance of competence over performance, or "what" over "how" questions. It need not forbid inquiry into extensional accounts, but Fodor is at least correct to note that prospects for progress on the latter front remain uncertain.

and affective operations and responses – what can be designated as an interpretation.²⁷ The presiding concern is not whether said interpretations are valid or erroneous – much less confirmed by some extensional entity or falsified. The priority is to develop a model that can generate an apparent infinity of interpretations, while demarcating the distinct operations which allow for said interpretations.

Someone might grasp the debt of *The Flicker* (1965) to Greenbergian modernism, while someone else might be bored out of their skull.²⁸ One viewer might apprehend *Jaws* (1975) within the context of Watergate-era cynicism,²⁹ while another might not even understand that Steven Spielberg’s film is about a shark (!).³⁰ Explanatory adequacy simply requires that the theoretical model sufficiently coheres at once internally and with the most elementary and simplest insights into what viewers do when they watch films. To reprise the above examples, the “Greenbergian” viewing experience of *The Flicker* and the “bored” reading all boil down to identical interpretive operations. The same principle of adequacy and simplicity holds for the most obtuse incomprehension towards *Jaws* or the more historically and socially informed appraisal – and further still, for viewers who despise *The Flicker* and love *Jaws*, and all other variations therein.

²⁷ The term “interpretation” is sometimes taken to entail a particularly rarefied form of hermeneutics – locating some quasi-allegorical significance in a text, above and beyond comprehending its narrative or subject matter. Such a restricted definition can be found throughout film studies (Bordwell 1989a), but also non-academic writing in film and culture criticism (Sontag 2001: 3-14) – and often for polemical purposes. Whatever the interest of these argumentative interventions, such a segregated definition of interpretation remains unamenable to constructivist cognitivism. Even elementary acts of comprehension involve discerning implicit or extraneous meaning (Perry 1979) – i.e. are interpretive in a way that Sontag and perhaps Bordwell underestimate. I therefore take interpretation to signify any mental act as occasioned by a mind-independent stimulus (in this thesis, the film text), ranging from basic percepts (i.e. identifying a light) to more sophisticated engagements (i.e. understanding a nominal horror film as equally satirical).

²⁸ On the relevance of Greenberg’s writings and ideas to American avant-garde cinema, see Peterson 1994: 85-90.

²⁹ Both Britton 2009: 237-240 and Heath 1985 mention Watergate in conjunction with *Jaws*, although this is not the sole purpose of their respective articles. Despite his later hostility to “Reaganite Entertainment” (2009: 97-154), Britton develops a detailed and nuanced analysis of the film’s ideological content. Heath principally wishes to discuss *Jaws* within the context of a structuralist and semiotics rejection of Hollywood cinema, *as per* the tenets of canonical contemporary film theory (e.g. the reduction of film techniques and texts to feminist, Marxist and/or psychoanalytic determinants). A similarly reductive (and occasionally recondite) approach can be found in Daney 1983: 105-107.

³⁰ This perhaps invites the charge of relativism – that anyone can stipulate any interpretation, verging on non-sense (e.g. “*The Exorcist*, 1973, is really an abstract, avant-garde film that by sheer coincidence just happens to look like it’s representational!”). I take some inspiration from David Lewis’s possible-world semantics, on the vacuous truth-value of impossible antecedents: “there also are some *impossible* possible worlds that differ from our world in matters of philosophical, mathematical and even logical truth.” (1973: 24). For example: “*If there were a largest prime* [number] *p*, *pigs would have wings* [is a conceivable truth in an alternate, possible world]. [...] But what does that prove? We have to explain why things we do want to assert are true [...], but we do not have to explain why things we do not want to assert are false.” (25). Hence: “I am fairly content to let counterfactuals with impossible antecedents be vacuously true.” (*ibid.*). See also Bordwell 1985: 53.

Conversely, the model is inadequate if it violates principles of parsimony and simplicity. The postulate here is that the (theoretical) model reconstructing some natural entity put forth must be concise and uncomplicated, without which said entity would not be able to function so effectively, with proportionately little or no **conscious** effort. In more concrete terms: the experiences of watching an avant-garde film (e.g. *The Flicker*), a Hollywood title (e.g. *Jaws*) and an art film (e.g. *Floating Weeds*, 1959), must be fundamentally simple. By argumentative parity, the ability to construct an interpretation of, for example, a film by Yasujiro Ozu, as inspired by or generated from a prior viewing of *Floating Weeds*, must be no less elementary, at least within its basic operations.

By “simple,” or “elementary,” one means that the initial or primitive terms, and their relations or operations, are designed for optimal efficiency, in the most transparent and brusque understanding of this expression. Viewers share the competence to experience percepts, affects and construct interpretations, such that conscious effort usually plays an intermittent and minor role. Likewise, said percepts, affects and cognitions can be frequently deployed with near effortlessness, because they are at the basis, simple, straightforward, and uniform to all viewing experiences.³¹ Were it not the case that one’s viewing experiences followed from a restricted perimeter of frames/concepts and scripts/operations, then they could not be so effectively attained – multiply, generatively and even infinitely, across all viewers and all film texts. Instead, the task of watching any one single film, or a range of films, would be cumbersome, if not beyond our cognitive and perceptual ken – akin to someone who must run a marathon while

³¹ Research has indicated that individuals are apt to better retain text or content if it is presented to them in causal and more precisely narrational terms: events linked by relations of cause-consequence and implicating agents and patients (see Branigan 1992). Research even indicates that, in recalling content or texts, interviewed subjects are liable to retroactively impose more rigid strictures of narrative causality unto narrated events that may initially have been presented ambiguously or diffusely (Bartlett 1961). Neither insight is unwarranted, yet this does not invalidate the current project. Research into narrative causality and cognition is pitched at the level of generality: the normative principles, including cognitive tendencies, according to which the mind operates in relation to textual artefacts. A universal study accommodates these insights within a broader explanatory scope: what cognitive competences underscore the construction of narrative and non-narrative eventhood, for example, in film texts. It applies to not simply extreme cases (e.g. avant-garde cinema), but equally more normative cases, in which not every aspect of the viewing experience is reducible to constructing a narrative telos. Such an insight is understood throughout cognitivism and narrative poetics. Bordwell notes that “any film might contain an aesthetically motivated flourish – a gratuitous camera movement, an unexpected and unjustified color shift or sound bridge.” (1985: 281). Such flourishes can owe to the lingering presence of non-classical influences in nominally classical texts (Bordwell, Staiger and Thomson 1985: 3). More extensively, as Greg M. Smith argues, resolutely mainstream films (e.g. *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, 1981) often contain a multitude of interludes and passages whose “emotional function greatly exceeds their goal-oriented [i.e. classically narrational] function.” (2003: 46; see more generally 2003: 44-48). Smith’s comments are not especially novel and recall Boris Tomashevsky’s analysis of free as well as static motifs (Tomachevski 1965: 269-272).

mystically gaining, developing, losing, and then reacquiring, in jumbled and aleatory order, a random assortment of motor and non-motor skills.

The emphasis on simplicity and explanatory adequacy can also highlight the respects in which projects undertaken by cognitivism and the AT prove limited, and by what theoretical precepts are emendations to be pursued. A theoretical model, as deployed by the AT, lacks explanatory adequacy, from the standpoint of cognitivism, if it cannot be invoked to generate all viewing experiences. Here, the argument is that if cognitivism theorizes a welter of cognitive, perceptual and affective abilities and dispositions, then its concomitant models and projects ought to illuminate, at least in part, why all viewers can prospectively experience any film. Conversely, projects in cognitivism and the AT that do not permit such inferences are at a loss to explain by what interpretive competences viewers are able to negotiate a range of film texts or apparently dissimilar cinematic content (e.g. avant-garde vs. classical cinema;³² character-centric vs. non-anthropocentric film content³³).

The thesis seeks to redress this lacuna in existing cognitivist studies, by appealing to analytic philosophy – both in terms of key concepts (e.g. theories of individuation and eventhood)³⁴ and methodological principles (e.g. parsimony, functionalism,³⁵ **mereology**³⁶). The

³² Tan 1996.

³³ Smith 1995.

³⁴ See Strawson 2003, Davidson 2001, Whitehead 1920.

³⁵ As a term, “functionalism” has broad applications across disciplines (cognitive theory and philosophy of mind, narrative theory and poetics, even Holocaust historiography!). As the term suggests, it privileges and even advocates the analysis of variously specified entities (serotonin, editing, the concentration camps) in terms of their purpose within a larger framework or telos (feelings of happiness, narrative causality, genocide). More contentiously, it seeks to diminish or even oppose notions of essence or so-called *quale* (i.e. there is a unique quality to happiness, irreducible to how it is produced in the mind/brain), ontology (i.e. edits necessarily create discontinuity in a representation of the phenomenal world), or psychological dispositions (i.e. the individual psychologies or intentions of the executioners most germanely explains the Holocaust). For an account, in philosophy of mind, of identity vs. functional theories of the mind, see Lewis 1983: 122-132. For criticisms of functional theories, see Block 1978 and Searle 1980. For advocates and/or defenses, see Putnam 1975, as well as Dennett 1993. For functionalism in cognitive theory (broadly understood), see Johnson-Laird 1983 and Marr 2010. While functionalism has engendered considerable dispute, proponents and critics also adopt or reject variously stronger or deflationary variants of the theory. Searle 1980 is keen on rejecting the strong claim that a machine can exhibit intentionality, no different from humans; see also Tallis 2004. By contrast, Johnson-Laird 1983 is clear that he is not principally concerned with conscious psychological activity. This thesis adopts a deflationary functionalism: parsing functions of the mind/brain need not convey with exactitude each phenomenological experience (measuring serotonin won't tell you what exactly it feels like to be happy or sad). However, the terms advanced will adequately cover the interpretive circumstances (mainly physiological and preconscious) within which phenomenological experiences can occur. I should add that, because it is uniformly concerned with intentionality, Searle's Chinese Room Experiment overlooks key distinctions that ought to prove fundamental to any cognitive theory. Recall that Searle posits a room in which a man is instructed (in English) to copy Chinese text, such that he grasps the instructions (graphically copy Chinese letters and words) but not the content produced (the meaning of the Chinese letters and words): the thought experiment is meant to refute computational, and therefore functional, theories of the mind, as surely a machine

alignment of cognitivism with analytic philosophy is the basis for the remaining chapters, in which I advance that all occasions of screen phenomena are ultimately constructed within the viewer's interpretation as representing **objects** and/or **events**. The viewing experience is therefore exclusively comprised of how viewers jointly **identify** and **predicate** cinematic objects and events, whereby an object is any entity which retains its identity independently of a transformation, while an event is an identifiable transformation enacted as relative to an object.³⁷ The challenge throughout is to demonstrate that these distinctions hold across an otherwise incommensurably varied range of texts (e.g. Hollywood, primitive, avant-garde and art films), such that one's experiences of these films ultimately fall within the parameters of fundamentally invariant, interpretive operations.

Part two, encompassing chapters three and four, addresses cinematic objects (i.e.

being fed instructions cannot encounter any obstacles comparable to the man who is outputting Chinese without understanding a word of it. Yet a functional theory of linguistic competence posits terms that are exactly inverse to those devised by Searle. Contrary to the man in Searle's experiment, who understands that he is being given instructions, we are not aware of the operations whereby we mentally receive and process input. Demonstrating that consciousness operates differently in language acquisition and machines, on the one hand, and the Chinese room experiment, on the other, does not invalidate all functional approaches to the mind. On the contrary, it only limits the explanatory scope of Searle's thought experiment.

³⁶ Mereology is the theory of parts and parts-whole relations. Drawing on the work of Polish logician Stanislaw Lesniewski, Nelson Goodman makes several early interventions, including separate collaborations with Henry S. Leonard and W. O. Quine. See Goodman 1977, especially 24-44, for both discussion and references. See also Cohnitz and Rossberg 2006: 82-98 for an overview. I confine myself to appropriating select terms from Goodman – "overlap," "discrete from" – without attending to the more unique significance he stipulated for "sum" – which has proven contentious (Hausman 1979). For Goodman, the sum of two individuals is their shared content, the parts that overlap. I retain only the notion that nominally discrete parts can overlap a whole, and conversely (or symmetrically), the whole overlaps its parts. A sum is taken, more trivially, to be a whole that incorporates (all its) parts.

³⁷ The privileging of identification and predication as the primary schemas or mental frames would seem to invite two problems. Firstly, it suggests a reversion to psychologism – the view, associated with Kant and Boole, that the principles of logic can be exclusively explained in terms of one's mental operations, and *vice versa*. Secondly, even allowing for psychologism, the emphasis on identification and predication reverts to first order logic, which is contested as inferior in its explanatory reach to second order logic. Neither concern impinges on the current thesis. Whatever one's stake in the dispute between psychologism and objectivism, my usage of identification and predication as *a priori* to one's interpretations of film texts makes no claim as to the validity of one's interpretations – regardless of how the latter question may be pursued. The second charge proves more serious, as second order logic is sometimes understood as having surpassed the more restricted purview of quantification over individual subjects (i.e. the purpose of first order logic) by encompassing as well as relations between subjects. Such a concern for relations and functions is why the types of predication envisaged for objects and events are no less defined synthetically, *as per* mental operations of continuity and discontinuity, as opposed to any analytic property or quality of the said object or event (i.e. how the object or event feels to the viewer at a given moment). For a critique of psychologism, from cognitive psychology, see Johnson-Laird 1983. For a historical overview of the conflict between psychologism and objectivism, see Currie 1982: 13-17. On second order logic, Bertrand Russell argues for the importance of quantifying objects by their relations and not exclusively their qualities or properties, in Russell 1926, especially 1926: 56-61. The relations he privileges – symmetry, reflexivity, transitivity – are carried over into Carnap 1967 and Goodman 1977. Finally, a classic work in interpretive theory that addresses the problem of validity is Hirsch 1967.

“Cinematic Objecthood”), while part three, made of chapters five and six, is concerned with cinematic events (i.e. “Cinematic Eventhood”). In chapter three, “Identifying Cinematic Objects,” I posit the interpretive activity whereby viewers identify screen phenomena as representing objects. The analysis conjoins cognitivism and analytic philosophy in advancing a theory and definition of objecthood. For instance, cognitivism’s commitment to **constructivism** entails that what viewers experience as an object is not reducible to its purported physical construction or the literal screen content: e.g. in Disney’s *Pinocchio* (1940), the titular hero is identifiable as such, whether he is made of wood or transformed into an anatomical boy. In pursuing such arguments, I equally depart from non-constructivist strains of cognitivism, that under the guise of realism skew too heavily towards empiricism.³⁸

In turn, mereology, as occasionally deployed by analytic philosophy, entails that the same screen phenomena can yield different identifications of objecthood, based on endlessly (de)composable parts and wholes. A close-up of a character’s face can favour that viewers will concentrate exclusively on the character’s eyes. Alternately, viewers may mnemonically juxtapose the character’s current physical look with a prior depiction in the film. In the former case, a purported object (“face”) can be decomposed into finer units (“eyes”); in the latter, the same object (“face”) is constructed as part of a wider ensemble (“character then and now”). Such shifts in interpretive activity prove fundamental not just to how viewers identify screen phenomena – as depicting a face, eyes or an evolving character – but also how viewers predicate said phenomena, usually in affect-laden terms.

This latter concern informs chapter four, “Predicating Cinematic Objects.” I argue that cinematic objects are predicated by viewers in terms of purported tertiary qualities:³⁹ e.g. the black screen in *The Flicker* is upsetting, whereas the shark in *Jaws* is terrifying. A potential problem with such an argument is that there will be a seemingly infinite range of predicable qualities, overruling any commitment to conceptual parsimony. Therefore, individual predications ultimately adhere to one of two types: either **new** or **old** objects. An object is

³⁸ Currie 2008. Some of these approaches have their origins in Bazin 1958. See also Cavell 1979 and Walton 2008.

³⁹ As understood by Locke, the perceived qualities of an object can be divided threefold. Primary qualities are those genuinely possessed or displayed by the object (e.g. movement, shape etc.). Secondary qualities do not genuinely belong to the object but are in the eye of beholder (e.g. colour: as has been demonstrated, the world is in black and white, and what we perceive as colour is merely an effect of light as refracted off the surface of objects). Tertiary qualities are those that have the power to effect change or significantly impact another entity (e.g. heat as caused by the sun). On the relevance of tertiary qualities to art-works and artistic styles, see Schapiro 1953: 289. In a somewhat different context, on the relevance of “qualia,” or evocations of consciousness, to our experience of fiction, see Herman 2009: 137-160.

predicated new if it is predicated in such a way for the first time in a film or is predicated in a way that is **discontinuous** from prior predications: when the black screen, in *The Flicker*, is first experienced as startling, or the shark, in *Jaws*, is finally killed and thus ceases to be terrifying (i.e. is no longer a threat). Conversely, an object is predicated old if it is experienced in a way that is **conjunctive**⁴⁰ with prior predications: if the black screen in *The Flicker* or the shark in *Jaws* are continually unnerving or terrifying, beyond their initial representations in their respective films.

Moreover, throughout the argument will not be that viewers consciously articulate such interpretations to themselves upon watching films.⁴¹ Quite the contrary, the merit of the theory will be that it explains mental operations and related experiences that viewers accomplish without conscious introspection. Instead, viewers involuntarily interpret a cinematic object as either **continuous** or **discontinuous** with its prior representations. *New* and *old* becomes the fundamentally invariant interpretive alternatives for all representations of cinematic objects, just as every screen phenomenon is ultimately interpretable as either an object or an event.

This distinction leads directly to chapters five and six. Chapter five, “Identifying Cinematic Events,” pursues a similar analysis for cinematic events as was undertaken for cinematic objects in chapter three. Viewers construct events from frequently indeterminate or impoverished screen phenomena: from the one-minute arrival of a train in the titular film by the Lumière brothers (*L’arrivée d’un train en gare de la Ciotat*, 1896), one can unhesitatingly infer a larger sequence of transformations (e.g. the train is arriving from a prior location and will continue its itinerary). Mereologically, events are composed of parts adding up to a whole. In the opening of Ozu’s *Floating Weeds*, successive images of a lighthouse taken at an increasing distance ultimately compose a transformation as relative to the depicted lighthouse: from one

⁴⁰ The relation of predication to terms such as conjunctive and continuous, as well as their inverses (disjunctive, discontinuous), is explicated in chapter four: these terms cover the interpretive procedures whereby one can move fluently, in the case of a film such as *The Flicker*, from “startling” to “unnerving” and even “upsetting.”

⁴¹ This raises the question as to the epistemic status of the stipulated terms, as well as the hypothetical interpretations posited throughout the thesis. Verbal language is used to explain non-linguistic operations and phenomena: i.e. activities of the brain/mind, including physiologically and pre-consciously processed interpretations. Philosophical responses to this quandary vary (see Johnson 1987), but I find Kenneth Craik’s theory of explanation, as cited by Johnson-Laird, the most germane. Johnson-Laird posits that the mind translates external phenomena into symbols, a procedure which thereafter can generate further symbols, including predispositions to actions (1983: 2-3). Johnson-Laird’s and Craik’s theory is extensional – how the mind interacts with mind-independent phenomena – yet it may also be recast intensionally. In the current thesis, the ideal or stipulated language, as well as more hypothetical approximations, constitute symbolic or encoded translations of natural phenomena: what the mind does, as occasioned by film texts. The language explains as adequately as possible what happens mentally, even if what happens mentally only rarely includes consciously articulated verbal phenomena.

image to the next, its scale/size changes, in relation to its surroundings and the camera, such that prospective viewers can construct a continuity of transformations.

Despite the apparent simplicity of these examples, the analysis is not trivial. As with cinematic objects, the challenge is to explain how all identifications of eventhood, across a broad gamut of films, ultimately adhere to the same interpretive operations. Just as objects are divided *as per* predications of old and new, cinematic events also occasion alternating predications, which informs the analysis of chapter six, “Predication Cinematic Events.” The two types of events are defined as **short** and **long**. Long events constitute the viewer’s default mode in interpreting transformations. Successive changes are experienced as part of a continuum (e.g. the shifting size of the lighthouse in *Floating Weeds*). By contrast, short events are experienced discontinuously, as interrupting a hitherto ongoing sequence of changes: e.g. if a character is unexpectedly attacked by a shark (*Jaws*), sprayed in the face by a hose (*L’arroseur arrosé*, 1895), or if a conversation is cut short by a seemingly stray or irrelevant audiovisual clip (*Le gai savoir*, 1969).

As with old and new objects, long and short events mobilize interpretive operations of continuity (old objects/long events) and discontinuity (new objects/short events) – operations which remain fundamentally the same, regardless of the individual film text, interpretation or viewer. The thesis revolves around the shared *competence* of all viewers to interpret and experience films – that one can readily identify and predicate objects and events, and from these fundamental operations, generate any range of interpretations and experiences – rather than any single interpretation or experience (i.e. in cognitive terms, the viewer’s *performance*). Not all viewers will grapple with the challenges of *The Flicker*, *Floating Weeds* or *Le gai savoir* on a first viewing. Yet even the most sophisticated appreciations of such texts will ultimately follow from constructions of short/long eventhood and old/new objecthood – no less so than with *Jaws* and *L’arroseur arrosé*.

In the analysis throughout, the fundamental types of predication for objects – old; new – as well as events – short; long – are not chosen fortuitously. They follow from terms and arguments advanced in analytic philosophy. The distinction between old and new objects partly accords with the concept of **reidentification**,⁴² as put forth in P.F. Strawson’s theory of

⁴² Strawson 2003: 31.

individuals. As for short and long events, it is implied in A.N. Whitehead's process philosophy,⁴³ in which actions and transformations can either register as immediate or incremental. The respective pairs of predication-types entail that ordinary usages of the terms "object" and "event" be jettisoned – for these now are fundamental interpretive categories as to how all entities are alternately identified.

At the same time, the respective terms accord with long-standing intuitions,⁴⁴ about which attributes or categories of predication can prove more fundamental to either identification. The distinction between short and long events hinges on the relatively simple premise that actions, occurrences, transformations and the like can either be experienced as **disjunctive** and finite, or gradual and ongoing. Similar feelings pertain to our encounters with film texts, including both narrative and non-narrative texts.⁴⁵ As for the demarcation between old and new objects, it follows from discriminations of familiarity versus novelty, which are no less pervasive to one's every day experiences with people, places, things and the like.⁴⁶ Again here, film content, if not artefactually delimited film texts, tend to impress viewers by their degrees of non-conformity or adherence to conventions or antecedent expectations.⁴⁷

The above interpretive categories – old/new objects; short/long events – are then synthesized in part four ("Cinematic Objecthood and Eventhood"), chapter seven ("Predicating Objects and Events"), which considers how objects and events are predicated jointly. Select terms are stipulated, to designate said joint predications. A long event and an old object results in the predication *prolonged*. Conversely, a new object and a short event yields the predication *sudden*. Similar designations obtain for a new object and a long event (*sustained*), as well as an old object and a short event (*concise*). Additional explanations and examples will be advanced,

⁴³ Whitehead 1920: 165-174.

⁴⁴ The significance of intuitions to one's theories and arguments is well considered in Chomsky 1957 – who also notes that this need not obstruct a commitment to ideal language philosophy. See also Daniel Dennett's so-called "intuition pumps," deployed in disputing (or "quining") commonsensical notions of subjectivity (Dennett 1993).

⁴⁵ See Bordwell 1985: 156-334 on different representations of eventhood throughout narrative cinema. The shifting role accorded to causality, in relation to time and space, is meant to account for the extent films can either feel fast or slowly paced.

⁴⁶ Strawson 2003. In keeping with the extensional strain of much analytic philosophy, Strawson offers a *de re* theory of individuation. By contrast, following from constructivist cognitivism, my account of identifications of objecthood is *de dicto*.

⁴⁷ For contrasting views in film studies – the relevance of classicism and convention vs. defamiliarization and the so-called "tradition of the new" – see respectively Bordwell in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 3-11 and Thompson 1988.

such that these joint predications constitute the delimited range of cognitive, perceptual and affective experiences when watching a film.

Finally, in conclusion, I give some indication as to how the arguments in this thesis might yield further research programs within film studies. The purpose of the study is to posit a theoretical model which adequately covers all viewing experiences of films – within a cognitive, perceptual, and affective capacity. This project remains consistent with tenets central to cognitive theory, broadly speaking, as well as analytic philosophy and cognitive film theory. At the same time, insight into how the mind/brain works, especially in conjunction with perception and affect, remains radically limited – perhaps insurmountably so. I have few illusions that my own contribution still leaves much unexplained, raising more questions than could ever be answered. Still, if all that is accomplished is to encourage further inquiry in the direction of constructivism, then this will have forced certain questions onto the table that desperately require answers.

The Task Ahead...

Chief among these questions, which are addressed but by no means exhausted in the thesis are: how to best explain the *generative* competences⁴⁸ activated in the viewing experiences? What do viewers do when they devise interpretations (in the broadest sense of the term) that far exceed the literal screen content: e.g. we can often unhesitatingly construct a legible understanding of an image that utilizes off-screen space, such that its purported content is nowhere to be seen. More crucially, what do viewers do when they formulate relatively novel interpretation following prior examples?

Consider a student who encounters F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) during a survey course on silent cinema or German Expressionism. Upon or after seeing the film, they might spontaneously draw comparisons and/or contrasts with other films – silent films or horror texts encountered in other courses or elsewhere – albeit not initially nor explicitly addressed in the course. Even with the most elementary interpretation – “this is less bloody than other vampire movies” – the hypothetical student is exercising a cognitive aptitude without which there could

⁴⁸ The closest answer to be proffered is that, even when engaging with the film's image-track, our responses are conceptually determined and delimited. A convenient motto is, even in the face of visual stimuli and other physical entities, mind always subsumes matter: the physical is interpreted *as per* conceptual parameters, not the other way round.

be no film studies. What the student is doing, mentally, is something few if no film scholar can adequately elucidate.

If there is a single contention animating this thesis, it is as follows: attempting to explain and theorize such competences, at least in part, ought to incite the curiosity of any scholar – cognitivist or otherwise – who wishes to grasp just what it is that makes film viewing (and film studies!) possible.

Part One:

Cognitivism, The “Affective Turn” and Analytic Philosophy

Chapter One: Cognitive Theory and Film Studies

Introduction

It has often been said that film scholarship can only imperfectly grasp what it *feels* like to watch a movie. Most would agree that there is an experiential and even impressionistic dimension to film-going that is ineffable – or, at least, best left to the informal discourse of non-academic film criticism.¹ By contrast, film studies, whether purportedly data or doctrine-driven,² supposedly shuns the more subjective vagaries entailed by watching and responding to a film.³ Rather, the challenge is to arrive at generalizable and perhaps even universally applicable theoretical and/or historical insights arising from objectively uncontested premises: e.g. how changes in technology, or else more broadly how urbanization has influenced or even caused the evolution of new film styles;⁴ how abstract notions of causality, space and time serve as the basis for a theory of narrative structure and comprehension, etc.⁵

At the same time, film studies have long affected an interest for what can be dubbed the “power of movies.”⁶ Consider the proto-cognitivist and/or expressivist approaches of Hugo Münsterberg and Rudolf Arnheim, or the presumably antithetical realism in Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin.⁷ In addition to their appeals to medium-specificity, these theorists attempt to

¹ See Bordwell 2011, Bordwell 1989a: 264-265, Thompson 1988: 314-315, and Rosenbaum 1995: 70-72.

² The distinction arises in Bordwell 1996: 18-30 and throughout Bordwell and Carroll 1996 (within which it is anthologized).

³ However, Arthur Danto contends that the language of art criticism is close to an ideal language (1981: 155-156). See also Pouivet 2010: 119-120. By contrast, Meyer Schapiro has argued that art criticism has failed to develop a technical and consistent nomenclature to address the qualitative dimensions of style, falling back on physiognomic (happy, sad) and/or inter-sensorial (cold, powerful) metaphors. See 1953: 289-290.

⁴ On technology, see Salt 2009. On urbanization, see throughout Hansen 1987 or Gunning 1991.

⁵ See Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 3-84.

⁶ Carroll 1996: 78-93.

⁷ Münsterberg 1916, Arnheim 1933 and 1958, Kracauer 1960, Bazin 1958. For better or worse, Noël Carroll treats respectively Arnheim and Bazin as antithetically diverging on questions of expression and realism, all the while adhering to the same paradigm of classical film theory (Carroll 1988a).

address film from the standpoint of *aísthēsis*:⁸ the viewer's perceptual apprehension of and investment in constructing meaning and garnering experiences from images and sounds. For these early generations, film theory frequently doubled as film criticism, just as descriptive accounts of the purported medium or art-form seemed inseparable from variously articulated prescriptions.⁹

This concern does not vanish with later periodic shifts. Despite appeals to disciplinarity,¹⁰ or greater rigour,¹¹ one still finds at least intermittent mention of the pleasures or audience reactions presumably occasioned by films. Christian Metz's and Laura Mulvey's respective emphases on "scopophilia"¹² are of a piece with more affect-oriented accounts of the viewing experience. Similar scholarly inclinations pervade the "modernity" or "history of vision"¹³ thesis: i.e. editing, with narrative pacing and visual iconography associated with urbanisation, is said to instill (or have instilled) shock and other perturbations in the viewer. Finally, and most significant to our current purposes, recent developments in cognitive film theory (cognitivism) have trained their attention to theorizing the viewer's emotions. This epistemic shift shall hereafter be termed the Affective Turn (AT) and constitutes our focus for the next two chapters.

Cognitivism has made decisive in-roads in theorizing the viewing experience of cinematic textual artefacts. In a significant majority of its iterations, it has taken up the study of what is termed the "viewer's activity"¹⁴ or the "beholder's share."¹⁵ What these terms convey is that cognitivism is *constructivist*.¹⁶ It privileges the *interpretive* procedures by which viewers identify and qualify/predicate cinematic content.¹⁷ Such interpretations can here be stipulated as

⁸ Translating loosely as sensorial perception in Ancient Greek (αἴσθησις) and the etymology of "aesthetics," as coined in the eighteenth century. See also Guyer 2005.

⁹ See Carroll 1988a, Carroll 1996: 3-24, Carroll 2003: 1-9.

¹⁰ Metz 1971a.

¹¹ Comolli and Narboni 1969.

¹² Metz 1984, Mulvey 1975.

¹³ See respectively Singer 2001 and Bordwell 1997: 141-149.

¹⁴ Bordwell 1985: 29-47.

¹⁵ Gombrich 1995: 154-244.

¹⁶ Constructivism signifies that, perceptually and cognitively, we impose identity and significance unto external stimuli – irrespective of what is there (Bordwell 1985). Films, for example at twenty-four frames per second, do not literally show movement, but we experience the screen phenomena as movement as a secondary property (Currie 1996 – although Currie's thesis, as stated, invites further complications). The movement in film is engendered physiologically – it's a construction of one's cognitive-perceptual systems, regardless of whether it is "really" on the screen.

¹⁷ Philosopher such as Nelson Goodman (in his earlier work at least) have argued for a methodological and even mandatory division between properties and qualities, such that properties are the attributes an entity possesses, while qualities constitute its appearance to our sense-percepts (Goodman 1977, Goodman 1990). One predicates an entity, even an art-object, in terms of its properties, which is analytically and necessarily separate from how those

decrees, lifting a comparable usage of the term from analytic philosophy.¹⁸ A *decree* is here used as an assertion regarding screen phenomena, from which objects and events are identified and predicated (or constructed). We make such decrees all the time at the movies, usually without realizing it (i.e. we usually do not have to deliberate over the decree while making it). They are almost always contextually determined, i.e. they are relative to prior decrees, and can likewise be revised or corrected with later decrees.¹⁹ An example of a decree, from everyday experience, might be as simple as, “the apple that is red today is a different colour from the sky I observed yesterday as blue” – a judgement, as Nelson Goodman notes,²⁰ most of us are (justifiably) comfortable making, even as it mobilizes a complex web of mnemonic images, entrenched beliefs and more specifically principles of identity and transitivity.

The above has begun to sketch theoretical principles inherited from cognitivism that will inform the rest of this study. Regarding the next two chapters, the cognitivist theories under discussion will constitute the “Affective Turn.” For the AT, insight into the viewer’s activity must exceed ratiocination. Without overlooking these core insights, a theory of viewing experience must also encompass affect, emotion as well as feelings, broadly understood. The AT does not develop an autonomous or sequestered theory or study of emotion. Rather, it incorporates the psychology and/or philosophy of emotion into already devised theories of cognition and perception. Cognitive, perceptual and affective processes and operations are studied jointly, such that they can be mutually reinforcing.²¹ This has implications for film

properties affect us (1976: 45-95). By contrast, I treat qualification and predication under the same rubric. This is partly for conceptual parsimony, but more crucially because the very purview of the thesis – the viewing experience of cinematic texts – defines predicated content only insofar as it has affective and more broadly aesthetic import to sentient viewers.

¹⁸ Goodman 1977: 98.

¹⁹ Goodman further writes: “A decree by itself thus may be unchallengeable; and any decree, however, unnatural, can be maintained by giving up enough others. But in practice our choice, when a conflict arises, is influenced by two factors. In the first place, we favor the more ‘natural’ decree, the one best supported by an instinctive feeling of hitting the mark, as when we select a remembered color. In the second place, we favor the decree that makes necessary the least adjustment in the body of already accepted decrees. Normally, we have not a conflict of two decrees, but a conflict between a new decree and a whole background of accepted decrees. We could uphold the discordant newcomer, but only at the exorbitant price of reconstructing our whole picture of the past.” (1977: 98-99). Similarly, the supposed dependence of meaning upon context, and/or the perpetually revisable status of our knowledge claims, runs throughout analytic philosophy (Quine, Putnam), including early antecedents to and adherents of logical positivism (Frege, Carnap).

²⁰ 1977: 99.

²¹ See also Lapointe 2016b.

aesthetics – by which one means the gamut of cognitive, perceptual and affective responses constituting the viewing experience of a film text.²²

In this first chapter, I sketch an overview of cognitivism to provide the background to both the AT and my current project. I isolate four principles by which cognitivism has frequently, albeit not necessarily, operated. One: it is constructivist and posits the intermediary role of “**schemas**”²³ which define our relationship to the world. Two: it conceives of multiple, cooperating mental processes, albeit while privileging both **preconscious** and **physiological** processes.²⁴ Three: it is functional and relational, insofar as it conceives of otherwise discrete entities as defined by their inter-relations, or how they operate within a larger system. Four: it is corrective, because it conceives of perception and understanding as ongoing, where initial schema activations are perpetually refined, rejected, confirmed and/or enriched, the whole inevitably inviting further interpretations.

In chapter two, I analyze more closely the work of five significant AT theorists: Noël Carroll, Ed Tan, Torben Grodal, Greg M. Smith and Murray Smith. All five theorists purport to study emotion within some functional and/or situational capacity. Rather than inventory and/or prioritize each emotion informing the viewing experience, they delineate interpretive conditions under which any range of emotions and/or affects can arise. Nonetheless, the first three cited theorists (Carroll, Tan, Grodal) are faulted for falling back on a covert and/or weak essentialism.²⁵ Despite their claims to studying emotion functionally, they ultimately single out certain emotions above others. This leads to circular and/or trivial arguments (Carroll, Tan), as well as conflating apparently non-identical affects and equivocating as to their presumed functions (Grodal). The lesson to be learned is that the viewing experience cannot be defined

²² Aesthetics is a protean and frequently disputed term (Carroll 2001, Eagleton 1990, Rodowick 2001: 107-140). In its eighteenth-century guise, it mandates a rigid separation between sense percepts and higher cognitive faculties – a dualism overthrown in the twentieth century, as much in aesthetic theory (Goodman 1976) as psychology of perception (Zeki 1999). See also Gombrich 1995. As I am encompassing under the same rubric, aesthetics, the effects engendered by textual artefacts, there is a risk of vagueness and circularity – or infinite variety. This is circumvented by the fact that I delineate between uniquely stipulated interpretive contexts within which different effects are experienced by viewers.

²³ On “schemas,” including the history of the term in psychological and cognitive theory, as well as its pertinence to film studies, see Smith 1995: 47-52. In the next chapter, I offer my own, restricted application of the term.

²⁴ On the different processes of the mind/brain, to which I return, see Thompson 1988: 26-28. Note, however, that cognitivism, and cognate areas of formalism, have tended to focus more on the preconscious (see especially Bordwell 1985, Thompson 1988, Smith 1995, Smith 2003).

²⁵ Essentialism, as understood in film theory (Carroll 1988a) means identifying and predicating entities within some immutable, uniform and/or *a priori* capacity: e.g. the essence of film is photographic recording, and so all films are necessarily reducible to the act of reproducing on celluloid the audio-visual phenomena of external, physical reality. From the standpoint of functionalism, this approach is untenable.

strictly in terms of representational content, or within a narrowly circumscribed range of feelings. Instead, one must evolve a conceptual system irreducible to any specified type of experience.

This would seem to be the case with the latter two theorists (G.M. Smith and M. Smith – no relation). Either is more concerned with the interpretive procedures whereby viewers come to experience emotions, regardless of which emotion a prospective viewer might experience. Unfortunately, their respective models prove equally limiting. Greg M. Smith’s “mood cue approach”²⁶ amounts to a self-fulfilling prophecy: it yields the theoretical and critical insights that it does only insofar as it has defined them *a priori* to any inquiry or study. Murray Smith’s “structure of sympathy,”²⁷ while incisive as to theorizing the viewer’s involvement with cinematic characters, by the same principle limits its applicability: it has scarcely little to say as to whether objectively identifiable, non-human entities (e.g. inanimate objects) might likewise compel our attention, as do events, or more strictly narrative actions and occurrences.²⁸ In turn, the lesson to be learned here is that one’s conceptual system must be at once sufficiently specified yet broad enough as to produce a universal range of germane insights.

These insights lead to the remainder of chapter two, as well as the ensuing thesis. To emend the identified lacunae in the AT, I borrow concepts and methods from analytic philosophy. This includes analytic conceptions of objecthood and eventhood, to be elaborated throughout. This also includes variously defined logical terms and operations and an overall inclination to conceptual parsimony. The current project restricts the range of schemas to two: identification and predication.²⁹ It thereafter introduces only two types of identifiable content – objects and events – and in turn two types of predication for each type of content: new/old objecthood; short/long eventhood. Multiple identification and predication schemas are activated

²⁶ Smith 2003.

²⁷ Smith 1995.

²⁸ See also Seymour Chatman’s separate theorizing of “events” and “existents” (1978: 43-145). Smith clearly grasps that debates arguing for the presumed (ontological, epistemological) priority of events over objects, and *vice versa*, runs throughout narrative theory (Smith 1995) – though these issues have been raised more perspicaciously in analytic philosophy (Whitehead 1920, Davidson 2001, Strawson 2003).

²⁹ At the risk of redundancy, identification and predication schemas are what enable us to make identifications and predications of phenomena accessible to the senses, or conceivable in the mind. They are *a priori* in the Kantian sense, and therefore automatically activated: they are physiological. However, the semantic content of these individual identifications and predications – e.g. “that is a car,” “that is a red house,” “this is an exciting tennis match” – are derived from experience. We fill the schemas with the apposite content without deliberation – by acquired habit – such that they involve what we will see is the preconscious. I return to this at the end of chapter two and later chapters.

and assembled³⁰ by alternate mental operations: continuous and discontinuous.³¹ Continuous mental operations are **clustered** and/or conjunctive: they function by aggregation. Discontinuous operations are corrective and/or disjunctive: they involve revision and even rejection of prior interpreted content. Whether viewers realize it or not, continuous and discontinuous activations of the identification and predication schemas form the *cognitive basis* (or ground) that determines the physiological dimension of one's aesthetic engagements with cinematic texts.

Cognitivism: Methods and Doctrines

Cognitivism is by no means a uniform practice.³² Nonetheless, its arrival on the scene of film studies advances distinct contributions, most notably to interpretive theory and poetics.³³ It offers marked advantages over past theoretical schools, most notably canonical contemporary film theory,³⁴ while reappraising prospects for research inherited from classical film theory.³⁵ A compact history of the movement is not feasible, but some preliminary insights are in order.

³⁰ Michael Arbib and Mary Hesse write of “schema assemblage,” albeit within a different context (1986: 50-54).

³¹ The emphasis on schemas (identification/predication) and operations (continuity/discontinuity) accords with the association, in cognitive and psychological theory, of schemas with frames and scripts (Arbib and Hesse 1986: 51). Note, however, that Arbib and Hesse also advance that “[t]here is no fixed formal definition of a schema[.]” and appeal to “family resemblance.” (50). See also, in a separate context, Sylvan Tomkins’s theory of images (i.e. frame) and duplication (i.e. script) within the psychological “feedback system” (2008: 3-14). The distinction between frame and script also distantly recalls analytic vs. synthetic judgements.

³² I tend to minimize disagreements between actual cognitivists. One signal difference hinges on research culled from the hard sciences (Bordwell 1995, Grodal 1997, Smith 2003) in contrast to more philosophically speculative theories (Carroll 1990, Currie 2008). I sympathize with the philosophical wing, although I have sought to make my arguments as consistent as they can be with theories of affect/emotions (e.g. Tomkins, Plutchik, Frijda, LeDoux) and perceptual psychology (e.g. Hochberg, Gibson, Gregory, Anderson, Marr) – even as readers may note my inclinations to some of these theorists (e.g. Tomkins, Marr) over others (e.g. Frijda, Gibson). More importantly, the exclusive distinction between philosophy and science is historically inaccurate and epistemically naïve (Zahar 1998). Historically, most philosophers have worked in equal measure as scientists (Aristotle, Descartes, Kant) and *vice versa* (Newton, Einstein, Chomsky). Epistemically, scientific research involves conjecture and idealization – especially in cognitive theory, where knowledge is arguably in its infancy. Moreover, data collection and hypothesis confirmation are themselves no guarantee against later falsifications (Kuhn 1985). For an antithetical perspective, see Smith 2003: 15-41; 65-81. For opposing views on this question, see also Smith 2014 and Turvey 2014, published in the same anthology (Nannicelli and Taberham 2014).

³³ I use either term inclusively. Theories of spectatorship, the viewer’s activity, the psychology of perception, even reception studies and/or the role of the reader can be arraigned under “interpretive theory.” Poetics encompasses narrative theory, style theory and stylistic analysis.

³⁴ This includes: *Les cahiers* in its post-68 period (Comolli, Narboni, Oudart); theorists of the same era (Baudry, Metz, Kuntzel, Bellour); *Screen* in the 70s (Mulvey, MacCabe, Wollen, Heath); and can even extend to later generations who seek to vindicate in varying capacities post-Structuralism or the Frankfurt School (Stam, Nichols, Rodowick, Mayne, Hansen, Gunning, Žižek).

³⁵ For example, Bordwell derives considerable influence from both Arnheim and Eisenstein. Carroll occasionally turns to Pudovkin. Currie’s realism follows in many crucial capacities from Bazin.

The intrinsic interest of cognitivism can be seen by the four principles to be studied in this section. This starts with the founding notion of “schema” – a term whose application we will have cause to sharpen, but which can be initially defined as a conceptual intermediary of the mind/brain which serves to constructions interpretations as occasioned by external stimuli.³⁶ Cognitivism can be taken as starting with the position, reiterated by E. H. Gombrich throughout *Art and Illusion*, that there can be no opposition between *seeing* and *knowing*.³⁷ Rather, every act of seeing (and more broadly perception) mandates a judgement,³⁸ or interpretation, in the sense of minimally ascribing identity to the phenomena perceived. As Gombrich elsewhere insists, there is no “innocent eye” (1995: 12). There is no authentic nor privileged mode of perception that holds ontological or even epistemological superiority over other acts of observing, seeing and construing the world. Rather, every perceptual act is, if not theory-laden,³⁹ then at least informed by degrees of belief, concept and variously defined mental-physiological operations that ought to undermine more Platonic or holistic approaches to knowledge and representation.⁴⁰

This is where cognitivism parts ways from prior schools in film theory, especially certain tendencies in canonical contemporary film theory. To cite one contrasting approach, the naïve Platonism can be approximated as follows: there exists a rigid division between reality and appearance, such that the latter, in being mistaken for the former, can only prove cognitively and even ideologically suspect. That very bias informs apparatus theory.⁴¹ To wit: “*Le dispositif*

³⁶ See Head and Holmes 1911, Bartlett 1961, Gombrich 1995, Bordwell 1985, Peterson 1994, Smith 1995, as well as Arbib and Hesse 1986, and Hastie 1981, among others, for a variety of usages and stipulations.

³⁷ See especially Gombrich 1995: 21, although the view permeates the whole study. The history of cognitive theory is far more complex. One major strain of twentieth century cognitive theory and its philosophical precursors (Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant) is the relation of sight/vision to cognition. Whitehead remarks on how seventeenth century theories of perception and knowledge were mandated by newly formalized discoveries in the physiology of perception, which upended any facile identification between reality, broadly construed, and our perception and even knowledge of the same (1920: 26-27) – although Gombrich notes correctly that modern theories of optics extend back to eleventh century Egypt (1995: 13). Other accounts of cognitive theory focus instead on the relation between thought and language (Chomsky 1966), which influences some of the views in my project, but need not obviate Whitehead’s (or Gombrich’s) point.

³⁸ Perceptual judgements are typically minimally interpretive acts of identification: e.g. “that is a chair.” See Peirce 1955: 302-305.

³⁹ See Hanson 1958.

⁴⁰ Gombrich appeals to Pygmalion as a heuristic for his anti-mimetic theory of representation (1995: 80-99).

⁴¹ Apparatus theory also singled out techniques and technologies – i.e. linear perspective, as developed in Renaissance painting – as inherently ideological duplicitous – an argument that has been traced back to the art historiography of Pierre Francastel (see Peterson 1994: 89 and 190, n.16). For important criticisms of this position, see Bordwell 1985: 104-110. Note that despite his anti-mimetic stance, Gombrich surprisingly contends that perspectival composition more accurately accords with visual perception (i.e. as a physiological process) than other pictorial representations of depth (1995: 204-244). Nelson Goodman criticized Gombrich’s realism on many

cinématographique aurait la particularité de proposer au sujet des perceptions ‘d’une réalité’ dont le statut approcherait de celui des représentations se donnant comme perceptions.” (Baudry 1978: 45). The assertion is that the viewer’s perceptual activity is ontologically distinct from one’s quotidian immersion in extra-cinematic reality – even if epistemologically, either might seem quite similar.

In a trivial sense, this can be granted. For example, one sees objects that exist in depth in phenomenal reality, whereas two-dimensional films provide us with “depth cues.”⁴² But Baudry’s argument starts from a premise that the four cognitivist principles would disavow: that there is some undifferentiated or absolute experience of phenomenal reality, and a wholesale cinematic “[*impression*] de réalité” (1978: 48).⁴³ By contrast, cognitivism maintains that this impression is only relative to a welter of decrees, from viewers. Theatre, photography, sculpture and painting all respectively convey their own “*impressions de réalité.*” More importantly, the illusory or authentic realism of their signifying processes will grow or fade as viewers adjust their interpretations. Such adjustments or changes in interpretation may operate along broadly historical lines, or within a more limited, piecemeal capacity. In terms of the former, photography arguably replaced painting in its aptitude for satisfying our collective “‘*complexe de la momie*’”⁴⁴ (Bazin 1958: 11). In terms of the latter, we learn to accept films as potentially corresponding to the phenomenal world, in some counterfactual capacity,⁴⁵ despite the highly unreal, structuring medium of cinematic techniques. We also acquiesce to this “impression” with the subsidiary awareness⁴⁶ that, of course, none of what we see is *real*.

occasions – 1972: 141-146; 1976: 34-39 – though his nominalism far exceeds the ideological reductions in apparatus theory.

⁴² On “depth cues,” see Bordwell and Thompson 2013: 146-148. On cinematic representations of space, see Arnheim 1933/1958.

⁴³ Metz 1971a: 13-24 treads the same water with greater nuance. Currie attacks views associated with Metz, Baudry and others (2008: 19-112). Yet, some of his views are closer to the early Metz than he realizes. For instance, he associates the purported realism of cinematic images with their representations of movement; or spends copious pages arguing why film is not a “language” (in the sense of “natural language”: akin to English or Japanese). See Metz 1971a: 39-99, Currie 1996 and 2008: 113-137. See also Buckland 2012: 88-89.

⁴⁴ And, following Bazin’s cue, photography is thereafter supplanted by cinema, which will eventually be dethroned by so-called “total cinema” (1958: 11-19; 21-26).

⁴⁵ See for example Currie 2008: 53-56.

⁴⁶ The term comes from Michael Polanyi, which he contrasts to focal awareness (Polanyi 2015: 55-57). Focal awareness is the object of our attention (e.g. the cinematic content); subsidiary awareness is a latent understanding which accompanies but is distinct from the object of our attention (e.g. you are sitting in a theatre; you never forget this, even though the main of your attention is directed at the film and not the circumstances within which you are watching the film). Polanyi applies these terms to quotidian activities. Jacques Aumont extends it to aesthetic perception (2007: 160; 193-194).

It is at this point that one must turn to cognitivism, detailing its four ascribed principles, to reveal how it offers a more variegated and richly detailed portrayal of the viewing experience. In what follows, I address the four principles in greater detail, as they apply specifically to film analysis. These are: one, cognitivism as a constructive theory, relying on schemas; two, these schemas and related interpretive actions occur largely within the preconscious, in select coordination with conscious mental processes; three, these schemas are organized within a relational/functional capacity; four, they are subject to operations termed correction. I now address each of these principles in the indicated sequence.

Constructivism and Schemas

Cognitivism is a constructivist theory. This does not entail that cognitivism disbelieves in the expanse and infringement of a mind-independent reality. Instead, cognitivism maintains that this mind-independent reality is significantly filtered through cognitive mediation which has sometimes been termed “schemata” or “schemas.” Below, I articulate what is meant by constructivism, before turning attention more fully to schemas.

For constructivists, meaning and content are not “given”⁴⁷ in the base materials or physical properties of what is being presented. Instead: “The organism *constructs* a perceptual judgment on the basis of nonconscious *inferences*.” (Bordwell 1985: 31).⁴⁸ This is what Gombrich means by his dictum “making comes before matching” (1995: 99). By “matching,” he means that a pictorial representation shares a relation of resemblance to some real-world counterpart. By “making,” the implication is that this real-world counterpart is first apprehended via intervening concepts and perceptual habits, and comparable albeit not necessarily identical

⁴⁷ Neither is meaning nor content (nor truth) necessarily “given” for analytic philosophy, including early logical positivism. Carnap’s vocabulary occasionally suggests the opposite (1967: 3), for which he was taken to task by later analytic thinkers (Quine 1963: 20-46; Putnam 1975). A case can be made that his study of “elementary experiences” is far closer to coherence or internalist conceptions of truth than early critics presumed (Cohnitz and Rossberg 2006: 100-105; see also Friedman 1999: 89-162).

⁴⁸ Bordwell’s point is merely on perceptual judgements. In a more elaborate capacity, Edward Branigan’s theory of narration and narrative comprehension is likewise constructivist (Branigan 1984, 1992, 2006). Conversely, Anderson 1998, following the work of James Gibson, has argued against a constructivist notion of perception; see also Hochberg 1964. This partly hinges on whether one considers that physiological processes can be meaningfully understood as building separately identifiable entities (i.e. perceptions) from mind-independent phenomena (i.e. stimuli). Given the mediated determinants of most if not all perceptual apprehensions (e.g. secondary properties), this does not strike me as either fanciful or unlikely. See also Marr 2010. Though the point is not framed identically, see also Hilary Putnam’s commentary on Kant and internalist theories of knowledge (1981: 49-74).

concepts and habits inform the creation and reception of the pictorial representation.⁴⁹ In Gombrich's own words: "Every artist has to know and construct a schema before he can adjust it to the needs of the portrayal." (*ibid.*). One learns how to draw a circle before one can match it to a balloon or a head. More particularly, one must first grasp that a balloon or head are circle-like, before matching it to a painting, drawing or sketch of the same.

Whereas Gombrich focuses his attention largely on the fine arts, David Bordwell trains his eye to what might seem the most mimetic of the visual arts. He cites the Ames experiments⁵⁰ as an object lesson in visual perception and the putative counterfactual dependence between real-world entities and photographic/cinematic depictions of the same.⁵¹ The Ames experiments involved a seemingly random assortment of sticks which, viewed from an exclusive vantage point, coalesce into a chair. Another experiment operated on a similar principle, whereby a slanted floor seems to be all right angles, thus creating the impression that two individuals within the room could grow or shrink by several feet.⁵² Bordwell draws two conclusions from this insight. One: "an unlimited number of objects can create the same percept." (1985: 101). In other words: two or more differently organized sets of lines can be made to seem identical. Two: "we cling to familiar assumptions about our world [...] [such that] even when we know how the illusion was rigged, we still have difficulty seeing the space as it is; we cannot, it seems, perceive spaces so radically unlike those we have learned." (1985: 102). This is what is meant, in

⁴⁹ The pertinence of habits to preconscious processes (see below) invites the consideration that the Peircean conception of the term can be invoked within schema theory. This has already been addressed in Arbib and Hesse 1986: 44-45, such that I do not pursue it here. "Habit" as invoked within the context of audience experience also recalls Marxist sociology of aesthetics (Bourdieu 2007). For better or worse, I take Pierre Bourdieu's *La distinction* to have limited relevance to film. Cinephilia typically has extended over a range of heterogeneous groups and tastes (e.g. cult cinema, classical Hollywood, the avant-garde, the festival circuit, early cinema, superhero films etc.), while also originating outside of elite institutions and/or canonical culture (e.g. *la politique des auteurs*). Such *groupuscules* share Humean standards of taste, which must be cultivated but need not be socially and economically exclusionary. For a far more discerning sociology of aesthetics, see Mukařovský 1970, especially 1970: 49-50.

⁵⁰ As an antecedent to Bordwell, see Maurice Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the same (1996: 64-65). Nonetheless, see also Anderson and Anderson 1996: 355-357 for a contrasting view.

⁵¹ Constructivism poses some challenge to perceptual realism or the transparency thesis as advanced in Currie 1996 or Currie 2008, and Walton 2008: 79-132. Such disagreements cannot be fleshed out here.

⁵² The question as to whether we are fooled by this impression, or lend qualified credence to it, all the while retaining subsidiary awareness that there must be some trick, is a separate issue. My own sense is that, in keeping with Fodorean theories of the modularity of mind (Fodor 1983), even if we know a trick has occurred (e.g. the floors are slanted), we still construct a significantly different interpretation (e.g. the man is shrinking/growing), based *in part* on preconsciously assimilated assumptions about our world. Bordwell of course makes roughly the same point. Similar paradoxes are posed by the so-called "moon illusion" (Rock 1995: 26-30).

Gombrich, by there being no convenient separation between knowledge and seeing: we see what we already know, and sometimes can only learn to see differently via insistent effort.⁵³

This leaves untouched the cognitive mediation by which screen phenomena is constructed into cinematic representations – the point at which “schema” as a theoretical term and concept, must intervene. Positing schemas as enabling cognitive-mediated constructions sounds nebulous and vague. One must sharpen our definition of schemas such that the resulting theory renders explicit, and yet non-redundant, how we get from phenomena-*x* to representation-*y*. Such clarity mandates specifying and distinguishing between types of schemas – a taxonomy (or more minimally, distribution) upon which not all theorists concur.⁵⁴ An acceptable generalization, however, is that “schemas” are alternately or jointly understood as *frames* or *scripts*. I shall now briefly consider either approach.

The notion of schema-as-frame derives from Marvin Minsky, who defines it as a “structure” or “remembered framework to be adapted to fit reality by changing details as necessary.” (1975: 212). It is activated “for representing a stereotyped situation, like being in a certain kind of living room, or going to a child’s birthday party.” (*ibid.*). Going to a child’s party would encompass any range of routines from: commuting from one location to another, to showing up on time, to bringing an appropriate present/food, to bringing your own child, etc. It would also abridge superfluous information: e.g. do you start with your left or your right foot when walking from your car to the child’s house? Despite, the diachronic nature of the latter example (“going to a child’s birthday party”), it may prove heuristically viable to liken a “frame” to what Michael Arbib and Mary Hesse mean when they define a schema as a “unit of representation” (1986: 13). In this capacity, schemas are more synchronic: the very image of a frame conveys how phenomena or stimuli can be filtered and organized into a discrete and uniform whole. This might extend to apprehending an otherwise jumble of images and sounds as representing a character, and/or person.

In film theory, the idea of schema-as-frame finds resonance in Murray Smith’s conception of the “person schema” (1995: 21). One may ascribe the transitive identity of

⁵³ It has been argued that the Ames experiment neither sufficiently approximate everyday perceptual experience nor the viewing experience of films. Bordwell addresses these challenges – from Gibsonian ecology, for example – and I think meets them persuasively (1985: 101-102).

⁵⁴ Just in terms of defining “schema,” take Gombrich vs. Bordwell. For Gombrich, a schema is an initial draft later to be emended (1995: 64): e.g., when children first draw heads as circles, and later learn to adjust the circle and/or face-schema, allowing for differently shaped bone structures (e.g. cheek bones, the chin etc.). By contrast, Bordwell’s definition is all encompassing, as he divides schemas into different categories or functions (1985: 31).

“person” or “character” to some screen phenomena that might otherwise be inanimate (*Le ballon rouge*, 1956), non-existent (*Nosferatu*), non-human (*Au Hasard, Balthazar*, 1966), or change physical appearances (*Cet obscur objet du désir*, 1977). Whether the schema is thought of as a unit or a frame, or pertains to a character or person, there intercedes between oneself and external phenomena at least one conceptual entity (i.e. *schema*) that selects and individuates phenomena.

If the schema-as-frame is understood as synchronic, this does not indicate how successive “frames” can be sequenced, assembled and/or synthesized to produce inferences. This brings one to scripts. A script is a means of tacitly and/or informally organizing units of information, or discrete frames. It performs the task of drawing explanatory connections between phenomena and stimuli that would otherwise, even once identified and predicated, transpire as a jumble of non-sequiturs.

Roger Schank and Robert Abelson phrase the problem more plainly: “There are scripts for eating in a restaurant, riding a bus, watching and playing a football game, participating in a birthday party, and so on. These scripts are responsible for filling in the obvious information that has been left out of a story.” (1977: 41). Between “John was hungry” and “John bought some bread,” the causal connection and explanatory rationale ought to be clear, albeit deceptively simple. One can substitute the second unit/frame with “John stole some bread,” and the semantic connection between either utterance remains acceptably similar. Conversely, switch “John was hungry” with “John likes pigeons” and the inferred significance has shifted.⁵⁵

Bordwell seizes on the link between what (non-film) cognitive theory terms “script” and cognitivism’s (i.e. cognitive film theory’s) interest in narratology. Reporting on parallel research into narrative comprehension, he summarizes that:

First, these studies have revealed that even five-year-old children in our culture recognize certain activities as characteristic of storytelling and story-following. Second, the patterns of comprehension and recalling a story are remarkably uniform for all age groups. People tacitly assume that a story is composed of discriminable events performed by certain agents and linked by particular principles. People also share a sense of what is secondary to the story’s point and what is essential to it. Third, and most significant from a Constructivist [i.e. cognitivist] standpoint, people perform operations on a story. When information is missing, perceivers infer

⁵⁵ This may seem to be an instance of the so-called “primacy effect,” whereby the first sentence (“John was hungry”; “John likes pigeons”) determines our reading of the second (“John bought some bread”; “John stole some bread”). This need not be the case, as studies of the “recency effect” also testify (Sternberg 1978, Perry 1979). One can add to the sentences, “John woke up and it was all a dream” to see how the final sentence can shift interpretation of all that precedes: viewers of Fritz Lang’s *The Woman in the Window* (1944) doubtless know this. See also Peterson 1994: 14.

it or make guesses about it. When events are arranged out of temporal order, perceivers try to put those events in sequence. And people seek causal connections among events. (1985: 33-34).

When confronted to perceptual phenomena, viewers construct “a series of gestures, words, and manipulations of objects [that] add up to the action sequence we know as ‘buying a loaf of bread’ [.]” (34). Moreover, “[in] a film, buying a loaf of bread might consume an instant, a scene, or several scenes.” (35). The script is such that it can be activated across a non-discriminate variety of textual iterations (akin to how, between a film and a remake, roughly the same story gets told twice).

Schema theory mobilizes an elaborate arsenal of frames, scripts, constructions and inferences. Yet, typically, the intricacy of the viewer’s activity is unnoticed by actual audiences. These competences are akin to the acquired abilities to speak in one’s native language or walk. They may initially prove arduous to acquire and are onerous upon reflection. Yet, once acquired, they are effortlessly executed. What makes this execution so effortless is addressed by the second cognitivist principle: cooperating mental processes, with special emphasis on the preconscious and physiological activity. These are what allow the *expedient* activation and deployment of schemas.

Mental Processes

While canonical contemporary film theory tended to privilege the unconscious as the site of the spectator’s mental activity,⁵⁶ cognitivism embraces a dynamic and integrated view.⁵⁷ Different mental processes are posited as cooperating in the viewer’s activity, with focus generally attended to the preconscious.⁵⁸ The preconscious is understood as supported by physiological and conscious processes⁵⁹ – while the unconscious, without necessarily being

⁵⁶ See for example: Oudart 1969a, 1969b; Mulvey 1975; Metz 1984; Baudry 1978.

⁵⁷ See especially Bordwell 1985: 30-40.

⁵⁸ See Thompson 1988: 25-35, especially 26-28.

⁵⁹ I define preconscious in the current chapter, as it is less widely understood, yet has special pertinence to cognitivism and the AT. Physiology, as sometimes defined, involves the involuntary, automatic and uncontrollable processes of living organisms (e.g. the input of perceptual stimuli via the senses). In keeping with Cartesian/Kantian antecedents, I will extend the reach of physiology to cover innate concepts or frames: i.e. content of the mind/brain with which we are born (see also Chomsky 1986). These processes prove crucial to my thesis yet are of lesser import to prior cognitivists and AT theorists, such that I defer relevant analysis until later (see chapters three, onwards). Finally, conscious processes involve deliberate and controllable processes of which we are aware (e.g. reconstructing the events of an ambiguous narration). These intervene, but to a lesser degree than physiology and the preconscious.

dismissed,⁶⁰ becomes an unhelpfully onerous concept for accounts of the viewer's activity and the viewing experience.⁶¹

As the term suggests, the preconscious is the mental repository of acquired knowledge required to perform most quotidian activities. Upon reflection, it should be apparent that it requires some instruction and understanding to, for example, walk, ride a bike, use a language, tell or follow a story, or execute other commonplace actions. However, most of us, everyday, accomplish such complex undertakings with minimal deliberation. If pressed for details, one can consciously account for any one of these actions with approximate degrees of accuracy (e.g. "This is how to walk: place one foot ahead, pressing down first on the heel [etc.]"). What ought to prove astonishing, however, to any layperson is the ease and fluency with which such dexterous actions are completed with near-automatic efficiency. The preconscious is what allows us to store vast amounts of complex information, and moreover select, sequence and apply this information on relevant occasions – without having to stop and (consciously) think about what we are doing at every step.

The "preconscious" gained some recognition due to Freud's neurological theory.⁶² Ironically, Freud simultaneously opted to not ascribe it the same attention and weight as the unconscious: the repository of *repressed* knowledge that either undermines the performance of quotidian activities or manifests itself in apparently aberrant behaviour. Whatever the comparative interests and merits of pre- vs. unconscious to licensed psychoanalysts, this unfortunately proved to the lasting detriment of psychoanalytic film theory, whose fixation on the unconscious led many to sidestep entirely the preconscious.⁶³ The preconscious, in turn, has been addressed and emphasized by select cognitivists (i.e. Bordwell-Thompson). Cognitivists who have eschewed this concept (i.e. Gregory Currie) incur theoretical challenges that an appeal to the preconscious can doubtless resolve.

⁶⁰ Some cognitivists are hasty in their dismissal of any Freudian legacy: "I believe that psychoanalysis is false, not just in the sense of getting a few things wrong, as relativity theory probably does, but in the sense of being wildly, deeply and unrescuably false, as Aristotle's physics is." (Currie 2008: xiv). Others have proven more accommodating, although it is crucial here to distinguish between psychoanalytic theories of spectatorship (Currie's point) and interpretations of psychoanalytically-themed films, as occasionally permitted in Thompson 1988 and Smith 1995.

⁶¹ See Bordwell's critique of Oudart (1985: 110-113).

⁶² Davidson 1986. Claes Davidson is a licensed psychiatrist and analyst who has published extensively on psychoanalysis.

⁶³ Christian Metz makes brief mention of the preconscious in his psychoanalytic film theory. Ultimately, he accords it less significance than the unconscious (Metz 1984: 139). See also Wollheim 1999: 8.

Take two related notions pivotal to the psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious and recurring in theories of spectatorship: disavowal⁶⁴ and repression. These are not necessarily incompatible with *all* aspects of the viewer's activity: films can prove complicit in alternately the repression or analysis of traumatic or supposedly taboo topics and desires. However, as a universally posited attribute of the viewer's activity, disavowal and/or repression remain inaptly convoluted mechanisms. Hence, on some level, one typically knows that cinematic images and sounds are not extensionally identical to some pro-filmic event: when you watch *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), Humphrey Bogart is not *in fact there* (i.e. present in flesh and blood, as is the case for acting in the theatre), even if the image has his astonishing likeness (and presumably required his pro-filmic presence to be made). Yet to advance that this knowledge is "disavowed" (in the Freudian sense) or repressed is to equate it with, for example, Oedipal fantasies of parricide or incest: impulses so horrifying to conventional morality (or to social norms) that their mere contemplation (outside of analysis) actually proves insuperable.

Such unlikely contrivances are avoided if one recasts the viewer's interpretive actions from the standpoint of the preconscious. Here, there is no antithesis between the fact that Bogart is not literally present and that one imaginatively invests oneself in his performance of Sam Spade. To enjoy his performance, one does not have to continually "repress" the knowledge that he is not in fact physically present (!)⁶⁵. Instead, one retains a complex web of inferences, including but not limited to approximate information as to how the film was made and how it is now being shown: images of Bogart's apparent likeness, representing with his presumed cooperation his performance of Spade, are being projected, broadcast or transmitted on a screen. These inferences, upon inspection, are convoluted, but there is no need to deliberate upon them during each frame of the film. On the contrary, the preconscious, as a mental competence or

⁶⁴ Disavowal in Freud is linked to the origins of sexual fetishes, whereby one suppresses from conscious memory the first sight of female genitalia – which is experienced as traumatic due to castration anxiety, i.e. one experiences as trauma the discovery that there is no phallus (Freud 1961: 152-158). Metz in turn suggests that one must fetishize the cinematic image by disavowing any deliberate awareness that it is merely a representation, despite the apparent likeness between a film image and some real-world antecedent/pro-filmic event (Metz 1984: 95-106). Either explanation strikes me as unduly convoluted. There have been further uses of psychoanalysis in film theory. For criticisms, see Carroll 1988b and (more importantly) Britton 2009: 384-424.

⁶⁵ It might be argued that psychoanalytic film theory is concerned with pleasure and desire, narrowly construed, and not broadly defined interpretive activity, as favoured by cognitivism – though I think some level of continuity and meaningful disagreement surfaces (see also Lapointe 2016a). Inescapably, Baudry's earlier comments on filmic "*perceptions 'd'une réalité'*" (1978: 45), or Oudart's suture theory, seeks to theorize how audiences perceive and cognize cinematic images and sounds. Metz's comments on how audiences identify with the camera are likewise intended to elucidate a pre-cognitivist version of the viewer's activity (1984: 70-71). One cannot write off select theoretical dissimilarities as a case of apples and oranges.

process, allows one to enact such complex ratiocination without conscious effort or reflection: it stores, as it were, such frames and scripts, and deploys them expediently. Someone can reflect on such inferential activity, should they so choose: preconscious processes do not necessarily rise to the level of conscious reflection, but unlike physiological processes, they remain readily available to introspection.⁶⁶

Bordwell and Thompson address these concerns in their respective mentions of the preconscious. Bordwell notes the solecisms in spectator theory and “suture”:

[Jean-Pierre] Oudart appears to claim the suture as an unconscious process (he borrows the term from Lacanian psychoanalysis). Yet all the operations he describes must occur in what Freud calls the “preconscious,” since they are not repressed and there is no resistance to an analyst’s [i.e. film scholar’s] bringing them to light. (1985: 112).

Indeed, because of his deferral to psychoanalysis, Oudart’s famous analysis of off-screen space in Buster Keaton’s *The General* (1927) verges on incoherence.⁶⁷ Recall that a tilt down long shot depicts the advancing Union Army, in the background. Suddenly, the Confederate adversaries enter the foreground, atop a hill overlooking the Unionists below: the former are readying for a surprise attack on the latter. Oudart notes, correctly, that audiences ought to be surprised by the revelation of the Confederates.⁶⁸ The question Oudart fails to answer is *why* this is.

Accustomed as we are to identifying representational content with what is “shown” on-screen,⁶⁹ it takes some readjustment to grasp that the narration is crucially mobilizing off-screen space. But the revelation that *The General* has been occluding diegetic space from our visual perception, or select mimetic conventions, does not prove traumatic or demystifying.⁷⁰ It does

⁶⁶ On operations of the mind/brain that are inaccessible to conscious introspection, see Chomsky 1965 on linguistic competence and Johnson-Laird 1983 on inferential activities. I return to this topic in later chapters.

⁶⁷ See specifically Oudart 1969b: 50. The article is in two parts: Oudart 1969a and 1969b. Branigan offers a more charitable account of the same analysis (2006: 133-145). Bordwell criticizes Oudart’s article (1985: 110-113), all the while conceding: “Oudart’s account of suture is subtler and more interesting than his commentators’ [i.e. Daniel Dayan, Nick Browne] version.” (111).

⁶⁸ I have done my best to reconstruct Oudart’s insights, though his exalted rhetoric frequently renders comprehension difficult: “*Le spectateur met un instant à réaliser, comme le personnage de Poe qui voit un papillon grand comme un navire, qu’ils ont pris pied sur une hauteur dominant la rivière, que la position de la caméra cachait. C’est alors qu’avec jubilation et vertige, il appréhende l’espace irréel qui sépare les deux groupes. Il est lui-même fluide, élastique, en expansion. Il est au cinéma.*” (1969b: 50).

⁶⁹ This literalist-denotational assumption recurs throughout the work of otherwise disparate theorists as Bazin, Metz-Mulvey, Gaudreault, Currie. Although apparently commonsensical, it should be taken as incompatible with constructivism.

⁷⁰ The idea that heightened awareness of cinematic technique or film form leads to some (ill-defined) reflexivity or demystification of the medium – which in turn becomes an impetus to opposition or revolt – can be found in Stam 1992.

not occasion any return of the repressed, simply because nothing has been repressed in the first place! One has not disavowed that cinematic representations are not self-same with the totality of phenomenal reality. Instead, one has assimilated the understanding that films can seem visually presentational, in the sense of being iconically reducible to showing us literally depicted and denoted content,⁷¹ such that *The General* obliges us to revise or correct this understanding.

Thompson addresses in more general terms how audiences preconsciously grasp cinematic technique: “Much of our reaction to stylistic devices may be preconconscious in that we learn cutting, camera movement, and other techniques from classical films, and we learn them so well that we usually no longer need to think about them, even after only a few visits to the cinema.” (1988: 27). Conversely, less classical or conventional cinematic techniques should invoke more sustained or conscious efforts from the viewer. The great advantage of the preconconscious is that, unlike the unconscious, it cooperates with physiological processes, as well as the conscious mind. The various surprises and revelations that upset preconconscious assumptions do not throw one into mental pandemonium. They require deliberate reassessment (or correction), after which preconconscious habits can resume.

As a corollary, segmenting mental processes serves to demarcate different types of interpretive activities that operate conjointly. Gregory Currie has noted the sheer range of mental activities arraigned under the designation “interpretation.”⁷² Hence, within the current thesis, any judgement assigning meaning to an entity, including the most rudimentary object identification, can count as interpretation – as do more ambitious efforts in (for example) formalist analysis or symptomatic reading.⁷³ For Currie, this invites the criticism that one is wielding “a very indiscriminating sense of interpretation.” (2008: 232). By contrast, he proposes restricting “interpretation” to culturally informed beliefs, which exist above and beyond biological capacities. Object recognition and more precisely perceptual judgment are hardwired into one’s biology, and immune to conscious alternatives: one cannot help but “judge” one’s perception of the photographic image of an object as such. Inversely, for Currie, interpretation involves education and understanding: e.g. learning how a succession of cinematic shots culminate in

⁷¹ This equally approximates what Gaudreault means by “*monstration*” (Gaudreault 1988).

⁷² See several comments cited below, but also more generally Currie 2008: 225-259.

⁷³ Formalist analysis would here include parametric narration (Bordwell 1985: 274-310; see also Thompson 1988: 245-352). On symptomatic reading, see Bordwell 1989a: 79-104.

some form of discernible meaning or even intention. “Interpretation” designates only the latter, whereas perception must be understood as something else.

The distinction is doubtless not so simple as Currie makes it out to be, but his alternative poses other problems.⁷⁴ Currie chooses to limit his use of interpretation to what he terms “*narrative interpretation*.” (2008: 228). He advances: “Narrative interpretation is the kind of interpretation that even the least ambitious of us engage in when we read: working out what is going on in the story.” (*ibid.*). He demurs that there are other interpretive activities, even within fiction, and cites a string of less apparent thematic, stylistic and even historic queries. In reading Charles Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* (Currie’s example), one can ponder: “whether the opening chapter maintains a tension between comedy and tragedy, whether the railway serves as a symbol of social change, whether the novel bears the marks of the onerous constraints of serial production under which it was written.” (2008: 229). All these concerns, Currie admits, are interpretive questions, but not of the type he addresses.

Yet this makes his argument vulnerable to the same suspicion of indiscriminating definitions. For why not limit interpretation to the specifically exegetical ambiguities enumerated above, and designate Currie’s object of study as narrative *comprehension*? At the same time, Currie’s discrimination between belief/biology and culture inadvertently points to a more consistent alternative. Instead, we can think of interpretation as a broadly encompassing activity, and which can be subdivided, in part thanks to our mental processes: e.g. the physiological, the preconscious, consciousness, etc.

One does not “learn” sight (i.e. physiology) as one needs to learn what a hat (or a fedora hat) is to identify it (preconsciously) on Humphrey Bogart’s head in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941).⁷⁵ Similarly, physiologically, one cannot help but see repeated flashes in Tony Conrad’s *The Flicker*, even with the conscious awareness before or thereafter that this “flicker” effect was achieved under differently specified technological circumstances. More broadly, in traditionally projected, celluloid-based cinema, one invariably sees images as moving, however much they are in fact static frames displayed in rapid succession. These physiological processes are legitimately

⁷⁴ Paradoxical or ambiguous representations such as the duck-rabbit, as favoured by Gestaltists, demonstrate how even object recognition requires inference and judgement.

⁷⁵ The same would apply for more discriminating viewing habits: i.e. visual appreciation of art-works. For the sake of analytic discrimination, it makes sense to conceptually separate: the physiological mechanics of perception (e.g. light refracted through the retina); the perceptual judgement that a painting is a painting (e.g. object recognition); and the more sustained appreciation of the painting as an artefact (e.g. an object’s significance). See also Carnap 1967.

understood as interpretive activities and participate with preconscious and conscious processes of: e.g. following a story (preconscious); making the default assumption that the film has some purposeful unity and meaning (*idem.*); engaging in more complicated thematic or stylistic analyses (conscious). In this segmented but cooperative division of mental processes, perceptual judgment and narrative comprehension both tend to the preconscious, as a matter of generalization. By contrast, exegesis, especially in the face of ambiguity and disagreement, is more productively arraigned under the category of conscious processes. Consequently, different aspects and parts of a film call forth distinct interpretive acts.

This occurs equally in avant-garde and more “typical” films. In later chapters, I attend to *The Flicker* (i.e. avant-garde). For now, consider *The Maltese Falcon* (i.e. typical film). One spots the fedora on Sam Spade’s head by physiological and preconscious processes. Physiologically, the identification-schema allows us to see *something* as an object. Preconsciously, one immediately recognizes this object as a fedora. Conversely, any of the passages of the film pertaining to the mystery story-line (i.e. who killed Eugene Archer and why?; where is the Falcon located?) might require that one instead piece together with deliberation the unfolding plot – a conscious process. That this should happen in parts of the film where preconscious processes are just as equally brought into play – one preconsciously recognizes a fedora hat even as one is straining to add up the multiple clues – suggests the following: preconscious and conscious, as well as physiological, processes exist concurrently during the viewing experience.

This brings us to the next point, schemas and interpretations need to be assessed in relation to one another, as functional and systemic entities.

Functions, Relations and Systems

Cognitivism typically designates entities by their relations and functions within a system.⁷⁶ In other words, representations and interpretations are understood as contextually

⁷⁶ Especially here, functional/relational systems are not indigenous to cognitive theory, but cut wide across various instances of analytic philosophy, cognate fields, and (not necessarily cognitivist) film theory. They fit schema theory: i.e. they help draw relations between schemas, identify some of the ways the same phenomena can enlist different schemas, as relative to parts/whole relations in interpretation. I draw from “constructional systems” as theorized in Carnap 1967, which explicitly influence: Goodman 1977, Chomsky 1953 and arguably Chomsky 1965. In film, the following are arguably “constructional,” in the analytic sense: Soviet Montage theory (Pudovkin 1954); *la Grande Syntagmatique* (Metz 1971a); Bordwell’s model of classical narration (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson

defined. In later chapters, we will see how screen phenomena-*x* may be defined as an object or event-*y*, and/or predicated *z*, as relative to previously and subsequently identified and predicated objects and events. In the most pedestrian terms, one knows that the gun on the mantle is not just the gun on the mantle if someone is expected to pick it up and fire it. The gun is identified and predicated in relation to other objects (i.e. the mantle, the characters) and events (i.e. the firing). Conversely, it is these relations that allow one to accomplish the perceptual judgement, “that is a gun,” as opposed to, “that is an indiscriminate part of the background,” although this would remain a viable interpretation within an alternate, relational context.⁷⁷ For instance, the plot twist involving “Rosebud” in *Citizen Kane* hinges on such contingently delimited, corrected relations.

One equally interprets “the gun on the mantle,” or “Rosebud,” functionally. The word function has many usages. While not all cognitivists, or even narrative theorists, will uniformly concur on its usage in the current study, throughout *function* signifies *purpose*.⁷⁸ The implication is that, however inelegant it may sound, all identifiable cinematic content is constructed functionally. This contention applies to variously designed narrative ploys. The “gun on the mantle” serves to anticipate an impending event, thereby activating select interpretive activities (and creating certain effects) for the viewer. By contrast, the final revelation of “Rosebud” serves to shock viewers and oblige them to reassess the preceding narrative: they are not supposed to expect that Kane’s dying words refer to his sleigh (or that this shall never be disclosed to the characters).⁷⁹ It will also extend to any number of background details within an image (e.g. locations), or experimental/non-representational cinema: e.g. the repeated flash in *The Flicker* or plethora of city sights in *News from Home* (1977).

Moreover, theorizing cinematic content in relational and functional terms avoids various forms of essentialism: not every inanimate object (e.g. a gun on the mantle; Rosebud; a flashing light) will serve identically or even comparably the same purpose. Conversely, the challenge becomes to delimit an acceptably varied range of functions, such that one can comprehend and catalogue cinematic content – or the interpretive procedures by which viewers construct the

1985: 3-84). I rename “constructional” alternately “relational,” “functional” or “systemic” to avoid confusion with “constructivist.”

⁷⁷ Arthur Danto makes a similar point in his interpretive theory, with appeal to Mannerist painting (1981: 115-135).

⁷⁸ Bordwell 2004. Elsewhere, Vladimir Propp devises an unusual application for the term (akin to representations of thematized eventhood) that seems counterintuitive (Propp 1968).

⁷⁹ For someone watching *Kane* well advised of the ending, “Rosebud” will function differently. Conversely, the subsequent outcome of “the gun on the mantle” might surprise naïve audiences. No less significantly, audiences might miss crucial details or simply not follow the film – the examples throughout are illustrative, not definitive.

same. If content-*x* is placed in position-*z*, it will elicit *A* (e.g. Rosebud, positioned at the end of *Kane*, reveals surprise). If content-*x* is placed in position-*y*, it will elicit *B* (e.g. the gun, positions mid-way through our hypothetical film, evokes suspense).⁸⁰ These examples freely mix emotion (surprise, suspense) and narrative construction (at the end, mid-way) – or more universally, outside of canonical storytelling, identifications and predications of eventhood. The two AT theorists to be now examined emphasize one over the other in their respective studies.

Greg M. Smith and Noël Carroll invoke respectively the terms local/global and micro/macro in their relational/functional and systemic analyses.⁸¹ Smith attends to narrative cinema but conceives it as a conduit for a range of affects. Carroll is focused on suspense but posits that it arises in determinate narrative structures. Theoretically, they remain on similar terrain. Both local and micro signify that some aspect of the film is experienced within a delimited or relatively isolated capacity in the film text. Conversely, global and macro entail that potentially the same cinematic technique or content will have resonance throughout the structure

⁸⁰ On the centrality of surprise, suspense and curiosity to narration, see Sternberg 1978. See also Todorov 1978: 14.

⁸¹ See Smith 2003 and Carroll 1996: 94-117. Moreover, the emphasis on functions and relations invites the distinction between top-down and bottom-up processing – terms which pervade cognitive literature, yet I find less efficacious than concepts invoked in this and later chapters. The same perceptual phenomena and even identifiable content might nonetheless occasion so-called “data-driven” (i.e. bottom-up) or “hypothesis-driven” (i.e. top-down) interpretations. In the former case, one identifies a red balloon in a filmic image. In the latter case, one scans a filmic image with the expectation of finding a red balloon, perhaps successfully locating it. As this example suggests, bottom-up vs. top-down processing are ubiquitous to not only cognitive and perceptual psychology (J.R. Anderson, Fodor, Rock, Ullman), but also cognitivism (Bordwell, Branigan, Grodal, Peterson, Tan – among others). Unfortunately, this same distinction has incited seemingly irreconcilable dissonance within scientific research and theory. When work is undertaken in computation and perception, there is little concert as to whether these processes are predominantly bottom-up (Fodor 1983, Rock 1995), or an interplay of the two (Anderson 1983, Ullman 1996). Further discord arises as to whether the same or similar interpretive acts count as one or the other process: identifying letters as forming a word, in the most elementary capacity, has been singled out as top-down (Anderson 2015: 47-48); inversely, ascribing dual meanings to ambiguous words has been posited as bottom-up (Swinney 1979). One is tempted to stipulate definitions of either term, but many uncontroversial attempts so far remain ambiguous. For instance, bottom-up, bottom-to-top or data-driven processes are posited as involuntary and contextually invariant, yet few percepts are so phenomenologically (and cognitively) pure. Even colour recognition – one of Bordwell’s examples (1985: 31) – is reported to be physiologically impossible, beyond sense-percept stimuli, in infants (Putnam 1975: 7-8). (That is why distinguishing between physiology and the preconscious is so important). Likewise, top-down, top-to-bottom, or hypothesis-driven processes are defined as voluntary and contextually determined. However, such a definition glosses over different types of hypotheses, especially deduction (seeking out percepts based on expectations) and abduction (attempting to identify ambiguous percepts). (Equally: bottom-up, with its matching of tokens to types, if anything seems inductive – suggesting that it is neither wholly innocent of experience, nor always involuntary or necessarily immediate). If both deductive and abductive judgements are top-down, then the latter process in fact conflates two syllogistically non-identical inferences. If only deductions are top-down, then abductions represent either a blind spot, or a synthesis of top-down and bottom-up that requires further terminology. Neither alternative seems promissory. (Admittedly, considerably more robust and refined theorizing and research is to be found in Ullman 1996: 317-358. Still, many of Ullman’s chief concerns, as partly indebted to Marr – how perceptual and computational processes can correlate to and be realized within information technologies, or simply artificial intelligence – remain esoteric to the current context).

of the film. In later chapters, I have cause to repurpose their terms. Yet an overview of their respective projects remains instructive.

Let us start with Greg M. Smith, who separates emotion from mood. Emotion is local, and thus experienced within some delimited or isolated capacity in the film text. Mood is global and applies to what has resonance to the overall structure of the film. Emotions, while not reducible to reflexes, typically result from associations and stimuli to yield short-term responses. Smith cites research noting how “most emotional expressions on the face last between half a second and four seconds.” (2003: 37). While other types or expressions of emotion – from sadness to fear; or heartbeat frequency to the nervous system – are shown to vary, current findings suggest that “the overall duration of emotions seems to be relatively brief.” (*ibid.*).

By contrast, moods enjoy more sustained longevity. They “have an inertia. They tend to keep us oriented toward expressing and experiencing the same emotion. They encourage us to revisit the stimulus again and again, each time refreshing the emotional experience with a new burst of emotion.” (2003: 38). The emotions – transient, incidental, ephemeral – accrue and are renewed due to moods, which are inert, signifying and more permanent. Nonetheless, the two interlock, as “[m]ood encourages us to experience emotion, and experiencing emotions encourage us to continue in the present mood.” (2003: 42).⁸²

Smith illustrates this by way of the opening of Spielberg’s *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). The film is marked by “fear and excitement[,]” (2003: 45). The hero, Indiana Jones (Harrison Ford), braves life-threatening impediments and other dangers in attempting to recover the Ark of the Covenant. The prologue, while about a separate adventure, nonetheless primes our expectations for the rest of the film: “The mood is suspenseful, apprehensive of the imminent attacks of jungle savages [*sic*] or the swift triggering of hidden death traps.” (*ibid.*). The mood, therefore, is an emotive disposition that pervades our global experience of the opening of the film: it need not be constant (not every second of the film is “suspenseful”), but it nonetheless stands as more significant in how the film is to be appraised.

Conversely, the opening sequence is also strewn with what Smith terms “emotional markers” (2003: 44), namely “configurations of highly visible textual cues for the primary purpose of eliciting brief moments of emotion.” (*ibid.*). In the prologue: “One of the guides

⁸² Carl Plantinga takes an opposite approach to mood and emotion (Plantinga 2009). This disagreement is not without interest, but neither does it impact my thesis.

traveling through the thick jungle uncovers a grotesque stone idol and screams, accompanied by the loud flapping of a flock of flushed birds and a musical stinger. Clearly this is a concentrated organization of emotion cues coordinated to prompt a startle reflex in the viewer[.]” (2003: 46). Its purpose is to “provide a reliable burst of congruent emotion that helps maintain the sequence’s suspenseful mood.” (*ibid.*). The emotions associated with the stone idol locally buttress the existing mood, which further sets the terms for one’s global affective engagement with the film. It is an isolated moment, but one that is significant and instrumental to the structure of the film.

Similarly, throughout his work, Noël Carroll defines narration as what he calls “erotetic.”⁸³ What this means is that story-related content engenders a question or string of questions, to which an audience member, if engaged, will wish an answer. The ensuing narrative provides some semblance of an answer, although this operates within a larger design – which introduces the distinction between micro and macro. Typically the narrative does more than set up and answer a single question, thus ensuring that the plot unfolds. When the identity of George Kaplan is revealed in *North by Northwest* (1959), this does not bring the film to a stop, as both concurrently and in the meantime, a range of other questions have been enacted: will Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant) get to the bottom of this misunderstanding?; will he clear his name of accusations of murder? More to the point, the answer to a question ought to engender a further query. For example, in *Psycho* (1960), the question inaugurating the narrative is: how will Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) respond to her boyfriend’s (and her own) financial troubles? Necessarily, the answer – she commits embezzlement – invites a flurry of subsequent queries (will she get away with it?; will she return the money? etc.), which constitute the backbone of the first half of that film’s narrative.

But the above does not entail, in Carroll’s account at least, that the questions and correlated answers continue indefinitely.⁸⁴ For Carroll, there is a logical point at which the narrative ought to stop – notwithstanding filmmakers who flaunt narrative logic. This is where the idea of relations, functions and systems comes into play. Not all questions are of equal prominence, such that they are divided between macro and micro levels. The former informs the arching structure of the narrative; the latter pertain to moment-by-moment developments of

⁸³ Carroll 1996: 88-91; 96-100.

⁸⁴ By contrast, generative/recursive narrative theories have advanced that narration can pursue indefinitely: Propp 1968, Shklovsky 1990, Perez 1998: 50-91.

comparatively incidental importance. Carroll turns to Keaton's *The General*, whereby the macro questions are: "will Johnny Gray win his true love, will he recover his train, 'The General,' and will he eventually succeed in enlisting in the Confederate Army[?]" (1996: 100). The successful completion of the narrative is premised on a relatively satisfactory answer being provided to each of these questions.

Macro questions thereby serve the purpose of summarizing an entire narrative or theorizing the problem of narrative closure.⁸⁵ Micro questions illustrate moment-to-moment occurrences that might either remain incidental pleasures, or equally prove instrumental (i.e. equally function within a macro capacity). Keaton's film has bits of throwaway slapstick, piquing the viewer's interest without inflecting the bulk of the narration. It "also has a large number of micro-questions which connect scene to scene and fictional event to fictional event." (1996: 100). Carroll mentions any number of impediments the hero encounters when attempting to escape the enemy: e.g. "the Union hijackers scatter debris on the railroad track in order to frustrate Johnny's pursuit." (*ibid.*). This pertains to at least one of the macro questions: will he recover his train? However, it also operates on a local level: how will Johnny overcome this obstacle. The same event is differently identifiable, as having respectively macro and micro import, based on how it is located within a system of relations (i.e. at the macro or micro level).

Both Smith and Carroll, consequently, consider the viewer's affect and comprehension as alternately changing or cumulative: i.e. one narrative question or elicited mood usually engenders another. But this observation leads to an additional concern. A question-answer model can cut both ways: a new question can equally recast an old answer in a fresh light. Put differently, one *corrects* previous interpretations or aspects of any given perceptual-cognitive experience of a representation or film, which brings us to the fourth principle.

Corrective

Therefore, cognitivism is what I term corrective. Perception and understanding are said to function based on what Gombrich termed "schema and correction" (1995: 99): one's framework for apprehending the world is continually being re-adjusted due to new phenomena. As well, as Bordwell has indicated, narrative comprehension involves a process of gradual hypothesis

⁸⁵ See also Carroll 2007, Neupert 1995, Heath 1981: 131-144, Todorov 1969 and Shklovsky 1990: 52-71. Shklovsky has a far more diverse conception of narrative construction than subsequent narrative theorists seem willing to admit.

forming and the subsequent confirming, revising or discarding of these hypotheses based on changes or transformations in the narrative. Similar insights apply for style and character construction. After an initial discussion of Gombrich, a review of select passages in the work of Bordwell, Murray Smith and Edward Branigan helps illustrate the interest of “correction” as a theoretical principle: it aptly conveys the dynamic and ever-varied interpretive activity of viewers.

For Gombrich, it is not enough to posit that schemas inform our construction of the world. In the fine arts, any apparent mimetic achievement in fact “proceeds through the rhythms of schema and correction.” (1995: 64). In such an instance, the schema “represents the first approximate, loose category which is gradually tightened to fit the form it is to reproduce.” (*ibid.*). One can draw a balloon for a head and find that this insufficiently fits the shapes or forms one discerns in some putative, real world counterpart to our sketch. Consequently, one can adjust one’s sketch, such that the result “is not a faithful record of a visual experience but the faithful construction of a relational model.” (1995: 78). Making comes before matching, which yields further making and improved matching, depending on one’s purposes.

Similar principles can be applied in film. Consider how the above remarks on *Psycho*’s erotetic narration (e.g. Marion’s embezzlement and efforts to elude possible capture) obviously misrepresent later developments in the film’s narrative. In keeping with “schema and correction,” this can be best accounted for with appeal to what Bordwell has cited as the “primacy effect” (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 37).⁸⁶ The primacy effect means: first impressions are the best. Or: “in any narrative, the information provided first about a character or situation creates a fixed baseline against which later information is judged.” (*ibid.*). This is pivotal to our comprehension, as Bordwell sums up: “Once the exposition has outlined a character’s traits, the character should [or: we expect it will] remain consistent.” (*ibid.*):

[O]nce first impressions get erected, they are hard to knock down. [...] [W]e tend to take the first appearance of a motif as the ‘true’ one, which can withstand severe testing by contrary information. When, for instance, a character first presented as amiable later behaves grumpily, we are inclined to justify the grumpiness as a temporary deviation. (*ibid.*).

⁸⁶ The term arises in the psychological literature with the so-called “recency effect,” whereby a primary impression can be reversed. This distinction, and more crucially its implications for aesthetic experience, have to my mind been underplayed in cognitivist analyses of film (see also Smith 1995). By contrast, the ambiguities of the primacy and recency opposition, and their implications for film and literary analysis, were not lost on literary theorists who invoked these terms prior to Bordwell, and explicitly influenced him. See Sternberg 1978 and especially Perry 1979.

In *Psycho*, the “fixed baseline” is that the narration is to revolve around Marion’s financial and emotional woes. This is put to stop when Marion is killed, after which much of the rest of the film is centred upon Norman’s (Anthony Perkins) efforts to conceal the body and elude detection. At this point, viewers recalibrate their expectations towards the film’s narration and characters.

Alongside narrative action, a similarly dynamic procedure obtains for character construction. Murray Smith’s “*structure of sympathy*” (1995: 5) allows for this. In spectator theory, Smith proposes dispensing with such all-purpose terms such as identification or its commonly identified obverse, distanciation. Instead, he posits a segmented and constructed process whereby audience members appraise and develop responses to on-screen characters. The great drawback of the identification/distanciation couplet is that it imposes one’s engagement with a character as immediate and absolute. Terms such as interpellation or subject-positioning convey that the spectator comes to the film already primed to lend their affective disposition to the *dramatis personae* or narrative. This disposition, once triggered, is complete and undifferentiated. The alternative laid out by Smith indicates that enjoying an ideologically informed genre film accrues via degrees of assumption, interpretation and revision. One first perceives the titular gunman in *Shane* (1953) as an elevated figure but can come to regard him by the finale as lonesome and even condemned. Viewers start with one interpretation (“mythical hero”) and this is gradually transformed into an alternate reading (“tragic hero”).⁸⁷

Finally, Edward Branigan offers a dissection of a Nick Fury comic book whose depictions of space in relation to characters and events proves jarring. As Branigan recounts, an initial panel shows a close view of two hands up against a looming brick wall: a pair of grapples or similarly futuristic gadgets, held in each hand, could entail that this unidentifiable figure is scaling the wall. The subsequent panel raises a contrary problem: we get an extreme long shot from above as Fury finishes scaling the wall. As Branigan summarises, in panel 1, “[n]ormal schema order – orientation, followed by initiating event – is violated” (1992: 80). Instead, a resulting schema – that the action is not only *in media res*, but it and its protagonist are near-unrecognizable – obliges the reader to correct their interpretations (i.e. *forget about the defining context and initiating action; rather, whose hands are those and what is going on?*). Yet panel 2,

⁸⁷ On the more explicitly temporal implications of such judgements, within narrative comprehension, see Sternberg 1978: 67-74.

rather than simply corroborate these interpretations, offers a more complicated follow-up: “its framing goes to the opposite extreme: radically external to the event from an improbable overhead position” (*ibid.*). See figures 1a-b below:



Figures 1a-b: Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. 1:1 (1968), writer/ill. Jim Steranko

The implication is that, in conjunction with interpretations of the narrative content, readers must also forge insights into attendant spatial depictions. Namely, how will this action be given to us: up, close and personal to a fault (panel 1), or from a bird’s eye view (panel 2). Panel 2 undermines the more restricted spatial schema inferred from panel 1 (we are unusually close to the action) and enacts a different pattern (we are to oscillate from jarring close-up to equally jarring long shot).⁸⁸

In the next chapters, we will see how successive identification and predication schemas will compel us to revise and possibly reject our earlier responses to and interpretations of representations. Consequently, “correction” here diverges from the piecemeal refinement envisaged by Gombrich. Instead, it may involve, as one has seen in Bordwell, the wholesale adoption, rejection and even transformation of entire hypotheses. Some of these corrections hinge on differently appraising the same perceptual phenomena in shifting interpretive contexts –

⁸⁸ Though not for purposes of suspense, select works by Jean Renoir and other French filmmakers in the 1930s also include such spatial dislocations – see Lapointe 2013.

a point to which I return from chapters three onwards. More specifically, select forms of correction, and/or the lack thereof, correspond to different named aesthetic experiences. For now, suffice to say that the intricacies of the filmgoing experience significantly include corrected interpretations of functionally delimited schemas.

Conclusion

This first chapter has outlined four significant principles that inform cognitivism: constructivism, the cooperation of distinct mental processes, functionalism, schema correction. These principles will recur throughout the thesis, with significant additions and emendations. Notwithstanding said emendations, important criticisms of cognitivism and more specifically the AT are warranted. In the next chapter, which completes this first part, I submit key claims made by select AT theorists to closer scrutiny. The problems are twofold and hinge respectively on the challenge of firstly defining affect/emotion and secondly, delineating the viewing experience.

On affect/emotion, the difficulty arises from evolving a sufficiently supple model that can accommodate or cover the seemingly innumerable range of feelings that a film can incite. More simply: how to incorporate emotion into a model of the viewer's activity without first pinpointing what emotions are, and/or which emotions matter most (or exclusively) to filmgoing? Functional approaches partly point to an answer to this question.

Regardless of how one settles the above concern, a greater problem looms: by what principles to evolve a model of the viewing experience that satisfies explanatorily adequacy? Recall that throughout significant branches of cognitive theory, the focus is on competence – the innate repertoire of cognitive, perceptual and affective abilities – over performance, i.e. how individuals might make use of said abilities. Competence would mandate that a model of the viewing experience be universally applicable – extending to all potential viewing experience of film texts. The limitation in existing AT theories is that they cannot make the inductive leap from general or normative descriptions of performance to universal or explanatorily theories of competence. Explicating these difficulties, and articulating a way out, is among the chief concerns of chapter two.

Chapter Two: Cognitivism's "Affective Turn" and Analytic Philosophy

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have offered an account of select theoretical principles underwriting cognitivism. The purpose has been to underscore the theoretical valence of several of cognitivism's tenets to a model of the viewing experience. We have seen that such a theory must privilege the role of schemas in terms of what viewers do in constructing representations from screen phenomena within relational contexts. It must also allow that the same screen phenomena can yield different representations, and/or interpretations that can be subject to corrections. Such corrections can include ascribing different functions and/or relations to interpreted representations. Finally, the viewer's activity throughout is conducted with expediency and efficiency thanks to the preconscious – as well as, as we shall later have cause to explore, physiological processes.

In this second chapter, the arguments are divided into two sections. Firstly, we appraise specific work undertaken by the Affective Turn (AT), within cognitive film theory and advance several criticisms of how the AT has sought to study the viewing experience. Secondly, in articulating these criticisms, I adumbrate an alternative. This alternative retains the cognitivist principles hitherto explored. However, it equally enlists analytic philosophy in overcoming the lacunae flagged in the AT – this philosophical content includes, but is not limited to, concepts of identification and predication, as well as theories of individuation and eventhood. The analytic alternatives and cognitivist principles, as evolved over these first two chapters, in turn inform the remainder of the thesis.

The AT: Prospects and Limitations

Overall, two problems recur throughout the AT. The first would seem a damning criticism that ought to undermine its prospects. This is that emotions are too amorphous or contingent a topic to allow for systematic study. In fact, practitioners of the AT understand this, and circumvent the problem by examining the viewer's affect in more functional and/or synthetic

contexts.¹ This remedy, however, raises a more serious challenge – namely: by what specific terms, priorities and conceptual models – or, in logico-analytic terms, by what primitives and systems² – are we to characterize the viewing experience of cinematic, textual artifacts?

Such terms and systems depend on the respective and chosen mandates of an author: e.g. character construction; mood and technique; tone and narrative construction.³ What I hope to show is that several such accounts falter universally – i.e. as universally applicable, as opposed to general, accounts of the viewing experience – and thus invite reconsideration. Consequently, one ought to exercise an almost punitive self-awareness in settling for one ensemble of informing concepts and models over another. Likewise, one need not be either an idealist nor a relativist, i.e. there is no need to forsake realism, to recognize that common-sense or even ordinary language cannot serve as an alibi for logical and theoretical shortcomings.⁴

In what follows, I firstly address authors who avail themselves of what I term a weak or covert essentialism (Carroll, Tan, Grodal), despite occasionally professed aims to more functional models. The criticism is that they ultimately misrepresent or shortchange the affective range and/or specifications of the viewing experience. I then turn to authors who posit an adequately varied account of the viewing experience, albeit by relying on flawed and/or misleading theoretical models (G. M. Smith, M. Smith). These critiques lead me to formulate an alternate approach to the viewing experience that I begin to lay out at the chapter's end.

¹ See most notably Smith 2003: 3-14.

² Within analytic philosophy, a primitive is a term defined extraneously to a theoretical system. All subsequent terms are said to be derived from this initial term, within the system. This purportedly renders transparent all further arguments. Such an approach was initially championed with almost utopian expectations (Carnap 1967) and it has since become clear that, even with the barest primitives and the most rigorously delineated system, inferential errors are still wont to seep through (Goodman 1977). I explicitly apply these ideas and sources to film theory in Lapointe 2016c. All the same, the language and approach can help minimize, albeit without eliminating, the risk of error.

³ In respectively Smith 1995, Smith 2003, Grodal 1997 and Tan 1996.

⁴ Of course, ordinary language philosophy is a venerable tradition. However, at least one paradoxical example merits mention. P.F. Strawson opens *Individuals* by signalling his allegiance to “descriptive metaphysics,” akin to ordinary language philosophy. (Strawson 2003). No sooner has he done so, however, that he stipulates a definition for individuals (“material bodies”) irrespective of the ordinary (and varied) usages of the term: i.e. as a noun to designate a person/people; as an adjective to designate equally animate and inanimate entities. He then devises further terms: “basic particulars,” “sound particulars.” Comparable, albeit far more serious ambiguities, arise in Carroll 1990.

Emotions and Functions

Emotions, as everyone should know, are notoriously protean, analytically-defying concepts. Whether one is reading the psychological⁵ or philosophical⁶ literature, there is disagreement as to whether they are to be studied strictly from the standpoint of the neurosciences, or within some more phenomenological or even philosophical capacity.

Both these points are well understood and explicitly stated, for example, by Jon Elster in his richly researched work on the topic.⁷ Among other contentions, Elster advances that theoretical insight into emotions is not terribly more evolved, despite progress in biological understanding of the body, including the brain, than what is to be found (albeit in embryonic form) in the work of Aristotle.⁸ Elster also persuasively raises “[t]he possibility that ‘the emotions’ may not be a coherent and theoretically useful concept” insofar as there is a “lack of agreement [among specialists] about what emotions are [that] is paralleled by [a] lack of agreement on what emotions there are.” (1999: 241).⁹ Elster then lists what he takes to be seven criteria for identifying emotions, albeit none of which are sufficient and only one of which is necessary.¹⁰

The significance of Elster’s claims to my argument is twofold. Firstly, it articulates a parallel insight shared by the AT: that emotions in relation to film need to be theorized in a functional capacity.¹¹ Secondly, that emotions proper, even understood functionally, do not

⁵ For example: Tomkins 2008, Frijda 1987, LeDoux 1996.

⁶ For example, see de Sousa 1987 and Wollheim 1999.

⁷ Elster’s more suggestive insight into the study of emotions is his distinction between natural laws and mechanisms (1999: 1-47). Mechanisms allow one to theorize degrees of contingency with respect to both natural and artefactual occurrences. More precisely, mechanisms can be invoked as a methodological principle when one wishes to explain such occurrences after the fact, when nomologic or predictive claims are inaccessible to inquiry. Note here that Elster invokes them in the natural sciences (1999: 2-3), though their usefulness to developing robust arguments in the humanities and social sciences ought to be apparent. Elster himself invokes them in a study of human emotion, broadly construed. For reasons of scope and manageability, I have opted to bypass substantive mention of the topic. An additional chapter on a relatively novel methodological principle would prove onerous within an already detailed and ambitious project (note that Elster himself devotes a chapter to the issue, but subsequently only returns to it intermittently). More crucially, the emphasis throughout on competence (*what* happens during the viewing experience) over performance (*how* there can be multiple, varied viewing experiences) indicates that the study of mechanisms is a separate concern. Mechanisms pertain to the theorist’s inability to predict different viewing experiences (i.e. performances), not the principles and parameters of the viewer’s competence.

⁸ Elster 1999: 52-75. See also de Sousa 1987, who makes a comparable point, albeit regarding Descartes.

⁹ See also LeDoux 1996: 73-103, who makes the same argument in explicitly physiological terms: “there may not be one emotional system in the brain but many” (103).

¹⁰ The traits are that emotions involve: one) a qualitative feel; two) cognitive antecedents; three) intentional objects; four) physiological arousal; five) physiological expressions; six) degrees of pleasure and/or pain; seven) action tendencies. See Elster 1999: 244-283, especially 1999: 246.

¹¹ Call this a deflationary functionalism, as functionalism is a divisive topic in philosophy of mind (see introduction): it has proven contentious as to whether one can properly define the “quale” of an emotion, or the

afford exclusive insight into the viewing experience. Instead, if one wishes to cut past ratiocination, one must develop a model of viewing experience that, while incorporating emotions, speaks to broader interpretive contexts. These contexts, as we shall see in later chapters, are understood as the simplest yet most comprehensive range of mental competences within which one experiences (perceptually, affectively, and cognitively) cinematic textual artefacts.

Let us start with the first implication: emotions and functions. What this means is that one cannot hope to itemize every emotion experienced by viewers, or stipulate that some emotions take priority in theorizing (i.e. speak in some way to the “essence” of) the viewing experience. Instead, one must delineate a limited range of interpretive circumstances under which a (seemingly) limitless range of emotions are elicited, each of which serve to complete or fulfill an interpretive act. Hence, it does not matter what emotions *are*, or how *many* there are (or how anyone would go about answering either question): instead, what matters is that they serve identifiable functions in the viewing experience of cinematic, textual artifacts.

Nonetheless, some AT theorists still fall prey to a weak or covert essentialism. Others successfully maintain a functionalist approach, yet devise terms and approaches that are arguably unproductive, and/or of limited scope. This problem leads to the second implication of Elster’s above remarks. One cannot premise a meaningful theory of the viewing experience only on affect, or emotions proper. As a corollary, the challenge is to evolve a parsimonious language that canvasses the range of the viewing experience, while also encompassing a broad cross-section of cinematic texts. Key insights drawn from analytic philosophy, jointly with acknowledging the limitations of the AT, allow us to do so: this will then occupy section two of this chapter and the remainder of the study (i.e. the entire thesis).

Covert Essentialism: Carroll, Tan, Grodal

In approaching the work of Noël Carroll within the scope and aims of the current study, one must admit several caveats. Carroll confines his study of affect and film-going to the

qualia of all emotions (if such a thing exists), and instead must delimit the broader interpretive circumstances (i.e. perceptual, cognitive) in which a manifold variety of affects arise.

purview of what he (inconsistently) terms genre and mode:¹² a set, or range of sets, of cinematic texts. He then propounds to privilege a *general*, and not a universal, theory.¹³ One therefore cannot ascertain his work within the current study's scope: a *universal* theory of cinematic texts, regardless of genre, mode (or "sets," however defined). That notwithstanding, there are sufficient internally misstated or underwhelming propositions in Carroll's project from which one can extrapolate instructive lessons.

Carroll proposes to define select cinematic genres – horror, melodrama, suspense¹⁴ – in terms of their affective impact on audiences. Or, to be more precise, these films elicit what he stipulates¹⁵ are "compound emotion[s]" (1999a: 37, 38).¹⁶ The films are classed by a specified or individuated affect, albeit in relation to equally specified content. In horror, this content is the confrontation between human beings and what Carroll terms "impossible beings": individuals that defy real-world scientific knowledge as to what is physically possible in all living organisms. In suspense, it is that a chain of events suggests a morally evil, but likely outcome (and by implication, the inverse). Specific content – a vampire; a *Perils of Pauline*-style finale – elicits a correlating sentiment: respectively, dread-disgust and anticipation-anxiety.¹⁷

This latter specification introduces the functional dimension of the argument. Carroll states it rather equivocally as: "that horrific beings are predictably objects of loathing and revulsion is a function of the ways they violate our classificatory scheme [i.e. of what is

¹² He defines horror as both a genre and a mode (1990: 194), neglecting to note that in either film or literary theory, each term is distinct from the other (Bordwell 1985: 150). If horror is a genre, it cannot also be a mode, and *vice versa*. Genre theorists and critics already know that similar problems arise as to how one must address film *noir*.

¹³ In his study of horror, he develops both a general and a universal theory, despite suggesting that the former is ultimately preferred (Carroll 1990: 178-195).

¹⁴ Carroll 1990 is devoted to horror; Carroll 1996: 94-117 concerns suspense; Carroll 1999a addresses all three genres.

¹⁵ Another philosophical incoherence throughout Carroll is that he announces his allegiance to ordinary language philosophy (1990: 12-13), but in the same breath stipulates terms such as art-horror, on the justification that "horror" as an everyday expression is too broadly encompassing (*ibid.*). This amounts to a form of opportunism, if not cheating: he plays, then circumvents, the "language games" to paper over the lacunae and inconsistencies in his argument.

¹⁶ Carroll misinterprets what psychologists mean by compound emotions: they are emotions for which ordinary language *already has names*, and which psychologists argue are the synthesis of primary emotions (Plutchik 1980; Hupka 1984). This is equally invoked in evolutionary perspectives: i.e. compound/secondary emotions evolved from primary origins. By contrast, Carroll argues: "Melodrama, then, frequently is rooted in engendering a compound emotion, comprising pity and admiration." (1999a: 37). But since he hasn't recognized this emotion, this becomes a psychologically inexact use of "compound."

¹⁷ I bypass mention of melodrama, as Carroll's account does not sway my critique (or redeem his arguments from my criticisms). Also: Carroll does not explicitly locate compound emotions, as he (mis)understands the term, in suspense – my ideal reconstruction of his argument remains, I believe, defensible, consistent with his approach and perhaps even emends its internal coherence.

scientifically-biologically possible].” (1990: 185). What Carroll has in mind by “function” seems to approximate “consequence” or “result.” Nonetheless, if one means by “function” the purpose or usage of an “X” or “Y,” then Carroll’s insight becomes symmetrical to the following: the violation of classificatory schemes evoked by a vampire (i.e. “undead”) or a zombie (i.e. “living dead”), or even Norman Bates (i.e. “neither woman, *nor* man”),¹⁸ functions to elicit concomitant emotions of dread and disgust.

Statements about functions can be extended to entail statements about relations, and/or synthetic judgements. Here, the dread-disgust is only understood as such because it follows from a violated, classificatory scheme. In other words, quite apart from the fact that emotions typically have intentional objects, horror as defined by Carroll is posited as such: it is not so much understood phenomenologically (i.e. “what it *feels* like to be horrified”), as relative to interpretive criteria (i.e. “viewers predicate *x* as *y*, which engenders reaction *z*”) – or more bluntly, the emotion is wed to an inference, i.e. it follows from a premise. This is a heuristically productive approach, as it specifies under what interpretive conditions one experiences horror, or any range of genre-delimited affects – it also avoids dealing with emotion itself, or problematic cases (e.g. “perverse”¹⁹ or “oppositional”²⁰ readings). For Carroll, if one has identified and

¹⁸ The comment mimics Raymond Bellour’s oft-cited remark (1979: 125). Carroll makes roughly the same point without attribution (1990: 39). Note that Carroll allows for the insight that horror texts need not present antagonists who are anatomically monstrous. *Jaws*, *Psycho*, or *The Phantom of the Opera*, in their literary and filmic iterations, portray characters whereby it’s the antagonists’ behaviour or qualities (preternatural cunning and lethality; extreme psychosis; apparent supernatural abilities) that have intimations of monstrosity, as opposed to their biologically delimited identities (shark; man). See 1990: 37-42. This avowal shields him against the frequent criticism that his definition is too narrow (Smith 2003: 66-70), though it creates other difficulties.

¹⁹ Janet Staiger deploys this concept within the context of reception studies (Staiger 1992 and 2000). I cannot elaborate why Staiger’s research enterprises strike me as flawed and cursory. Her attempt to reconstruct post-war American film critical discourse from four reviews (!) of *Rear Window* (1954) ought to strike anyone as illustrating the inductive fallacy (1992: 81-95). There ought to be serious doubts as to how adequately her findings speak to the reception of Hitchcock and American cinema, not just among general audiences, but even critics outside the four reviewers she selected. There have been more detailed attempts (Tan 1996) to inventory audience responses to films, with post-screening questionnaires put to actual audiences. Likewise, discursive analyses of non-academic film criticism are worthwhile, but they ought to form a separate project: one can unfavourably contrast Staiger’s so-called “reception studies” with the more detailed and exacting research found in Marc Angenot’s social and literary historiography.

²⁰ The term is courtesy of Stuart Hall’s classic text “Encoding/decoding” (Hall 2005), which distinguishes between three interpretive strategies of decoding a text: the dominant-hegemonic, the negotiated, and the oppositional (2005: 125-127). Hall’s essay addresses television, and his three codes cite hypothetical examples drawn from class and economic-related concerns, such as in televised news reports. One wonders as to the applicability of his model to film studies (Mayne 1993). In the closing pages, Hall clearly identifies the oppositional code as having greater political value over the preceding two (he also implies that any pedagogy of resistance is teleological, passing through each of the codes in the order they are listed). But this is a reductively Platonic approach: for every text, there is but one definitive (albeit suppressed) interpretation, which can only be fully attained through the oppositional code. On the contrary, when a text becomes an artistic and/or cultural artefact, it functions within any

predicated the content *as per* determinate schemas or designations, then one experiences a consequent emotion or affective engagement.

At the same time, Carroll's approach remains resolutely unsatisfying. Limiting oneself strictly to horror – which has occupied his most copious analysis of fiction and emotion – the argument has the familiar ring of circularity. That much becomes apparent in the opening pages, when he inaugurates his theory by announcing: “The horror genre, however [i.e. in contrast to the musical], is essentially linked with a specific affect – specifically, that from which it takes its name.” (1990: 15). Whatever else Carroll's impressively catalogued corpus is meant to tell us, it does not separate horror texts from other classes of texts in ways that are theoretically illuminating, nor even critically productive.

To briefly pursue with a counter-example, Carroll underestimates how in select horror texts, the source of evil is a figurative monster, while the actual monster is a source of pathos. This undermines his principal definition of horror, whereby it is so-called monsters who perforce elicit responses of dread and disgust. Ironically, he comes close to conceding this point: “One thing that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is about is illustrating the notion that a person is not innately evil but rather is driven to what we now call anti-social behavior as a result of the way he or she is treated by society.” (1990: 197). See figure 2, from James Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935):



Figure 2: *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), dir. James Whale

number of conflicting interpretations: e.g. two viewers can agree that *Triumph of the Will* (1935) is unmitigated propaganda but disagree as to whether its aesthetics (i.e. conjunction of cinematic techniques with subject matter) are *necessarily* fascistic (i.e. Susan Sontag's famous contention. See Sontag 1981: 73-105). How such debates would fall within the tripartition of hegemonic-negotiated-oppositional remains far from clear.

Consequently, there is a distinction to be made, with respect to the viewing experience, between identifying select characters (e.g. a reanimated corpse) and predicating said characters (e.g. as figures of monstrosity, humour, pathos, etc.).²¹ Grasping that such operations of identification and predication are separate parts of the viewing experience is an insight Carroll only partly grasps.

This remark brings me to the work of Ed Tan. On balance, Tan's study of emotion and the so-called canonical feature film is far more rigorous and systematically researched. Drawing on Frijdean notions of "action readiness,"²² he finds a single, invariable function for all emotions.²³ He outlines and cites theoretical and empirical studies of how such a function might be operative in the viewing of actual film texts.²⁴ Finally, he correlates his identification of affect and/or emotion to a structured account of how viewers construct meaning from and respond to film texts.²⁵

In short, at specific junctures in our comprehension of a narration, concomitant emotions are aroused. Put differently, emotions – or, principally the emotion of interest – serve specifiable purposes within our interpretive activity. Tan separately analyses an adaptation of an O. Henry story ("The Gift of the Magi") and a little-known Dutch film (*Straf*, 1974) to outline how audience assessments of the characters and their travails elicit degrees of emotional investment. One empathizes with a character's troubled predicament (e.g. how will an impoverished wife/husband pay for their significant other's Christmas gift?), which creates interest as to whether or not they will resolve their predicament (e.g. will selling a personal possession help subsidize the purchase of the gift?), and how their goals will be attained (or not).²⁶ This is a significant amelioration over Carroll, whose narrative models discern only incidental and/or arguably selfsame accounts of emotion.

²¹ Carroll equally concedes: "there are lots of monsters who are good guys: E.T., Ariel, and The Swamp Thing [...]" (1990: 41). A further counter-example may be the title character in David Lynch's *The Elephant Man* (1980).

²² Frijda 1987: 69-72. Frijda and Tan also collaborated on a study of sentiment as experienced by film audiences (Tan and Frijda 1999). "Action-readiness," see definition in main text below, also informs Dirk Eitzen's work on humour (Eitzen 1999: 85).

²³ Tan 1996: 45-46; Tan 2014: 107. In the main, Tan 1996 lays out his approach/theory. Tan 2014, in turn, is concerned with an individuated application of the theory to a case study.

²⁴ For Tan 2014, he submitted a questionnaire to audiences – although the results do not seem especially edifying.

²⁵ Tan 1996, especially 41-223.

²⁶ See most notably 1996: 128-150.

Unfortunately, there is much in Tan's approach that ought to strike one as counterintuitive. Take the notion of action readiness. This term is derived from psychologist Nico Frijda's thesis that emotions, or nearly all emotions, are to be grouped and defined under the label of so-called action tendencies, or action readiness.²⁷ Emotions are defined within a delimitation of functions and relations: they serve to express a propensity or desire for action. It does not matter what the "content" of the emotion is (fear, happiness, sadness), or that the same emotion will arguably incite perhaps antithetical actions (fear = fight or flight). Rather, the argument initially advances that emotions are to be understood by their (hypothetical or actual) association to action, in contra-distinction to other forms of human experience (e.g. thought). It is then further refined throughout Frijda. For the current purposes, it is worth merely acknowledging that the notion "action readiness" communicates both the visceral stimuli and perhaps evolutionary origins of affect and emotion.²⁸

Frijda's contribution to psychological theory notwithstanding, his definition does raise questions of pertinence and application when invoked in problems of aesthetics and film viewing. As critics have advanced, and Tan himself acknowledges, "action-readiness" will have incommensurable implications for the physically stationary act of film-watching, when contrasted to privileged aspects of everyday life.²⁹ To cite the obvious: one can veritably fight or flee when experiencing fear in our quotidian experience, but many a film viewer will endure a horror film until the end.³⁰

Tan's response is that, again borrowing from Frijda, in aesthetic appreciation, the action is "virtual" (Tan 1996: 75; Tan 2014: 108).³¹ Consequently, audiences may experience the desire to intervene in the diegetic world on-screen and alter the course of events, while equally grasping that they have the inability to do so. But such a caveat should require additional theorizing on Tan's part. If the action-readiness is virtual, then this ought to plausibly align it with other mental dispositions, and/or even possibly emotions, that put aesthetic experience (including film) at a

²⁷ Frijda concedes that there are exceptions. See Frijda 1987: 71. "Action readiness" also recalls Jean-Paul Sartre's admittedly eccentric theory of emotion (Sartre 1969), which Frijda references on more than one occasion.

²⁸ If fear is a stimulus for fight or flight, it is not difficult to surmise that it must have posed survivalist and/or evolutionary advantages to primitive species.

²⁹ Elster advances the view that "action tendency" is an especially inapt concept from which to study aesthetic experience, and more generically the viewing experience, of textual artefacts (including film). See Elster 1999: 283.

³⁰ This partly hinges on what Colin Radford famously considered the paradox of fiction (Radford and Weston 1975). The example of horror necessarily arises in Carroll's study of the same. See especially Carroll 1990: 58-96.

³¹ Note, however, when Frijda wrote of "virtual emotions," he did not necessarily have the aesthetic experiences of audiences in mind (Frijda 2007: 45).

phenomenological removal from quotidian life.³² Yet Tan is elsewhere committed to the view, prevailing in cognitivism, that the emotional content of everyday life is co-extensive with what one experiences at the movies. (1996: 225-251). The very notion of action-readiness mandates that identifying the viewing experience by affect alone (or by affect and cognition) remains insufficient.

The problem of selecting the right master category by which to theorize the viewing experience is compounded when turning to Tan's notion of interest. While the viewing experience is associated with a multitude of emotions, Tan singles out a single emotion, "interest," as the dominant mode of engagement. (1996: 85-193). Unfortunately, the prospect remains that "interest" need not always inform or permeate the viewing experience. Consider his definition: "By interest we mean the inclination to call on resources from a limited capacity, and to employ them for the elaboration of a stimulus, under the influence of the promises which are inherent in the present situation with respect to expected situations." (86). This is a diachronic (and anticipatory) approach: "the present situation" stimulates our engagement in "expected situations." It therefore, most dubiously, rules out more synchronic and reflective approaches: e.g. at the close of *Citizen Kane*, one can think back on the significance of Rosebud. Tan might respond that this amounts to a differently named affective engagement – yet why this must fall outside his stipulated definition seems at best arbitrary, and at worst doctrinaire.

Likewise, Tan's approach rules out what may be termed "aesthetic emotions" (Elster 1999: 245), or what he acknowledges as "artefact" and/or "A emotions" (1996: 81). Elster's explication of aesthetic emotions runs counter to Tan's approach, including the necessary continuum he posits between emotions experienced in quotidian (i.e. extra-cinematic) contexts and at the movies:

If [a narrative] event [in a novel] also takes place in such a way that it enables the reader to solve cognitive puzzles created by earlier events in the novel, he may experience the *aesthetic* emotion of release we have when things are seen to fall into place. In some works of music, these aesthetic emotions dominate completely. The ordered and supremely controlled complexity of Bach's Goldberg Variations, for instance, generates emotions of awe and wonder that *may not have any nonaesthetic equivalent*

³² Take the following from Arthur Danto: "Diderot has brilliantly argued that we may be moved to tears by representations of things which by themselves will move us not at all, or move us differently. We may cry at a representation of a mother's despair at the death of a child, but he would be hardhearted who just wept at the correspondant reality; the thing is to comfort and console." (1981: 94). Danto's extensional approach (i.e. contrasting "representation[s]" and their "correspondant reality") is at some removal from constructivism. The point remains that his insights sufficiently complicate Tan's approach.

at all [latter emphasis added]. (1999: 245).

The emphasis especially raises questions which Tan only intermittently meets. Instead, he attends to artefactual emotions all too cursorily, such that the abbreviated examples fail to illuminate a robust definition: “These include enjoyment, desire (for example, one hopes for the return of an element [?] that one particularly enjoyed), admiration and astonishment.” (1996: 82).

Regardless, Tan circumvents this difficulty by distinguishing between what he terms “tonic” and “phasic” emotions. Here, the question would seem to be, not what emotions there are, nor how many emotions there are, but rather: how are they positioned within a larger system? He locates interest within the structure of a film, and the sequencing of the viewing experience, as a “tonic” emotion. Tonic means that it is relatively long-lasting and continuous. By contrast, “phasic” emotions are short and discontinuous.³³ When watching *Psycho*, the shock typically felt as the car concealing Marion’s corpse momentarily stalls when sinking in the mud is phasic; the nervous anticipation as to how long Bates will effectively conceal the murder is tonic.

Ruling out that “interest” can be defined as “phasic” raises the question as to how one might designate apparently synonymous responses that surface within a limited or abridged temporal span. The aesthetic pleasures cited by Elster can occur within entirely phasic contexts. These pleasures also follow from disinterested contemplation or studious engagement that are equivalent to the generic declaration “that’s interesting,” or “I find that [e.g. this plot twist in Austen’s novel; this audio arrangement in the Goldberg Variations] interesting.” This ought to strike one as an acceptable, ordinary usage of the word “interest.” Yet, it does not seem to hold with Tan’s stipulated meaning that the viewing experience hinges primarily on a distinctly felt tonic engagement. If this is the argument to be made, then one wonders whether an ideal term or ideal terms, that are explicitly sequestered from any conceivable equivalents in everyday parlance, ought not to be introduced.

Torben Grodal’s research into emotional tones and modes brings us closer to this theoretical end. Grodal devises an *ideal* language, that stands quite apart from *ordinary* expressions: these ideal terms envelope any range of emotional experiences, without needing to inventory every nameable emotion that arises in everyday conversation (or from one’s folk

³³ Tan 1996: 195-223, and especially 199-200, as well as 1996: 83. This distinction also resembles Greg M. Smith’s separation of “emotion” from “mood.” See however Smith’s commentary on Tan (Smith 2003: 70-75).

psychology). To that effect, Grodal devises four types of “experience” or “modes of affects” (1997: 57-58) that correspond to cognitive-perceptual processing. Therefore, there are obligatory connections between a cinematic representation, a viewer’s interpretation, and the viewer’s experience of said representation.

This approach allows for a considerably more varied vocabulary of audience affect and representational content. It also makes room for interpretation of, and affect in response to, non-representational cinema. Unlike in Carroll or Tan, therefore, Grodal’s model does not single out any one realm of affect (horror, interest), nor does it posit some self-same relationship between filmic content and audience response (audiences find horror films horrifying; audiences take an interest in interesting narratives). Instead, one has a means of differentiating between responses, while also outlining on what basis select images and sounds will trigger separately identified reactions.

Unfortunately, in other regards, Grodal’s model violates conceptual parsimony: he introduces a proliferation of terms that are either redundant or obfuscating. He also equivocates on the relationship between his vocabulary and his theory: the very same language, it turns out, support diagrammatically separate models. Finally, he is never transparent as to what has led him, in terms of theory and approach, to select one set of terms and theoretical system over another. At the very least, it becomes tempting to wonder what has been left out.

The four “modes” as enumerated by Grodal are: intense, saturated, tense, emotive. He defines them as follows:

If the mental focus is linked to non-figurative perceptual processes, the experience will be *intense*; if the mental focus is on a figurative associative web, it will be *saturated*; if the focus is on goal-directed mental or motor acts, it will be *tense*; if the mental focus is on autonomic-rhythmic processes, it will be *emotive*. (1997: 57).

As the above description implies, these emotional tones and mental functions also correlate to more broadly understood aesthetic properties, or definable features of a film. *Intense* pertains to perception in some purely phenomenal and/or non-cognitive capacity. Grodal cites various instances of abstract or avant-garde cinema in which the images have no ostensible “content”: one could equally mention Tony Conrad’s *The Flicker*. In turn, *tense* is correlated to narration, with its concomitant teleology and/or pursuit of identifiable goals. For Grodal, Indiana Jones’s pursuit of the Ark of the Covenant in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* exemplifies the link between a

tense tone and a more consistently narrational film. *Saturated* is understood as *lyrical*, which in Grodal's appellation specifically hinges on the film's content inviting a range of associations. The visual association, in *Psycho*, between Marion Crane's eye and the bath drain, is such a case. For lack of a better term, the drain is *saturated* in so far as, above its nominal identity (i.e. it's a drain), it contains additional associations: a recently deceased character and the circumstances of her death. Finally, the *emotive*, as the very term suggests, can be linked to the aspects of a film (e.g. fast-paced editing) designed to incite intense and involuntary emotional reactions. If one sticks to *Psycho*, the stabbing of Marion which precedes the "saturated" drain is one conceivable instance of the emotive mode.

That the above examples rationally reconstruct Grodal's terminology, albeit changing the sequence within which they are originally defined, ought to raise a question: how are these terms linked within the viewer's activity, if at all? In fact, Grodal devises not one, but two models that differently position the respective terms: one involving audio-visual processing; the second, narrative comprehension. The first model (i.e. audio-visual processing) is constituted of quadrants defined by input/output systems.³⁴ *Intense-tense* and *saturated-emotive* are respectively organized along parallel, horizontal axes. For each axis: "The flow from left to right suggests the movement from input to output, from sensation and perception [intense, saturated] to sequential cognition and action [tense, emotive]." (1997: 57). Therefore, one can apprehend perceptual phenomena and/or external stimuli (intense) and one must then interpret it within some causal framework (tense); one can also apprehend objects in terms of varied associations (saturated) and must thereafter situate them in relation to Frijdean action-readiness and/or affect (emotive).

The extent to which these connections are contingent or tenuous is implicitly acknowledged by Grodal's second model, which concerns audiences' "processing of fiction." (1997: 59). A flow chart positions the modes as in the originally cited definition: intense, saturated, tense, emotive. Here, "[t]he first step [intense] consists of basic perception[.]" while

³⁴ This is also distantly modeled on David Marr's theory of vision, whom Grodal discusses pages before (1997: 52-53). Yet he fails to seize on some of Marr's more promising, albeit challenging, insights. Marr sought to arrive at differential operators to measure the minimal values in intensity (e.g. changes in shape, colour, geometry etc.) required for object recognition – at the risk of being unduly technical, Marr employed the Laplacian operator to represent what he termed "zero crossing," when changes in intensity allow for changes in identification. Marr 2010: 54-61. Given Grodal's focus in the perceptual-cognitive experience of non-representational cinema as distinguished from representational cinema (i.e. between the "intense" mode and respectively either "tense" or "saturated" tones), his superficial engagement with Marr seems surprising.

step two [saturated] is defined as “memory-matching.” (*ibid.*). In turn, step three (tense) “consists of relating and contextualizing the items seen and determined in [basic perception and memory-matching]” (1997: 60). Afterwards, step four (emotive) are “reactions at a high level of arousal.” (1997: 61).

One must thereafter pass from steps one through four to adequately become engaged by narrative fiction. Alternately, films which block the cognitive-perceptual flow at step one (basic perception) or two (figurative associations) fall within the province of the non-narrative, avant-garde. Consider, as already cited, *The Flicker* (i.e. black/grey alternations = basic perception = intense) or Andy Warhol’s 1964 film *Empire* (i.e. the Empire State = associative network prompted by the titular edifice’s accumulated history and cultural significance = saturated).³⁵ Some films might even block audience engagement at step three: recall detractors of Hollywood action cinema who complain that the precisely executed stunts and/or violence nonetheless disallow a more heartfelt or meaningful engagement with the material.³⁶

Yet despite the apparently finite correspondences between poetics, comprehension and response, it is not entirely clear why two separate diagrams (A/V input-output; narrative flow) are needed, nor especially how one relates to the other. Grodal defines the four quadrants such that they correspond, respectively, to the four steps. The “intensities” of “sensation and perception” (1997: 57) correspond to the “intensities” of “basic perception” (59). However, since these experiences and modes have been divided into two diagrams, cannot one ask whether all quadrants might be concentrated into one step? Could an avant-garde film involving only “basic perception” nonetheless activate input-output systems that invite goal-directed activity (e.g. if the hermeneutic need to identify figurative content in a Stan Brakhage film is experienced as “tense”) or even emotive-affective reactions (e.g. if the same Brakhage film moves one to tears)?

Despite the rarefied language, a covert essentialism is at play: certain cinematic styles and forms mandate interpretive actions from viewers, which in turn mandate emotional registers or experiences. That such a terminologically dense theoretical apparatus rests on such facile equations ought to give one pause.

³⁵ *Empire*’s reputation – as a bore – precedes it. Given the scarcity of available prints, it would seem to be a reputation that has been made sight unseen. At the time of their release, Warhol’s films – including *Empire* – were critically respected (Peterson 1994: 134-141). For a recent and impassioned defense of the film, by a prolific art critic and Warhol biographer, see Gopnik 2014.

³⁶ See Pauline Kael’s memorable response to *The French Connection* (1971) as “jolts for jocks” (1971: 115).

This problem is compounded when Grodal introduces three new terms denoting types of emotional reaction: the *telic*, the *paratelic* and the *autonomic*. They are meant to stem from step four, the emotive. However, their definitions match them separately to steps two to four. The *telic* recalls step three (“tense” motor actions): “the telic mode occurs when we experience voluntary, goal-directed actions and thoughts” (1999: 134). The paratelic, in turn, recalls step two (“saturated,” figurative association): “the paratelic mode is activated when experiences, actions, and thought take place without an explicit goal, in relation to the protagonist’s moment-to-moment experiences.” (*ibid.*). Thereafter, the autonomic seems to duplicate step four (“emotive,” involuntary responses): “[t]he viewer and character react to such situations with tears, shudders, or laughter.” (*ibid.*). It becomes positively obfuscating why one needs four equivocated terms, divided into two models, on top of which three new, apparently co-extensional terms are posited.

Finally, one can be forgiven for wondering whether any areas of the viewing experience have been overlooked or inaptly conflated. Indeed, Grodal seems to premise the quadrants and/or steps on progressive object identification and predication. The sequencing, however, seems variable and contingent. By consequence, the logic that would lead one to the next, or even determine that these are the correct stages/quadrants to begin with, remains ill-thought. One can better appraise this when examining Grodal’s repeated statements about “saturation.”

As a quadrant, saturation is identified by evoked or experienced incapacitation, such that this also has implications for cinematic conventions:

Melodrama, for instance, uses a series of devices to block voluntary action, such as simply removing the possible objects (for example, by allowing the beloved to die or disappear) and thus making action impossible. Not only sensations but also memories and images of mental states are characterized by suspension of a motor attitude. This suspension leads to an affective charge of the images and perceptions that I shall call *saturation*[.] (1997: 56).

However, when saturation is identified with memory-matching (i.e. as a step), the elicited affect shifts:

If a film concentrates its representations on a Step 2 level by merely showing different visual items that activate a set of memory files, the effect of the films is normally labelled ‘lyrical’. This is what happens in many music videos and some commercials: the activation of networks of associations. [...] I have called the effect of the step two procedures ‘saturations’, thus indicating that the perceptual qualities are fused with the anthropomorph or zoomorph affects and emotions in a preoperational state. (60).

Memory files and networked associations need not entail the same mode or experience as blocked motricity or affectively charged images. To cite a brief counter-example, the oft-cited metaphor opening *Modern Times* (1936), equating workers and sheep, requires the viewer's ability to make associations – and ought to elicit concomitant affects. For viewers who find the edited images clever or apt, Grodal's account of associational reading or matching – i.e. in terms of inhibited actions and lyrical saturation – explains very little.

Grodal also equivocates between the different “Step[s].” He claims: “Processing can stop at Step 2 in lyrical film sequences, possibly combined with activation of autonomic response [Step 4?], as when certain sentimental or melancholic associations evoke tears. But in most narrative films, Step 2 processing immediately leads to Step 3[.]” (*ibid.*). At the risk of sounding facetious, therefore, Step 2 can stop in its tracks, lead sequentially to Step 3, or, by evoking tears, skip a Step all the way to 4 (!).

The more likely problem is that, firstly, Step 2 wrenches under the same rubric (i.e. “saturation”) otherwise non-identical experiences. Secondly, it may be a theoretical and conceptual misnomer to even term it, or the other interpretive actions, as “Steps.” Hence, “saturation” as defined by Grodal posits a causal link between blocked actions and affectively charged associations that need not hold: enacted actions can be affectively charged (e.g. a murder, a love scene), while blocked actions can engender comic, as opposed to “lyrical,” effects (e.g. slapstick comedy).³⁷ Likewise, the brief admission insinuating that Step 4 can follow from Step 2 confirms that Grodal's model(s) are fallibly defined from the start. Even if one could salvage a definition for “saturation,” or the other quadrants and/or modes, this would still reveal precious little about their inter-relations, or how they constitute the actual viewing experience.

To sum up so far, all three authors examined above (Carroll, Tan, Grodal) endeavour to present functional and/or systemic models of viewing experience. Affects are posited as arising in specified interpretive circumstances: if under context-*x*, then one experiences *y*. Unfortunately, this conceals a weak essentialism, whereby the context as specified is narrowly identified in terms of content, as is the resulting affect or experience. Delineated types of content will necessarily trigger correlating affects, whether this be “horror,” “saturated lyricism,” or vaguely

³⁷ Grodal might retort that he has stipulated “lyrical” such that it covers all these counter-examples: slapstick comedy, love scenes, murder scenes. But the suspicion becomes that the stipulation amounts to a self-fulfilling prophecy: it works as far as Grodal's model goes but has little else to elucidate about the viewing experience. This returns us to the criticism that Grodal is imprecise as to how he devises his terms and relates them to one another within a system.

defined “interest.” As already advanced, a properly functional and relational model instead must remain agnostic as to any named content and affect, which will prove interchangeable *as per* variously delimited functions and relations.

The challenge for the theorist is to instead specify these delimited functions and relations, albeit in a sufficiently capacious manner to accommodate a non-trivial range of interpretations and experiences. The next two theorists examined – Greg M. Smith and Murray Smith – attempt to do precisely this.

Cues and Structure: Context-dependant Affect

Greg M. Smith has developed what he terms the mood cue approach. As the wording makes clear, one’s moods are “cued” by select cinematic techniques. Take a simple case: “*Raiders [of the Lost Ark]* strongly marks the introduction of each Nazi character, using loud musical stingers, low-angle dolly shots, and menacing facial features to mark them clearly as characters to be hated.” (2003: 52). By contrast, Smith itemizes films in which the cues are mixed, and/or sparsely used. *Ghostbusters* (1984) mixes comedy and fright. At the opposite end, Jim Jarmusch’s *Stranger than Paradise* (1984) deploys a limited palette of cinematic techniques, which conveys the emotional content of the film as muted.

Smith intends the mood cue approach as an evaluative tool for textual criticism.³⁸ Nonetheless, as his study is published in an academic context, it is fair to assess its theoretical valence. A signal difficulty is that it has little cognitive value. As the prior example from *Raiders* illustrates, a film has mood cues to the extent that one’s moods are cued! But this is circular.³⁹ Consider a more detailed example to illustrate the point. On *Stranger than Paradise*, Smith advances:

The film eschews most of editing’s potential by always using a single uninterrupted shot for each scene of continuous space and time. Scenes are shot from a single camera setup; the camera only occasionally moves to reframe moving characters. This strategy restricts the range of angle, shot scale, and compositions available. Characters are seen mostly in medium-long to long shots, providing little detailed information on fa-

³⁸ Unfortunately, it is an evaluative strategy (2003: 8) that begs the question. Films are praised or panned insofar as the mood cue approach confirms how successful or not they are at cueing our moods... It is on this basis that Jean Renoir’s *The Lower Depths* (1936) is dismissed (2003: 131-137). But what if this imperative is beside the point? Renoir’s heterogeneous tone proves off-putting for Smith, but there may be other points of entry into the film: for example, its incongruous evocations of space via Renoir’s idiosyncratic *mise-en-scène* techniques. Noël Burch’s classic essay on Renoir’s *Nana* (1926) is premised on just such an approach (Burch 1967).

³⁹ It could be said that Smith means to illuminate why some films are more successful than others at cueing moods, and hence the approach escapes circularity. But how do we know that the sole interest of a film is its successful cueing of moods? The priority of “mood” to evaluation has been presumed, not demonstrated.

cial expressions. (2003: 58).

This confirms that the Jarmusch film, cast alongside *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, is a “less densely informative emotional text[.]” (52).

Unfortunately, in the two above quotes, the second, if it pertains to a novel theoretical or critical approach, ought to strike the reader as superfluous with regards to the first. The stylistic analysis (i.e. contained in the block quote) largely recapitulates insights comparable to what David Bordwell has already observed in parametric narration, i.e. self-imposed stylistic restrictions. The emotional tenor of such cinema is tacit in Bordwell when he singles out *Katzelmacher* (1969) for its identically restricted poetics, despite that “[o]ne does not think of [Rainer Werner] Fassbinder as an ascetic filmmaker[.]” (1985: 286). For the mood cue approach to have valence, it must evolve a language and conceptual approach that actually helps translate one set of terms and/or range of experiences – i.e. our cinematically induced moods – into another set of terms that more concisely defines or accounts for them.⁴⁰ Contrarily, observing that various films are more or “less densely informative emotional[ly]” (Smith 2003: 52) only announces *a priori* what Smith then sets out to reveal: that some films elicit our emotions more explicitly and less ambiguously than others.

Such theoretical strictures are observed in the work of Murray Smith. His “*structure of sympathy*” (1995: 5) sets out to account for how audiences are gradually engaged, or not, on a perceptual, cognitive and especially affective basis by on-screen characters. This is the initial premise of his study: that on-screen characters are what primarily engage audiences in cinematic fictions and mediate our experience of a cinematic narrative – or, “our ‘entry into’ narrative structure is mediated by character.” (1995: 18). Consequently, a theory of the viewing experience (at least for narrative cinema) must start with “character” as the initial term taking precedence over all other terms and theoretical constructs.

One obvious response is that not all films tell stories, or fictitious narratives, in the classical or canonical sense understood by Smith (or Tan).⁴¹ Consequently, a universal theory of the viewing experience cannot limit itself to Smith’s account – but might still incorporate his

⁴⁰ As with the critique of circularity directed at Carroll, in philosophical terms this hinges on the distinction between truth and cognitive value, articulated by Gottlob Frege. See Frege 1997: 151-152.

⁴¹ Regardless, Smith nonetheless steps outside of canonical formats, endeavouring to show how his model can account for non- or even anti-classical narrative poetics, as found in art cinema or the narratives of the Soviet Montagists: among the filmmakers considered are Bresson, Buñuel, Dovzhenko, Eisenstein and Raul Ruiz. See Smith 1995.

insights. Nonetheless, even taking Smith on his own terms – the centrality of character construction to the experience of cinematic storytelling – his purview suffers from at least two limitations. The first limitation stems from the significance of various objectively identifiable entities, including but not limited to characters, to the viewing experience.⁴² The second limitation pertains to the centrality or significance of events.

Consider firstly objectively identifiable entities, or more simply objects – a category which might incorporate, but need not be restricted to, characters.⁴³ While we undoubtedly grant privileged attention to fictional (or non-fictional) beings while watching cinematic narratives, other screen phenomena vie for our attention. Take Albert Lamorisse's *Le ballon rouge*. One certainly ascribes anthropomorphic or zoomorphic agency to the titular balloon, even if it is otherwise (or initially) an inanimate object.⁴⁴ Viewers may recall the improbable image of the balloon floating outside its purported owner's apartment – i.e. the boy Pascal (Pascal Lamorisse) – suggesting that it *chooses* to remain in place. In this regard, one endows intentionality and perhaps emotion to the balloon – attributes Smith flags as constituting what he terms the “person schema,” i.e. the set of criteria by which one constructs characters from screen phenomena.⁴⁵

Yet this is only part of how the balloon is represented. In other scenes, it commands one's attention, and is individuated, not because of any person schema, but in part due to its visual properties. Its anomalous size and salient colour are rendered vivid as much of the surrounding image content tends to be in monochromatic variations of grey and black⁴⁶ See figure 3:

⁴² Select counter-examples I do not develop below, in part because Smith seeks to address them, are: auteurs and stars. In the former case, one watches *Psycho* not for Norman Bates or Marion Crane, but because of Alfred Hitchcock: the latter is the principal object of interest, and the characters are merely accessories (i.e. does anyone care about Bates in Gus van Sant's *Psycho*, 1998?). Likewise, one is engaged by Humphrey Bogart's portrayals of Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe in respectively *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* (1946) regardless of *who* he is portraying: fewer *noir* enthusiasts warm to Dick Powell's interpretation of Marlowe in the otherwise defensible *Murder, My Sweet* (1944). Also, there is not much distinction between a character named “Rufus” in *Duck Soup* (1933) and “Otis” in *A Night at the Opera* (1935) – it's always just “Groucho.” As stated, Smith is aware of these difficulties and insinuates that we still construct “Groucho” or “Bogey,” and even “Hitch,” via the “person schema,” but this would also mandate that he stipulate a more *ideal* definition of “character.”

⁴³ This would ultimately mandate a stipulation of objecthood that far exceeds ordinary conversation. I return to this in chapter three. See also Meinong 1960 and Carnap 1967.

⁴⁴ The film fancifully ends with the red balloon being punctured and destroyed, after which the other balloons “come alive,” as it were, and rally to transport an otherwise grieved Pascal away. See also Bazin 1958: 118-123.

⁴⁵ Smith 1995: 21. For the sake of elucidation, as per the person schema, a person is identified as such by possessing: “1. a discrete human body, individuated and continuous through time and space; 2. perceptual activity, including self-awareness; 3. intentional states, such as beliefs and desires; 4. emotions; 5. the ability to use and understand a natural language; 6. the capacity for self-impelled actions and self-interpretation; 7. the potential for traits, or persisting attributes.” (*ibid.*).

⁴⁶ This also invites consideration of more expressive, as opposed to strictly mimetic, approaches to art (Carroll 1999b: 17-106). Smith explicitly favours anthropocentric mimetic approaches, albeit such that he defends them



Figure 3: *Le ballon rouge* (1956), dir. Albert Lamorisse

Smith might here rebut that one is only engaged by the balloon because of how it relates to the boy, or that one is already constructing it *as per* a person schema: its perceptual properties are correlated to character traits (e.g. red, large = boisterous, fun-loving etc.).⁴⁷ But this gets the interpretive process, and viewing experience, entirely backwards. By at least one plausible construal, one *first* identifies and predicates screen phenomena-*x* as “red, large balloon,” and *then* makes the leap, as André Bazin famously did, that it is, metaphorically, a happy, loyal dog.⁴⁸ The balloon is first an inanimate object before it “becomes” or is constructed as, via the “person schema,” an animate object (or “character”). As a corollary, identifications and predications of objects – whether these are inanimate or agential⁴⁹ – ought to take logical priority in a theoretical system accounting for the viewing experience.⁵⁰

against what he terms “anti-mimetic” (e.g. structuralist, post-structuralist) approaches – see especially his disagreement with Greimas (Smith 1995: 20). Smith would probably allow for the expressive appeals of films insofar as this arises at later stages of his “structure of sympathy,” i.e., such that expressive features of films are mediated by the centrality of characters. I devise other reasons for challenging his position. Regardless, privileging of “predication” in chapters four and six allows for what we commonly think of as “expression.”

⁴⁷ Smith states unequivocally: “our understanding of non-human agents (animals, inanimate objects, abstract concepts, social forces, natural forces, deities) is modelled on our understanding of humans to a large degree.” (1995: 20). That all depends on how abstractly or particularly one quantifies *degrees*: at the risk of sounding facetious, one could retort that our understanding of non-humans *and* humans alike are modelled on universally encapsulating concepts or categories to an even *larger* degree. The arguments throughout this thesis attempt to plausibly buttress a more modest variation on this view.

⁴⁸ See specifically Bazin 1958: 120-121.

⁴⁹ On how we can linguistically (and cognitively) confer animacy and even agency to otherwise inanimate objects, see Yamamoto 1999 and 2006.

⁵⁰ This declaration, which informs chapters three and four, would seem to run counter to views I have put forth elsewhere: I have argued that fictional characters, as they are portrayed and as we construct them, enjoy a so-called “quasi-existence,” autonomously of their textual iterations (Lapointe 2017). The latter intervention, however, is a study of *characters* as one (significant) component of fictional content. The current thesis, by contrast, attends to the

These remarks leave unmentioned the relationship of the boy to the balloon – one is introduced to the balloon as Pascal spots its presence (off-screen) and scales a lamp-post to fetch it. Unfortunately, this seemingly innocuous description commits one to a chicken-or-egg quandary as to whether one is engaged in Pascal, or the balloon, because of an event (Pascal *scales* the lamppost), or is engaged in an event, because it is being enacted by Pascal (*Pascal scales* the lamppost). Such insoluble queries have dogged analytic philosophy and have implications for narrative theory.⁵¹ Rather than definitively settle the matter here, I would like briefly to indicate that, within the context of cinematic texts, it makes sense to identify events separately from characters in a way that is underestimated by Smith – this proposition will then segue to the next section and the thesis’s primary arguments.

Commonsensically, events – or more restrictively, narrative actions and occurrences – are enacted by characters. One identifies and takes an interest in what characters *do* or what happens *to* characters. Yet this line of reasoning is challenged the minute one contemplates that characters might just as readily be inter-changeable, and one is following instead events, actions or occurrences, regardless of how the characters are individuated or identified. Such an insight becomes apparent in retellings of approximately the same story, albeit such that the actions remain largely intact, but the characters are different (i.e. non-identical individuals). Readers and viewers acquainted with Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and its multiple cinematic derivations will recall that the early narrative sections are devoted to the visit of solicitor Jonathan Harker – or Thomas Hutter (Gustav v. Wangenheim) in F.W. Murnau’s appropriation *Nosferatu*⁵² – to Dracula’s castle, after which he succumbs to the vampire’s assault (and in most instances, Harker is also attacked by the vampire’s brides).

viewing experience of all *film texts*, which need not be limited to fictional content, and can contain much more than just characters.

⁵¹ Smith 1995 prioritizes objects (or specifically characters). This places him within the orbit of Greimas’s actantial scheme (1966: 172-191) – notwithstanding their respective differences. By contrast, Bordwell favours representations of eventhood, or what he terms “causality” (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 3-84). Other theoretical differences aside, this loosely parallels Propp’s emphasis on “functions” as dramatizing events involving the dramatis personae (Propp 1968). Put differently, one way or another, narrative theory is confronted to problems identical to what one finds in analytic philosophy. This should have implications for a theory of the viewing experience as well.

⁵² As film historians and Murnau enthusiasts know, the filmmaker never secured the rights to Stoker’s novel, so he simply lifted the story, without credit, but changed the names of the characters. That we still think of *Dracula* and *Orlok* (in Murnau’s version) as sharing so-called “trans-world identity” (Lewis 1983: 261-280 and 1986) is an issue I take up elsewhere (Lapointe 2017).

Yet viewers of other cinematic iterations of Stoker's text might recall purportedly similar events implicating different characters: Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), adapted from a stage play (which was in turn adapted from the Stoker novel), has a differently named solicitor falling prey to the vampire. In this telling, Renfield (Dwight Frye) travels to the castle, is attacked, and Harker is only introduced later in the narrative. The switch has some basis in Stoker's novel: Renfield is a character who, prior to the start of the *syuzhet*,⁵³ did indeed travel to Dracula's castle and was victimised. No matter: "Renfield travels to Transylvania," in Browning's *Dracula*, can serve as a structural and functional counterpart within its narrative to "Harker/Hutter travels to Transylvania" in many of the other versions (e.g. Murnau, Coppola etc.). Such a glaring incongruity of character to action ought to be of interest to a theory of the viewing experience, even if one limits the purview to one's engagement in narrative structure.

Smith might yet rebut that Renfield is still a character in Browning's *Dracula* – or that *somebody*, however named or individuated, still must travel to the Transylvanian lair, for such an action to occupy our attention throughout the narrative. But this misses the point entirely. We identify the event from one version of *Dracula* to the next as roughly the same, even though they mobilize differently individuated characters. The events require characters, or more broadly objects, to be sure, and impact transformations upon those characters/objects. However, that one can identify and predicate the content of *Dracula* in terms of something that happens to a solicitor, regardless of *who* that solicitor is as a character, tells us that, at the risk of stating the obvious, events, no less than characters, remain our "entry point(s)" into narrative structure. Smith's model would gain in applicability if it encompassed "events," alongside "characters," or more broadly "objects," as initial terms from which the rest of the theory follows. Such stipulations and prioritizing now bring us closer to this thesis – which includes but also looks beyond (canonically understood) cinematic narration.

The AT and Analytic Philosophy

The preceding section and previous chapter have outlined how cognitivism theorizes the viewer's activity or viewing experience of film texts. Moreover, it does so in a way that

⁵³ In Russian narrative theory (i.e. the Opojaz), *syuzhet* is sometimes understood as "plot": how the content is evoked on-screen, or on the page, regardless of how the *fabula* or story might otherwise be inferred (Bordwell 1985: 49-53). By contrast, Meir Sternberg has argued that the *fabula/syuzhet* and story/plot distinctions are not so simple, such that *fabula* cannot simply be equated with story, nor *syuzhet* with plot (1978: 8-14).

incorporates affect/emotion to equally defined cognitive and perceptual processes (hence meriting the appellation, the Affective Turn/AT). This also invites considerations for aesthetics, broadly understood as one's manifold (cognitive, perceptive, affective) experience of a film text, irreducible to socio-historical contingencies or narrowly delimited acts of ratiocination/comprehension.

We have also grasped several of the weaknesses in the work of AT theorists, whereby they posit a select affect or response as occupying privileged importance (e.g. horror; interest; the one-to-one ratio between non-figurative images and "intense" experiences) or deploy insufficiently productive terms and/or theoretical relations (e.g. mood cues; the saliency of character). Consequently, while cognitivist principles (e.g. constructivism) and aims (e.g. theorizing the viewing experience) are to be retained, these will be emended with insights adapted from analytic philosophy.

While variegated and conflicting in its diverse incarnations, analytic philosophy can be ascribed two concerns pertinent to the current study. Firstly, it takes up the metaphysical challenge of seeking to account for what exists and subsists in the world.⁵⁴ In doing so, it seeks to devise the most conceptually parsimonious and epistemically reliable language available. The fewer the terms, and the more intimately and logically inter-connected each term, the better. This brings us to the second concern: a logical system of terms and relations must be devised that suitably accounts for everything (i.e. relative to an object of study) and does so while minimizing the prospect of inferential error. Such concerns, of course, pervade wide cross-sections of philosophy above and beyond the analytic tradition. However, specific terms, operations and principles derived directly from segments of analytic philosophy remain at once remedial and constructive measured against the above critique of the AT.

One can begin with our intervention in schema theory. An apparent weakness of schema theory, in cognitivism and aspects of cognitive theory, is the sheer promiscuity of its application:

⁵⁴ This would seem to lend it unduly if not hubristic ambitions: accounting for the whole of our experience of external reality (Russell 1926), or of the phenomenal world (Carnap 1967), or of appearance (Goodman 1977) – this thesis has admittedly inherited a comparably ungainly scope. At the same time, prior film scholars have likewise embarked on totalizing theories – e.g. developing a universal account of cinematic narration (Bordwell 1985) – and the promise of analytic philosophy is to pursue its projects utilizing specified concepts and argumentative protocols. No doubt, early analytic philosophers especially would have found risible the presumed antithesis between piecemeal reasoning and putative Grand Theorizing (*pace* Bordwell 1996: 26-30).

there seems to be as many schemas as the theorist can devise.⁵⁵ Murray Smith, as mentioned, initially premises his study on the postulate of the “person schema,” which suggests the definition of schema-as-frame: “[a] schema is a ‘mental set’ or conceptual framework which enables us to interpret experience, form expectations, and guide our attention[.]” (1995: 21). Yet, later, he apparently switches to defining schemas as scripts.

Hence, a schema remains “a pattern which allows the mind to organize and process the mass of sensory data it constantly receives[.]” (Smith 1995: 47). However, more importantly: “A given schema will provide an outline of events or features, with ‘slots’ for the major agents, events, props, or possible outcomes. On the basis of such schemata, we decide how to act, and we form expectations concerning the results of our actions and those of others.” (*ibid.*). Following this inclusiveness, schemas become at once psychological and socio-cultural, such that one has a “handshake schema” (1995: 50), but also “belief-schemata” (52). Consequently: “[w]hen such schemata interlock, they may function as ideologies” (50). Admittedly, Smith makes a plausible case that schema theory, even in so expanded a form, is a preferred alternative

⁵⁵ Bordwell advises: “More rigorously, we can follow Reid Hastie in distinguishing among various types of schemata [i.e. *prototype; template; procedural*]” (1985: 34). As such, prototypes operate roughly as frames, while templates are closer to scripts, and procedurals can be likened to meta-scripts, at least in Bordwell’s rendition. He understandably paraphrases and adapts Hastie’s model, devised to address memories of events, to fit his disciplinary aims, a theory of narrative comprehension privileging film – not without occasional difficulties. (I would also add that Hastie’s essay is devised more as an overview of existing findings than a distinct contribution to schema theory, see Hastie 1981). A prototype is “the member of a category with the most attributes in common with other members of the category and the fewest attributes in common with members of other contrasting categories.” (Hastie 1981: 40). However, the prospect of making informing comparisons (i.e. “common with other members”) and differentiations (i.e. “contrasting categories”) is lost in Bordwell’s more categorical summary: “In narrative comprehension, prototype schemata seem most relevant for identifying individual agents, actions, goals, and locales [...]. [However,] [w]e cannot inventory all the possible prototype schemata that might be pertinent to narrative comprehension.” (1985: 34). Likewise, a template is, as Hastie quotes noted researchers Donald Norman and Daniel Bobrow: “a framework for tying together the information about any given concept or event, with specifications about the types of interrelations and restrictions upon the way things fit together.” (as cited in Hastie 1981: 40; see Hastie 1981: 85 for reference). While once again degrees of commonality and differentiation are vaguely put (i.e. “specifications about the types of interrelations and restrictions”), in Bordwell any more attuned sense as to how the prototypes fit into a template is glossed over. Instead, he makes the inferential leap, albeit premised on antecedent research in the field, that “narrative structure” (1985: 35) constitutes a template and, what’s more, “the most common template structure can be articulated as a ‘canonical’ story format [...] [that] can be recast as: setting plus characters–goal–attempts–outcome–resolution.” (*ibid.*). Yet Bordwell’s focus remains remarkably feeble to just how fluently and dexterously various innate competences (e.g. perceptions of time and causality, in his example) can ultimately come to assimilate not just purportedly canonical narrative templates, but also so-called subversions to the canonical format. Instead, Bordwell posits procedural schemata, whereby one simply acquires understanding that some film narratives are canonical, and others are not (see 1985: 36). As such, “procedural schemata” amounts to little more than a superfluous stipulation. One is back to the vague observation that some prototypes can interrelate (e.g. *The Maltese Falcon* resembles *Casablanca*, 1942) and others do not (e.g. *The Maltese Falcon* is unlike *Floating Weeds*). This distinction satisfies some descriptive adequacy (i.e. differences between film texts), but it attends insufficiently to explanatory adequacy (i.e. how viewers can experience these and all other film texts).

to rival arguments in subject-position and apparatus theory.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, one can wonder whether an analytic or nominalist approach would recast the matter more simply.

In keeping with conceptual parsimony, we shall limit ourselves to two schemas, approaching the sense that schemas are frames. Drawing (liberal) inspiration from analytic philosophy's inclination to subject-predicate logic, the two schemas are *identification* and *predication-qualification* schemas (henceforth only "predication"). At the risk of redundancy, when screen phenomena-*x* are occasioned before a viewer, it is identified as *y*, and predicated *z*. By identification, one means merely how an entity is notionally and conceptually demarcated from other entities – though, as we shall see, the extent to which this surpasses discrete physical objects or material bodies is significant. By predication, one means how one can characterize an entity, above and beyond preliminary identification.

As I shall maintain throughout, the only two **types of *identification*** deemed relevant, i.e. for the viewing experience, will be objecthood and eventhood. These will be known as "cinematic objecthood" and "cinematic eventhood." The selection of objects and events as logical primitives is neither fortuitous nor aleatory. Theoretically, the division between objects and events has antecedents in film and literary narrative theory, such that invariably theorists posit the centrality of either one or the other. We have already seen this in how Murray Smith posits "characters" as being of fundamental importance, whereas Ed Tan privileges "interest" as arising from narrative action. Closer to our purposes, however, the division between objects and events has explicitly been taken up as an ontological and epistemological problem throughout analytic philosophy. This includes specifying criteria that allow one to identify objects and events (and separate objects from events) in adherence to sufficient and necessary conditions.

By cinematic objecthood, one means any identifiable entity to which one can lend transitive and continuous identity. A character can be an object (e.g. "Charles Kane"), as can inanimate, physical objects (e.g. "Rosebud"). No less significantly, objects can be collectively or generically identified (e.g. "traffic," "a solicitor"), or conversely parts of larger wholes (e.g. "Dracula's fangs"). This suggests that one imposes conceptual identification upon otherwise physically disparate entities – a point to be justified in the next chapter and consistent with constructivist-cognitivism – which leads to two further considerations.

⁵⁶ See especially Smith 1995: 49-50.

Firstly, otherwise non-descript perceptual phenomena can be arraigned under the category of objecthood, as shall be seen when one turns to abstract, avant-garde cinema. Secondly, objects retain a conceptual identity across their transformations, including incommensurable physical transformations (e.g. the prince who turns into a frog is still a prince – even if he looks like, *and is anatomically inseparable from*, a frog). This criterion of continuous and transitive identity leads us to the notion of reidentification, which is key to how objects are predicated.

If cinematic objects retain continuous and transitive identity across transformations, then this raises the question as to whether said transformations are separately identifiable. The example, in *Dracula*, of either Harker or Renfield visiting Transylvania has stated as much: we call these transformations (e.g. “visiting”) events. A cinematic event is an identifiable change or transformation as relative to an object. Most obviously, events will include large-scale changes in the narrative (e.g. “Charles Kane dies,” “Dracula bites his victim”), but will also enfold any number of incrementally shifting changes (e.g. “a light shines or flashes,” “a lighthouse looks smaller from shot-*a* to shot-*b*”). Consequently, cinematic events will be shown to pervade the viewing experience of cinematic texts no less than objects.

Furthermore, cinematic objects and events are separately identifiable: e.g. one constructs “Charles Kane” and “dies” as two analytically separate entities, just as one might alternately construct, “Charles Kane *swims*” or “the shark in *Jaws* dies.” However, objects and events occur *together* in any cinematic representation, such that neither has logical priority over the other within the current theoretical model⁵⁷ – nor interpretive priority over the other within one’s viewing experience. On the contrary, they are defined relationally and functionally, albeit such that they are mutually dependent. Screen phenomena-*x* that is identified as *y* across change-*z* is an object (i.e. object-*y*), while the change-*z* is an event. However, the same phenomena might likewise become an object, depending on one’s construal.

To cite an example: for some viewers, Andy Warhol’s *Kiss* (1963) represents several sets of two objects (“lovers”), sets of one object (“a couple”), or a single object (“a couple,” understood generically and repeatedly) engaged in an event (“kissing”). See figure 4:

⁵⁷ The principle that entities are understood synthetically, as relating to one another within a system, recurs throughout analytic philosophy: Russell 2010, Carnap 1967, Goodman 1977. Goodman defines “appearances” as sums of colours, positions in space, positions of time, such that no one term precedes the other in constituting an appearance.



Figure 4: Kiss (1963), dir. Andy Warhol

The kissing is an event insofar as it marks a transformation as relative to the couple: at least minimally, one constructs the couple(s) as harbouring intentions, emotions, and concomitantly moving. This interpretation obtains whether one interprets the kissing as a single, collective event, or as multiple, repeated events: it remains identifiable as effecting transformations as relative to a couple, or two lovers (i.e. objects).

However, more abstractly, the kissing could also be construed as an object: as an entity that retains continuous and transitive identity across potentially changing properties/qualities.⁵⁸ Here, by contrast, the event would be the *changes* in the participating couples, or even the sheer duration of the kiss. One might still construct the couples as objects, albeit now they are objects of lesser importance: the object that pervades⁵⁹ one's viewing experience would be the reidentified kiss, in conjunction with the event of the changing participants. Such an "objectification" of eventhood (e.g. "kissing") may strike one as highly esoteric and idiosyncratic – at least with regards to the viewing experience of cinematic texts (i.e. outside of Warholian experiments).⁶⁰ Nonetheless, what matters is that it is interpretively conceivable, and accountable within the terms and relations as advanced thus far.

The above analysis has broached the topic of predication, which brings us to the next concern. Cinematic objects and events can thereafter only be *predicated* within two capacities:

⁵⁸ The film can also be taken as intertextually representing Thomas Edison's *The Kiss* (1896), whereby the latter is the constructed or represented cinematic object.

⁵⁹ The distinction between the pervasive kiss and the "lesser" couple hinges on the difference between macro and micro placement of objects, to be seen in chapter three.

⁶⁰ It might not be so exceptional in ordinary conversation as one might assume. For example, few are puzzled by the following: "a(n) kiss/murder/incident/storm occurred last night," such that "occurred" becomes the transformation, and the words in the subject-position, while nominally thought of as events, are here "objectified" as it were – no less so than the kiss in Warhol's film. See also Chomsky 2015: 27-28.

new/old objecthood; *short/long* eventhood. By *new* objecthood, one means an object that is identified for the first time in a film text or predicated in a new or disjunctive way from its prior predications in the text. Therefore, *old* objecthood is a previously identified object also predicated in a way synonymous to or continuous with its prior predications in the text. The distinction of *new/old* holds several crucial implications, some of which I consider briefly here.

As predications for objecthood, *new/old* are drawn liberally from P.F. Strawson's analytic theory of individuality, albeit with important distinctions.⁶¹ Strawson introduced and used the term "reidentification"⁶² to signify an individuated, real-world object that is identifiable as an *x* within a spatio-temporal context, and then *reidentified* as the same in a different context: i.e. a different time; a different place. For example: that sun you see today is the same sun you saw yesterday. Strawson here did not mean altered or synonymous predications. Likewise, for him identifying is necessarily individuating: *that* raindrop is materially, physically discontinuous from every *other* raindrop, however much all raindrops may look alike, or be collectively identifiable as rain.⁶³ Nonetheless, that is a leap I will permit myself here, for reasons I now justify.

Strawson was engaged in metaphysical and ontological enquiries: how entities are individuated in some real-world capacity, perhaps independently of how we might otherwise know them. To cite the earlier example, this would extend to how one raindrop can be individuated as separate from another raindrop, regardless that, in our experience of the world, raindrops are usually identified within some non-defining and even interchangeable capacity (i.e. we typically speak of "*a* raindrop," and frequently "rain," not "*the* raindrop").⁶⁴ As such, strict adherence to Strawson's approach holds little promise in a theory of the viewing experience, unless one drastically restricts one's focus to the film's principal characters and/or content.

Nonetheless, theories of identification can be reconciled to constructivist cognitivism as follows: as an epistemological inquiry into how one demarcates different objects, whether generic or unique, from one another in the film text. Here, it does not matter that the raindrops from one image to the next in the credit sequence from *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) might be numerically distinct from one another; what matters to the viewing experience is that they are

⁶¹ Strawson 2003.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶³ Strawson would call this the difference between numerical and qualitative identity (2003: 34).

⁶⁴ Strawson had earlier developed a functionalist account of reference which is closer to our present purposes (Strawson 1971: 1-28).

collectively identifiable as constituting rain, which is then reidentified as an object in later images in the film: i.e. during the famous song and dance number featuring Gene Kelly.⁶⁵

To pursue, one can delineate reidentification of cinematic objecthood under the following minimal conditions. Viewers merely identify an object, no matter how generic or individuated, as the same as before, across any discontinuity that might be experienced within the film text. A “discontinuity” here can count as a correction in how the object is predicated. As shall be seen in the next part, viewers may decree that an object is to be assessed differently from how it was previously represented in the film: e.g. a seemingly omnipotent villain may be shown to have an Achilles’ heel (i.e. Orlok in Murnau’s *Nosferatu*).

Alternately, viewers can reidentify objects with no radical shift in predication, albeit after the intervening macro placement of a separately identifiable object. During the first conversation between Spade and Brigid O’Shaughnessy (Mary Astor) in *The Maltese Falcon*,⁶⁶ shot/reverse shot continuity editing facilitates that viewers can focus their interpretive attention on (i.e. macro place) either on Spade or O’Shaughnessy. The framing in a shot may center on O’Shaughnessy, after which the frame centers on Spade, only to return to O’Shaughnessy. In the latter instance, the return to O’Shaughnessy, viewers can reidentify her – above and beyond the discontinuity of macro placing Spade in the previous shot. See figures 5a-c:



Figures 5a-c: *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), dir. Jon Huston

However, within a single shot, one’s attention can also transit between different analyzable screen phenomena: e.g. from background to foreground. In any of the above images from *The Maltese Falcon*, one can look at a character in the foreground, look at a detail in the

⁶⁵ They might yet be individuated as different from the rain seen in the opening credits, but I would take this as a point in favour of constructivism: the priority of conceptual identification over physical (dis)unity.

⁶⁶ For a more detailed poetics of the editing, see Bordwell and Thompson 2013: 235-239.

background (e.g. the name “Archer”) and return one’s attention to the character in the foreground. In the latter instance, when one returns one’s attention to the character in the foreground, one has reidentified an object (i.e. the previously identified character).⁶⁷

No less significantly, objects are predicated in synonymous or differentiated ways from their prior identifications-predications in films. **Token predications** (e.g. “x is *red*,” “x is *big*,” “x is *bigger than y*”) will function differently in the viewing experience, depending on one’s prior constructions (or not) of an object. For instance, the first time one constructs the titular red balloon in Lamorisse’s film, the token predication “red” will function *as per* the **predication-type** “new.” In subsequent constructions of the balloon, however, the same decreed token predication – “the balloon is red” – will now function *as per* the predication-type “old.” The above terms will be further sharpened. Suffice to say, for now, that in keeping with the emphasis on relations and functions, otherwise qualitatively similar affects and experiences (e.g. “the balloon is endearing,” “the vampire is terrifying”) will register differently in the viewing experience, based on the viewer’s prior and ongoing interpretations.

Moreover, in addition to the deferral to Strawson, the distinction old/new remains consistent with reliably entrenched assumptions and concepts in aesthetics and art criticism. *New* objecthood has precedent in modernist conceptions of the art-work as “defamiliarizing” its content – a point taken up in neo-formalism.⁶⁸ Inversely, *old* objecthood follows from more traditionalist inclinations, whereby the art-work is assimilable to a lineage of re-enacted conventions or consistently maintained practices – a point equally informing formalist film theory.⁶⁹ The two perspectives need not be at loggerheads,⁷⁰ and neither shall they be lifted

⁶⁷ A more vexing question is whether an edit necessarily occasions discontinuity in object identification, as has been defined here. An object can be identified in two successive shots, such that the principal content (i.e. the macro placed object) remains purportedly the same, but there has been a change in, for example, shot scale, framing, camera angle, etc. The answer put forth here is that an object need not be reidentified when it is successively macro placed across the transition from a medium shot to a close-up – and/or other such edits. The discriminating concern is whether viewers macro place the edit (i.e. as an object). Viewers sometimes identify and attend to edits, to be sure, but at other times are just as liable to focus on the diegetic content, at the expense of cinematic techniques (or artefactual considerations). As such, the definition holds: one reidentifies an object when one identifies it again following an intervening macro object. If the same object-*a* is represented before and after an edit, but one does not macro place (i.e. interpretive focus on) the edit, then the object-*a* has not been reidentified.

⁶⁸ See of course Thompson 1988.

⁶⁹ See Bordwell’s remarks on classicism, especially in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 3-11.

⁷⁰ Noam Chomsky makes the apposite, if somewhat obvious, observation that: “The many modern critics who sense an inconsistency in the belief that free creation takes place within – presupposes, in fact – a system of constraints and governing principles are quite mistaken [...] Without this tension between necessity and freedom, rule and choice, there can be no creativity, no communication, no meaningful acts at all.” (1999: 100). In twentieth century

wholesale within the thesis. The point is that old/new objecthood have not been devised at random, but in addition to analytic philosophy, are equally buttressed by prior arguments in aesthetics and film studies.

Comparable antecedents inform predications – i.e. short/long – of cinematic eventhood. Alfred North Whitehead has written of eventhood as fundamentally pervading all existence, such that we thereafter predicate and experience select events as more durational or finite. This then will have obvious implications for the viewing experience, whereby one predicates certain occurrences as extending over most of the film text, while others are sudden and brief. As an example, consider as a long event the passage from night to day in *Empire*, experienced as relative to the film's eponymous building occupying a select position in space throughout the course of the film. By contrast, the relatively immediate illumination, via the floodlights, of the previously silhouetted building's top counts as a short event.

A short event is more precisely experienced as an interruption relative to an ongoing long event. One typically follows the course of action in a film, and even makes tacit decrees as to how events start and finish. In *Empire*, one can reasonably expect that, if the titular edifice is filmed long enough, night will eventually pass into the day. This event is experienced as a gradual transformation that incorporates more incremental changes: e.g. gradations in the shade or night sky. By contrast, the turning on of the floodlights, insofar as they prove unexpected or discontinuous with changes in the night sky, are experienced as interrupting the ongoing eventhood – i.e. they are constructed *as per* the predication-type short. Thereafter, other like occurrences (e.g. had another series of lights been lit) can be incorporated into the continuum of transformations. As we shall see, short events can be: a) subsequently absorbed into long eventhood; or, b), remain thoroughly disjunctive.

The above analysis should stand in obvious contrast to conceptions of eventhood in narrative theory, as inherited by film studies, whereby events are meant to signal fundamental changes on anthropocentrically designated characters.⁷¹ Following Whitehead's point, however, events will be deemed as such transformations, regardless of whether they are long or short, much less if they cover or fit into a conventionally understood narrative proper: in *Jaws*, a character devoured by a shark will be deemed an event, but so will the rising of the sun the next

art and literary criticism, the cornerstone of such an approach (i.e. tradition and individuated differentiation) is to be found of course in Eliot 1919a and 1919b.

⁷¹ See especially Herman 2009, and likewise Thompson 1999.

day (i.e. within the diegesis). Both might not stand in equal importance within the construction of a goal-oriented narrative. However, both can potentially inform the viewing experience of the film text, such that the latter (i.e. the sun's representation in *Jaws*) need be theorized as something other than *temps mort*, or a superfluous transition.

Such specifications of identification and predication raise some additional considerations that need be addressed. As should be apparent, a functional approach mandates that *anything* can be identified as an object, or as an event. However, this does not license that *everything* will be identified as such: the sufficient/necessary criteria of continuous and transitive identity, or transformation, determine the interpretive context within which phenomena-*x* become an object or an event. Additional terminological distinctions will also be introduced in the next chapters: some objects attract more interpretive attention than others; some events are parts of larger wholes. Here too, the framing and assemblage of schemas will prove instrumental, as will appeals to analytic philosophy (i.e. mereology, or theories of parts-whole relations).

No less significantly, the relation of identification to predication may prove ambiguous and will require further stipulation. While common-sense, and the logic of syntax, would dictate that identification necessarily always precedes predication, for the current purposes a contrary approach shall be postulated. Instead, acts of identification, whether for the construction of cinematic objects or events, and acts of predication, whether the objects are predicated old/new, or the events are predicated long/short, occur simultaneously. In the case of objecthood, an object can be identified for the first time (within the film text) and will perforce be predicated within the same instance: e.g. in *The Flicker*, that *black screen* (identification) feels *abrupt/unnerving* (predication). Alternately, a previously identified object can be re-identified, and concomitantly predicated anew or again (i.e. predicated in a different or similar way to its previous predications). A quick example: in *Jaws*, that *shark* (identification) is *consistently terrifying* (predication).

A parallel procedure applies to eventhood, whereby an event is predicated while it is also identified (i.e. as an event). For example, in Warhol's movie, the Empire State Building has been *standing* (identification)⁷² *there a long time* (predication); in the same, Warhol and Jonas Mekas

⁷² Whether eventhood is at all pertinent to the spatial occupancy of an otherwise immobile, unchanging edifice can be readily disputed. There remains at least three important counter-claims whereby Warhol's film represents an event. Firstly, it evokes temporal change: one is aware of the passage of time as relative to the ongoing existence of Empire State. Secondly, the ongoing presence of the building at least indirectly evokes its prior history: that to

are *reflected* (identification) in the window *very briefly* (predication).⁷³ While, as will be defined in part three, events cannot be re-identified in the same way as objects, they can be positioned as *micro* events, as parts of larger (i.e. *macro*) events, which in turn holds implications for both their identification and predication.

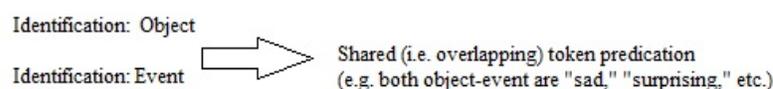
While these technical specifications may seem so elementary as to be trivial or fastidious, in fact they specify the relations between different mental operations and interpretive categories. As already explicated, identification and predication-schemas are activated jointly, such that any identified and predicated object or event will join both schema activations. In the case of a single object, or event, the activated schemas then **overlap**, i.e. in Goodmanian terms, they share the same content (i.e. identify and predicate the same object or event).⁷⁴ In the case of objects and events constructed jointly, they may also share the same token predications (i.e. overlap). Alternately, an object may change in predication during an ongoing (i.e. long) event. Or, a short or interrupting event might activate prior or antecedent token predications for an object. Such operations will be explicated in chapter seven: however, see diagram i:

endure over the years, it first had to be constructed. (For a similar analysis of monuments and eventhood, see also Whitehead 1920: 165-167). Thirdly, the film's apparent monotony can be taken as eliciting the expectation that more conventionally identifiable actions will occur (e.g. something, beyond the passage of time or shining of light, will happen). *Empire* thereby evokes an event *in potentia*, comparable to Shklovsky's account of the "negative ending" (1990: 57).

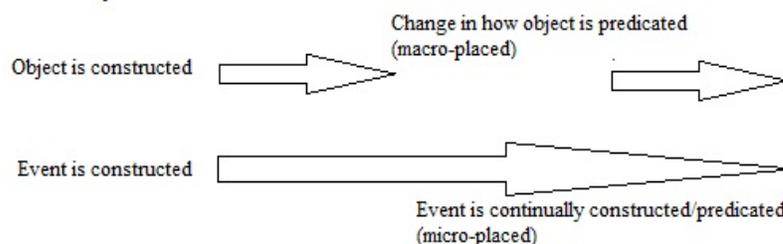
⁷³ Reportedly, Warhol and cinematographer Jonas Mekas can be briefly seen reflected in the window (the film was shot from Rockefeller Center). See Rosenberg 2004.

⁷⁴ On Nelson Goodman's mereology, see introduction.

1. Overlapping Object-Event



2a. Discretely constructed Object-Event



2b. Discretely constructed Object-Event

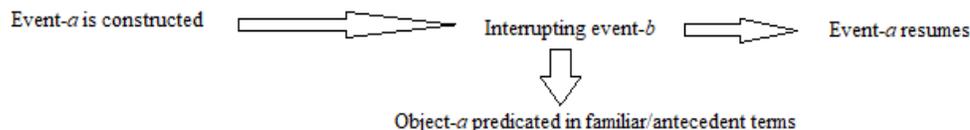


Diagram i: *Overlapping/discretely constructed objects-events*

Finally, an ultimate caveat is required before concluding both the current chapter and part one. A universal theory of the viewing experience of the film text will study what happens once viewers have already constructed the film as a text. In other words, the current thesis remains agnostic as to the differing ways in which the film text as such may be constructed.⁷⁵ Viewers of *Citizen Kane* may take this film to be a single film text. By contrast, other viewers might decree that *Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942) form a single text: i.e. not two films in Orson Welles's filmography, but a single, individuated, textual entity.⁷⁶ Still other viewers might attend to an excerpt of *Kane*, or its trailer, regardless of how this excerpt or trailer can be constructed as part of the film. All such varieties of textual constructions remain intriguing but can be addressed only circumspectly within the existing scope. Instead, it will be posited that the film text as

⁷⁵ See Goodman 1978 for select notions and constructs deployed in nominalist worldmaking – an insight that ought presumably to extend to film texts (i.e. how we construct one film text as distinct from or non-identical to another).

⁷⁶ This would seem to be an eccentric example, but in fact in its heyday auteurism (i.e. as evinced by Andrew Sarris) frequently insisted that a filmmaker's corpus be treated as a single text. There are even more pervasive instances of constructing multiple films into a text. The entries in a series, franchise or trilogy (e.g. *Les vampires*, Antoine Doinel, *Apu*) can be and frequently are taken as a single text. Inversely, a segment of any one such film can be isolated (how often has the ending of *Les 400 Coups*, 1959, been viewed and scrutinized, or even remembered and mnemonically reconstructed, on its own?).

decreed by the viewer is the film proper, as empirically delimited, with occasionally ambiguous exceptions.⁷⁷

Conclusion

So far, we have considered how the affective and more broadly aesthetic significance of cinema has long dogged film studies as a discipline. We have equally seen that while cognitive film theory, more specifically within the guise of its so-called “Affective Turn” (i.e. the AT), boasts distinct advantages over prior schools in film studies, it is nonetheless hampered by occasional inconsistencies and oversights, which in turn are best remedied with methodological tools and concepts inherited from the work of analytic philosophers. In concluding, I would like to briefly indicate how the remainder of the project will mobilize select analytic principles in improving upon the AT, while segueing into the concerns to be addressed in part two.

Mental operations of continuity pertain to the viewers’ competence in imposing degrees of reiteration and/or consistency on screen phenomena – yielding the predications of old objecthood and long eventhood. Conversely, mental operations of discontinuity pertain to one’s competence in constructing degrees of novelty and/or change from screen phenomena – which in turn yield the predications of new objecthood and short eventhood. Either interpretation – predications of respectively cinematic objects and cinematic events – feed into the viewing experiences.

These experiences, or broadly constructed interpretive contexts, as shall be delineated in chapter seven, are stipulated as “sudden,” “prolonged,” “sustained” and “concise.” Each experience follows from delimited combinations of the differently predicated objects and events. A new object and short event are jointly predicated “sudden,” whereas an old object and long event will entail a construction of “prolonged”; combinations of new-long and old-short will yield respectively sustained and concise. Insofar as objects and events have been plausibly defended, throughout parts two and three, to universally encompass one’s interpretive encounters

⁷⁷ It remains an ambiguous question to what extent the company logos opening the film, or other such notifications (e.g. information regarding a restoration process for silent films; citations of awards discerned at prestigious festivals etc.) are part of the text. Similar principles hold for the closing credits. Viewers will differently decree that these are part of the text, or not, and not infrequently on a case by case basis. Films can facilitate or inhibit this identificatory process (e.g. they might alter the company logo via images or sounds), but viewers’ decrees are just as liable to overwhelm these and other (extraneous) determinants. Anecdotally, I have attended screenings whereby audience members chatter throughout the opening credits and even subsequent images, only to turn their attention to the screen when the first line of dialogue is spoken (!). In such cases, the decree would translate as: “the film text proper begins when the first character speaks.”

with cinematic textual artefacts, then these combinations and other attendant vocabulary will necessarily cover all the bases of the viewing experience.⁷⁸

Just what these four terms signify and how they cover the viewing experience in terms of explanatory adequacy shall be more thoroughly maintained in part four, chapter seven.⁷⁹ Suffice to say for now that, with respect to affect, they are understood as functional and even synthetic, and not analytic or essential. They are invariant across any conceivable range of emotions, perceptions and cognitions (outside that they combine specifically predicated objects and events). They signify rather interpretive circumstances within which any number of responses are warranted. In part because they represent categories or types of viewing experiences, they will be posited as more pervasive and fundamental than any impressionistic or affectively specified *qualia*.⁸⁰ These types of viewing experiences will then be shown to define the experience of cinematic texts within some (broadly construed) aesthetic capacity.⁸¹

Before venturing such ambitious claims, however, we must address the arguments immediately at hand. Therefore, in the next chapter, we attend in greater detail to the problem of objecthood. This requires specifying under what interpretive circumstances screen phenomena are constructed as representing cinematic objects. It also mandates determining by what mental competences are such objects predicated by audiences. As we shall see in either case, a question so simple as “what is an object?” nonetheless requires an appreciably complex theoretical answer that speaks directly to the viewing experience of cinematic textual artefacts.

⁷⁸ This also remedies the logical difficulties incurred by the AT: i.e. selecting inopportune initial or primitive terms (Smith 1995, Tan 1996) and making dubious or unproductive inferences (Grodal 1997, Carroll 1990, Smith 2003).

⁷⁹ More generally, and to briefly reiterate, in chapters four, six and seven, I do not be outlining a theory of affect, emotions or feelings *per se*, with respect to the viewing experience of film text. Nor do I discuss how films create affect such as fear, anxiety or joy. Rather, in keeping with cognitivism’s commitment to functionalism, I elucidate by what interpretive procedures emotions and affect occur within the viewing experience – by way of predication. In discussing the production of affect in films, cognitive film theorists have somewhat indirectly shown us the need for a theory of predication to account for how viewers can experience affect when watching a film. It is such a theory of predication that I propose in the relevant chapters that follow.

⁸⁰ This term has a vexed philosophical history. It surfaces in protracted disagreement hinging on functionalist theories of the mind (Block 1978, Dennett 1993), informs theories of fiction (Herman 2009: 137-160) and has been invoked in a separate context to analytically distinguish appearance from reality (Goodman 1977, Goodman 1990).

⁸¹ In contrast to more narrowly constructed collapsing of aesthetics into beauty (Carroll 2001: 20-41), though I am inclined to think that eighteenth century philosophy of aesthetics was not necessarily as reductive as Carroll claims (see Guyer 2005).

Part Two:

Identifying and Predicating Cinematic Objecthood

Chapter Three: Identifying Cinematic Objects

Introduction

Even viewers who dimly remember or have never seen *Citizen Kane* are liable to know something of its famous ending. The reference and potential significance of “Rosebud” is revealed, as we see Charles’s childhood sled go up in flames. The significance of this scene to the narrative structure, themes, characters or other aspects of the film has elicited copious analysis.¹ A frequent problem viewers, including theorists and critics, of *Citizen Kane* confront is readily summed up as follows. In practical terms, one wonders just how much Kane’s dying words convey lasting insight into his character. More abstractly, one wonders just how much any person’s life can be just so readily encapsulated – a query explicitly articulated in the film.² It becomes uncontroversial to posit that at least part of interpreting *Kane* involves extrapolating and formalizing generally applicable propositions from consistently observed phenomena in the film.

Undoubtedly, these concerns have proven relevant to the critical and scholarly discourse surrounding *Kane*, and filmgoing. Nonetheless, they leave untouched by which interpretive procedures these images and sounds register within the viewing experience. Some questions with which a theory of the viewing experience would need to grapple can be outlined, by way of example, as follows. At the most elementary level, Rosebud, as represented near the film’s end, reveals the significance of Kane’s dying words. This plot twist is designed to startle viewers – which, given *Kane*’s ultimate renown, it presumably has. Allowing for the film’s reputation, the revelation of Rosebud is understood as among the most famed finales in film history. We can

¹ The literature on *Kane* is vast. Consider the material collected in the following: Gottesman 1971 and 1996, as well as Naremore 2004. See also Bordwell 1971, Mulvey 1992, and Ishaghpour 2005: 23-257.

² Noël Carroll adeptly addresses the interpretive challenges arising from how to assess the significance of Rosebud to Kane’s life – and, as a corollary, how does this then inform our analysis of the film. See Carroll 1998: 153-165.

conjecture that some viewers appraise Rosebud with quiet contemplation or studious attention. They know what is coming but watch all the same. At this point, additional distinctions become possible. Some viewers today might still find themselves swept along by the emotions and/or expressive power of the scene. Others spot unexpected details: for example, that the sled's varnish progressively melts and vanishes under the flames.³

As has been outlined in the previous chapters, these above concerns fall within the domain of the viewing experience. By viewing experience, one means both minimally interpretive acts of comprehension, but also the more qualitative dimensions of watching and hearing cinematic images and sounds, as channeled through affect and feelings. It has been noted in the previous chapters that this experiential area of the viewer's activity has been a recurring concern throughout film studies. It has also been maintained that such pursuits remain inadequately theorized. I advance that the viewing experience can universally be theorized by delineating acts of identification and predication, which aggregate and/or assemble within a range of combinations.

By identification, one means constructing a discrete entity from any perceptual phenomena associated with the film text (i.e. "screen phenomena") – via the activation of the identification-schema.⁴ By predication, one means ascribing a complement to an entity, in terms of its decreed tertiary qualities.⁵ This occurs via the activation of the predication-schema. The schemas serve to filter or frame the plethora of stimuli which is input from the outside world. They allow one to construct entities and ascribe them meaning from what would otherwise be an inchoate jumble of perceptual phenomena. A further implication, to be explored here and in the

³ The preceding paragraph has mentioned notable and occasionally antithetical notions in accounts film viewing and/or artistic perception: e.g. the tension between respectively more contemplative and more active/engaged approaches to art appreciation (Thompson 1988: 10); concomitantly, active vs. passive constructions of the so-called viewer and/or spectator (Bordwell 1985: 29-47); and separately, expressive vs. mimetic theories of artistic content and more broadly aesthetics (Carroll 1999b: 18-106; see also Goodman 1976: 3-95, especially 45-52). I return to these concerns, albeit within the context of this project's ideal language, throughout the chapter and the remainder of the study.

⁴ This is not to say that such entities derive their identities from how they are named, i.e. nominally identified (see also Metz 1977: 129-161). In avant-garde cinema, one can lend objective identity to the on-screen content even if it is on the threshold of perceptibility and is therefore only vaguely nameable. In fiction film, characters can change names (Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader; Clark Kent/Superman), yet remain the same, reidentifiable objects. A case can even be made that in *cinematic* objecthood, names and naming, unlike in the causal theory of reference (Kripke 1980), serve in part to predicate (see also Smith 1995: 29-31; 113-118).

⁵ See introduction; I develop this proposition further in the next chapter.

following chapters, is that the perceptual phenomena almost always “**underdetermine**”⁶ the activated identifications and predications. Conversely, the same phenomena can equally yield contrasting or divergent identifications and predications. In both cases, the construction of objecthood (and eventhood) need not coincide with the literal image and sound content. See diagram ii:

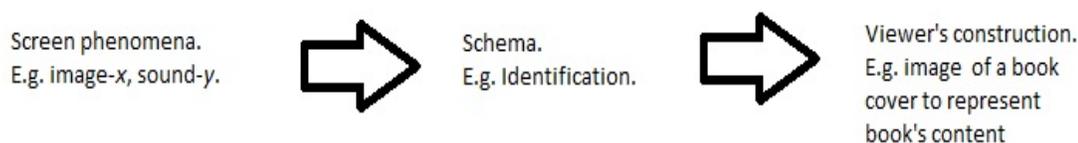


Diagram ii: Schema: identification

As has been argued in part one, the only two types of identification deemed relevant for the current study are objecthood and eventhood. The only types of predication for each are respectively old/new and short/long. In either case, the respective frames – identification; predication – and their obligatory operations – identifying an *x* (e.g. objecthood); predicating a *y* (e.g. old/new) – are innate and physiologically located.⁷ In part two (i.e. chapters three and four),

⁶ I here lift the notion of interpretations as “underdetermined” by experience from Quine (1963: 42; see more broadly 20-46) – which in turn is sometimes more generally construed as the Duhem-Quine thesis. In its various instantiations, Quine’s proposition has proven controversial and I appropriate it within a more restricted, neo-Cartesian sense: that mind-independent reality is inadequate to the schema-mediated interpretations we construct of this reality – including interpretations of cinematic texts. See also Chomsky 1982.

⁷ The ascription of mental content to physiology may seem to run afoul of common usage of either terms – even as they are sometimes deployed in cognitive theory (Johnson-Laird 1983). However, the hypothesis that the mind/brain harbors innate propositional or ideational content, which need only be activated as occasioned by experience, is a major current running throughout cognitive theory and philosophy, stretching at least back to Descartes – with important implications for contemporary linguistics, and arguably psychology of perception. It is hardly controversial to advance that the human mind/brain enjoys specifiable properties that separate it from non-human animacy and agency, as reflected in our artefactual and cultural productions. If this is so, then it remains but a small step to postulate that our cognitive and mental capabilities can be traced back to species-specific, biological endowment – without which, how could human civilization ever benefit from such a jump start over the rest of the animal kingdom? Even disallowing such plausible conjectures, the ability to individuate objects and events as particulars of larger types – one can’t help but think of a *car* as certain type of *thing*, whereas a *car crash* is something *else* – seems to me involuntary and instinctive. As such, there is much insight to be gained, for coherence and theory construction, by expanding the use of “physiology” to incorporate select interpretive operations of the mind/brain. (See also chapter one, n. 59). On philosophy, see Fodor 1983. On linguistics, see Chomsky 2000 and 2015. On perception, Semir Zeki’s work betrays a strong empiricist strain, but he also continually maintains that visual percepts owe more to higher cortical activity than information transmitted through the sense receptors (Zeki 1999). Gestalt psychology, given its Kantian heritage, also posits innate mental content as embedded in the brain’s activity, however differently terms such as proposition (and even content) might be defined (see Johnson 1987, Rock 1995).

we speak of objecthood as a type of identification; correspondingly, old and new are types of predication (for objecthood). See diagram iii:

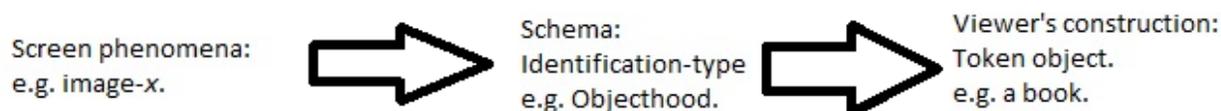


Diagram iii: Identification-type: objecthood

As a corollary to the above, we speak of individuated objects, and individuated predications, as *token* objects and *token* predications. In this regard, the schemas are activated empirically. Their semantic content – an exemplar-*x* that is framed individually, or as a *token* of a *type* (e.g. a person or hat as token objects of the type objecthood) – is sourced externally.

This is where physiology and the preconscious collaborate. Physiologically, viewers have the innate ability to construct any screen phenomena *as per* the identification objecthood. Such an operation is the activation of the schema, identification-type objecthood. Preconsciously, viewers learn by habit the means to identify *token* objects-*a, b, c* from phenomena-*x, y, z*. One can thereafter identify the same or similar objects anew, repeatedly during one's viewing experience of a cinematic textual artefact, without conscious thought.⁸ See diagram iv:

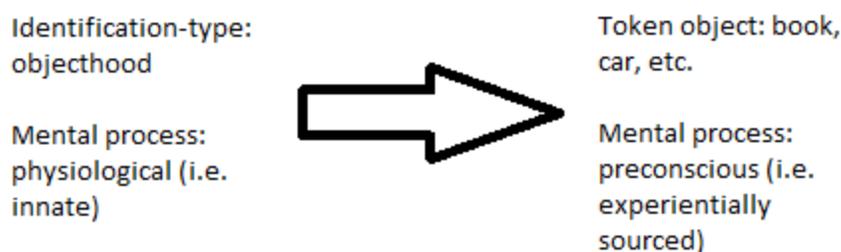


Diagram iv: Objecthood and token objects

⁸ Preconscious processes are accessible to conscious introspection, but not physiological processes. When watching a film, one can consciously introspect, “yes, I can see that it’s a car.” One cannot consciously introspect, “my identification-type schema for objecthood” has been activated. Such processes can be theorized after the fact, using the terms advanced in this study (hence the scholarly value of explaining what viewers – all viewers – do not necessarily “know” about their viewing experiences). The same distinction holds for predications of objects (i.e. new/old), as well as identifications and predications of eventhood. For a similar point on language (i.e. innate processes inaccessible to consciousness), see Chomsky 1965. See also Johnson-Laird 1983.

Finally, it need be noted that images and sounds can serve to construct any number of objects. Viewers can ascribe focal awareness to an object, while retaining subsidiary awareness of other objects. A character-*x* enters a room: one may focus on the character (i.e. as object), while according subordinate interest to the room (i.e. as object). One might equally shift focus between different parts of the character (e.g. eyes, legs), including off-screen parts (e.g. the back of the character's head). One may equally shift focus between different parts of the room (e.g. the wall or walls; chairs and tables; the "space," understood more abstractly⁹). Such interpretive procedures – of differently distributed attention – need be accounted for as well.

The above has already begun to outline the structure of the current and subsequent chapter. Their purpose is to study respectively identifications and predications of cinematic objecthood as a necessary and significantly constitutive part of the viewing experience. Therefore, I open this chapter by stipulating a definition of cinematic objecthood. In keeping with analytic philosophy and its self-scrutiny, at least some acknowledgement must surface – following the critiques of the AT in the previous chapter – as to why "cinematic objecthood" is a viable concept and its definition is to be preferred over rival approaches. At the same time, as this project retains core principles inherited from cognitivism, a theory of the viewing experience privileging cinematic objecthood shall nonetheless have to follow from a constructivist approach to the **viewer's activity**.

This latter concern – the cognitivist principles – occupies the remainder of the chapter. I revisit and expand upon the argumentative principles previously introduced, detailing their role in constructions of cinematic objecthood from screen phenomena. We see that cinematic objecthood activates identification and predication schemas. The implication is that the screen phenomena are always "impoverished," in the sense of "poverty of stimulus,"¹⁰ and/or underdetermined with respect to our interpretations. Constructions of cinematic objecthood

⁹ The distinction between physical (chair) and abstract (space) entities may invite confusion, as these are both understood here as objects. A separate project, about only objecthood, may opt to emphasize this distinction (along the lines of Meinong's metaphysical distinction between existing and non-existing objects). Such a move is not made here, at least not in terms of identification-*types*: distinctions between chairs and themes, and all this entails materially, may be specified within a token capacity. However, even here the constructivist standpoint will maintain that putatively physical token objects are first and foremost understood and experienced conceptually and abstractly.

¹⁰ "Poverty of stimulus" signifies that one's interpretations (in the broadest sense of the term) of mind-independent reality far exceed the sensorial input one receives from this reality. This indicates that the mind and other biological systems inhabiting our organisms play a mediating and even structuring role in constructing meaning from reality. Such a perceptive has been advanced with respect to language acquisition (Chomsky 1980: 31-46) as well as vision (Marr 2010: 8-38; 75-79).

exceed and are consequently irreducible to what is ostensibly being shown on-screen. This brings us to the second principle: cooperative mental processes. Physiologically, identification and predication schemas are activated as occasioned by screen phenomena. The preconscious then identifies objects within a token capacity: e.g. a book, a car, as tokens of the type objecthood (see diagrams ii-iv above). The preconscious identification of token objects is so habitual that it equally arises in the face of seemingly more abstract images and/or non-representational cinema.¹¹ Consequently, in addition to cooperating with physiological processes, the preconscious will sometimes also collaborate with the conscious mind. This is occasioned when the stimuli prove too impoverished or if viewers suspect that the object has not been correctly identified. This invites the third and fourth cognitivist principles. In identifying and predicating multiple objects, one (physiologically and preconsciously) places them within different relations and/or positions – designated here as micro/macro, as well as local/global. Such changes in placing are corrective and may entail further corrections in identification and predication.

This leads to the remainder of part two – chapter four – where I hone in on predication. As stated, objects are predicated *new* or *old*. *Old* objecthood signifies that object identification has not mandated correction within the viewing experience of the film text. Conversely, *new* objecthood signifies that object identification has activated correction, again within the viewing experience of the film text. The same screen phenomena can yield different constructions of cinematic objecthood: either different predications, or categorically different identifications. Some of these discrepancies hinge on the prospect that objects can be differently positioned within local and global contexts. The ever-varied contingency of such interpretive conjectures would seem to open the door to the most aleatory accounts of the viewing experience. What matters throughout is in specifying by what procedures one identifies and predicates cinematic objects – whether two viewers watching *Citizen Kane* predicate Rosebud differently, or an additional viewer constructs the varnish as a separate object is a separate matter.

These cited examples of cinematic objecthood attend to the viewing experience of identifiable and predicated representational content – e.g. a sled, fire, varnish, Charles Foster

¹¹ Not to jump too far ahead of the reader, but this current chapter focuses primarily on the preconscious over other mental processes. By contrast, the next chapter distributes theoretical attention more evenly between physiological and preconscious processes. (A similar approach will hold for chapters five and six, on eventhood). The reason is that in identifications of objecthood, there is only one physiologically activated schema: the identification-schema for objecthood. By contrast, in predicating objecthood, there are *two* physiologically activated schemas: either *new* objecthood, or *old* objecthood. One must sharpen these alternate physiological operations, while also clarifying their collaboration with preconscious processes.

Kane, etc. Admittedly, they do not attend to more habitual aesthetic topics – which typically are not reducible to representational content, but invite, for examples, considerations of style or various extra-textual designations. These will therefore be equally considered throughout the next chapter: showing that the theory of cinematic objecthood can account for the viewing experience of entities which habitually would not be thought of as objects, in an everyday sense. In studying such topics from the standpoint of objecthood – e.g. techniques – I show that old and new identification and predication can help illuminate the viewer’s encounter of these aspects of cinematic texts.

Of course, objecthood is not the only means by which one constructs cinematic content. Cinematic objecthood forms one half of the equation with cinematic eventhood. Having canvassed objecthood, I then prepare the ground for part three (i.e. chapters five and six), devoted to cinematic eventhood.

Identifying Cinematic Objecthood

Positing objecthood as a primitive term or fundamental category indicates that the range of conceivable examples – i.e. just what can be admitted as a candidate for objecthood – can take many forms. The challenge is to evolve a conceptually parsimonious language that accounts for such pluralities of identification and predication – specifically as they inform and occupy the viewing experience. Furthermore, the tension between parsimony and plurality mandates that the language be ideal: “object” is stipulated as carrying a specified but also broadly applicable meaning, such that it cuts past any number of amorphous usages in ordinary conversation.

In everyday discourse, objects typically signify inanimate, physical entities, which are perforce contrasted to variously animate, abstract and/or relational designations: e.g. people, ideas, actions. At the same time, we have seen in the previous chapters that sticking too close to ordinary designations undermines any comprehensive or universal theory of the viewing experience of cinematic textual artefacts. The “saliency of character”¹² above other constituents of cinematic content overlooks that inanimate objects, as well as depicted events, equally inform the viewing experience. Conversely, enumerating a diverse repertoire of “material bodies” – of the people, places, things variety – raises the question as to why these cannot be commonly

¹² Smith 1995.

included within a language of objecthood. This very insight was long ago grasped by analytic philosophers and occasionally their contemporaries.¹³

In advancing a definition of cinematic objecthood, it is important to be mindful of two concerns. Firstly, for reasons already articulated, one must accommodate non-trivially and in an informing capacity an expanded understanding of *objecthood*, beyond instances of the physical and the inanimate. Secondly, without descending into tautology, or capitulating to medium-specificity, it ought to be established what is meant by *cinematic* – if this is intended to mean identifications and predications that come about more readily in cinematic contexts than in quotidian life, or even other art-forms. Finally, an understanding of identifications and predications of cinematic objecthood must aptly reflect both these joint concerns (i.e. what is the definition of objecthood; why bother denominating objecthood as “cinematic”?).

Cinematic objecthood is that to which one can lend *continuous* and *transitive* conceptual identity. By identity, or identification, one means constructing a discrete entity from screen phenomena. A character might be taken as an instance of cinematic objecthood, but so can literal, i.e. inanimate, objects, as seen with the example of “Rosebud.” To this one need add that objecthood can include more abstractly delineated themes¹⁴ – such as *love* or *hatred*¹⁵ – or even thematically recurring actions or event (e.g. the repeated embraces in Andy Warhol’s *Kiss*). No less significantly, the latter remark confronts cinematic objecthood to the problem of motifs (e.g. repetitions of a kiss) or intertext (e.g. Thomas Edison’s and Warhol’s respective, synonymously titled films); the latter has been previously addressed, while the former is considered in the next chapter.¹⁶

By continuous and transitive, one means that when an entity retains its identity across successive transformations and/or changed looks¹⁷ – this entity can only be, by sufficient and

¹³ See Strawson 2003, but also Carnap 1967 and Meinong 1960.

¹⁴ This has some precedence in A.J. Greimas’s structuralist narratology (Greimas 1966) – for critiques, see Smith 1995: 19-20 and more fully Herman 2002: 115-167, which notably draws on Chomskyan linguistics (i.e. theta in lieu of actantial roles).

¹⁵ In D.W. Griffith’s *Intolerance: Love’s Struggle Throughout the Ages* (1916), above and beyond the characters and storylines, we are meant to take the theme of *intolerance* as informing the course of the film – consequently, this theme can be constructed as an object pervading the text. The extent to which Griffith consistently heightens our awareness of “intolerance” as a *macro* object, to which the rest of the content is ostensible (i.e. as *micro* objects) has struck many as exceptional – and crucial to the viewing challenges this remarkable film poses.

¹⁶ See chapter two, n. 61, for the former.

¹⁷ An analysis of transitivity of identity above and beyond ever-changing properties/qualities surfaces in Goodman’s already cited discussion of decrees (1977: 97-99). The significance of continuity to the identification of entities – regardless of their material and/or physical constitution – recurs in occasionally episodic, albeit persuasive form,

necessary conditions, an object (i.e. the concern of this part), and *perforce* not an event (i.e. to be examined in the next part). This distinction introduces the idea of reidentification, used here in a sense understood by analytic philosophy: one identifies something again as the same thing one identified on some prior occasion: e.g. the sun identified this morning is the same sun observed yesterday, and not some altogether different or new entity. Reidentification does not entail that the object exists in any state of material permanence. On the contrary, the whole point of “reidentification” is that it preserves identity across varied predications, the latter including that it is temporally finite (and reidentified mnemonically, and *only* mnemonically, for instance).

The latter remark invites the next point: continuous and transitive identity mandates the specification conceptual.¹⁸ Objects retain their identity across seemingly incommensurate transformations, such that our interpretive construction of objecthood overrides physical and material bases: for example, Pinocchio remains Pinocchio, whether made of wood or converted into a real boy.¹⁹ Likewise, objects can be constructed as discrete, even if they are physically separate: e.g. a character’s eyes can be separately singled out for objecthood; underwater flora and fauna can be unified under the heading “oceanic landscape.” Similar identifications can thereafter construct such collective entities as “crowd,” “cityscape,” “speech” or “traffic.”²⁰ In

throughout Chomsky. See his notion of “psychic continuity,” as quoted in interview in Bambini, Chesi and Moro 2012: 234 (see also Chomsky and Cockburn 1994: 173-174).

¹⁸ This puts me at a removal from Strawson (or, more modestly, signals my allegiance to analytic thinkers who are at a clear and categorical removal from Strawson). Strawson identifies “objective particulars” (2003: 15) with “material bodies” (39). They are therefore “tactual” (*ibid.*). I draw inspiration from Strawson’s analytic breakdown of some parts of the world into objective particulars – or more generically entities. However, schema theory obliges me to part ways with him – as the current and following paragraphs should make clear.

¹⁹ Chomsky’s argument on behalf of psychic continuity makes the same point on the oft-cited prince who is turned into a frog (Chomsky and Cockburn 1994: 173-174): I adapt his argument with a (partly) cinematic example for the sake of disciplinary relevance. Note however Bertrand Russell’s diametrically contrary analysis of continuity, consistent with his empiricism (see Russell 1926, especially 113-114). Much of what arises in Russell’s positivist-phenomenological reflections, including his bundle theory, is untenable within the current project. By contrast, I still draw influence from his so-called “logical atomism.”

²⁰ Lending collective objecthood or abstract designation to physically disparate entities diverges for example from Strawson’s ontology, which distinguishes between what he terms qualitative and numerical identity (2003: 34). Very briefly, physically discrete entities, different people in a crowd or automobiles in traffic, are qualitatively identical – i.e. tokens of the same type – but not numerically so, i.e. each respectively individuated from the other (*ibid.*). This accords with Strawson’s own specified sense of “individual.” (See also preceding chapter). More broadly, however, I see no principled reason why one cannot ascribe discrete identity to entities that are either collected (e.g. an individual sports team composed of players; a romantic couple composed of two people) or even abstract (e.g. cityscape, speech etc.). I also take the repeated (though highly dubious) observation on the exceptionally multiple terms in the Inuit lexicon for designating snow as reinforcing my point. See Metz 1977: 140-141. *Pace* Metz, however, research into language acquisition suggests that comprehension and semantics are partly biological in origin (Chomsky 2000: 59-67). David Marr presents what I take to be several parallel points with respect to the physiology of perception, especially in (psychological) constructions of uniform surfaces from otherwise discontinuous parts (2010: 44-53).

these and other instances, conceptual identification within a cinematic context precedes and overrides material/physical constitution of real-world phenomena.

What this means from the viewers' perspective is that one makes *decrees*, as previously defined (see chapter one).²¹ Upon seeing screen phenomena, one draws on prior knowledge (including of the real world and past cinematic experiences),²² which complements and completes the identification-schema of cinematic objecthood. One constructs from colours, movements, shapes, sizes and the like physical wholes:²³ i.e. visibly delimited material entities.²⁴ These physical wholes, as already noted, do not predetermine nor exhaust the object's conceptual identity: the object is not reducible to its physical parts, much less its physical instantiations. On the contrary, one constructs broad inferences from any range of interpretive determinants – e.g. how the world works; what to expect from cinematic texts; what is the most likely explanation of what is happening relative to the screen – that must select and synthesize from what is seen and heard, as well as interpolate to compensate for what is necessarily absent from the film frame.

For example, we construct the object “eyes” in discarding from our attention the rest of the face (*select*); we incorporate two eyes, a nose, mouth and the shape of a head to construct the object “face” (*synthesize*). No less significantly, we construct the object “character,” and all this implies in terms of a life, a body and psychology, beyond the close-up of a face as seen on screen (*interpolate*).²⁵ Such interpolations become especially crucial, because even in cases of seemingly straightforward object recognition – e.g. a box of cigarettes, a cube²⁶ – one never is given a complete three-dimensional view. The cognitive-perceptual apparatus appropriates physical and material paraphernalia for interpretive operations (e.g. selection, synthesis, interpolation). It subordinates this paraphernalia to conceptual frames that are of type (e.g. identifying objecthood) and of token (e.g. identifying individual objects). These conceptual

²¹ In the paragraphs immediately following, I reprise select citations and nomenclature for expository purposes.

²² See also Bordwell 1985: 32-33 for a more detailed, albeit differently framed discussion of the same issue.

²³ Some of the preceding hypothetical claims are liberally drawn from Nelson Goodman's reduction of all appearances to what are termed “color-spot-moment[s]” (1977: 136); see also 1977: 135-138.

²⁴ See also Marr 2010: 41, and more generally 2010: 41-98.

²⁵ These and other operations involve the cognitive “ground floor” or “zero degree” of identification: the identification-type objecthood. They equally mobilize cognitive principles to be addressed below – e.g. macro placement for “select”; micro parts/macro wholes, for “synthesize.” See especially subsequent analysis on relations and functions.

²⁶ The examples are drawn respectively from Pudovkin 1954: 123-124 and Arnheim 1958: 18-19.

frames always precede materiality or physical properties. At least initially, we see the world, and filmic content, from what we already know, and not the other way around.²⁷

These conceptual frames bring us to the issue of *decrees*. Decrees are concise, immediate, judgement in which various inferential principles compensate for limited or impoverished sensorial input. We know that the green grass we see today was likely green yesterday, even if we can't, in Nelson Goodman's words, "reviv[e] the past presentation [i.e. yesterday's view of the green grass] for fresh inspection [i.e. today]." (1977: 98).²⁸ Instead, we rely on notions of identity and transitivity to assume that the grass yesterday was roughly the same as it is today. Crucially, however, these interpretations usually do not mandate deliberation, but instead "we favor the more 'natural' decree, the one best supported by an instinctive feeling of hitting the mark[.]" (99). Decrees may be discarded or revised, albeit among the most conveniently plausible or parsimonious alternatives – as opposed to an interpretive free-for-all.

In film, decrees are made rapidly and successively in our (token) identifications and predications of objects. They are animated by the sense of "hitting the mark" (Goodman 1977: 99). For example, *if* a camera makes some ambulatory movement through an enclosed location, we *can* almost immediately construct the presence of an off-screen character, whose movements and eyesight are roughly in synch with the camera. We maintain these identifications and predications – until subsequent screen phenomena oblige us to differently emend, add to, or discard the prior decrees. The ambulatory movement might be confirmed to have been representing a character, or retrospectively understood as a trick that invokes and mocks past cinematic conventions.²⁹ In any given context, we usually rely on a near-automatic sense of what ought to be the more "natural" interpretation – albeit one that is not reducible to screen phenomena nor even its literal (i.e. perceptually recognizable) content.

²⁷ The question of what mental operations account for generating new knowledge is a trickier proposition. One would demarcate between cognitive competences and limitations (the main interest here) and individual cognitions that fall within the range of our innate faculties, or competences (a subsidiary concern here). More ambitious studies in the production of knowledge claims would wrestle with such provocative terms or concepts as Quinean web of beliefs, Hanson's theory-laden observations, or Kuhnian paradigm-shifts.

²⁸ Goodman makes no distinction between identification (grass) and predication (green), as his study is *appearance*, but this does not obscure the theoretical interest of "decree" as he defines it. Goodman's later work on inductive predicates (green vs. grue; round vs. grund etc.) also indicates that there are no *essential* predicates. There are only *projectible* predicates relative to a current purpose: in select instances, *green* is preferable to *grue*, yet elsewhere, *grund* may be more germane than *round* (or *green*). See Goodman 1983. Arguments on nativism vs. empiricism that were engendered by the "grue" paradox (i.e. Fodor, Putnam, etc.) are too broad to address here. At the very least, constructivism shares the rejection of any essential predicates for objects (after all, drying grass does not stay green).

²⁹ In *Halloween* (1978), few viewers no doubt anticipate that the homicidal voyeur, at first represented via subjective camera work, is in fact a child.

Finally, the above, hypothetical examples introduce the notion of “cinematic objecthood.” There need be no one-to-one ratio, or exact equation, between delimited physical entities (as heard or seen on-screen) and an object as evoked as part of the film’s representational content, via techniques, style, form (etc.).³⁰ Activations of the identification-schema construct objecthood from screen phenomena – sometimes regardless of, and underdetermined by, literal, on-screen content. What this entails is that cinematic objecthood is necessarily irreducible to what is being supposedly “shown” or can be “seen” on-screen.³¹ Such objecthood merits the appellation “cinematic” because firstly similar or identical sights or “views” in quotidian life need not evoke the same object, and likewise, secondly, similar or identical sights or “views” in another (individual) film might yet evoke different objects.³² As we shall see in chapter five,

³⁰ This recalls a dispute arising in analytic philosophy’s linguistic turn, which in film studies Metz on occasion paraphrased: “*Le logicien-linguiste américain* [sic.] *G. Ryle se moque d’une certaine conception naïve de la langue (que condamnait déjà Saussure), et qu’il baptise ironiquement ‘the FIDO-fido theory’: au chien Fido correspond rigoureusement le nom FIDO; les mots nomment après coup, chacun à chacun, des choses en nombre égal et strictement préexistantes[.]*” (Metz 1971a: 68-69). Ryle in fact directed his (frequently caustic, albeit brief) critique against Carnap, with occasional invectives against Mill, Frege and Russell. See also Chomsky’s earlier quoted comments on “psychic continuity” and the “referential doctrine” (Bambini, Chesi and Moro 2012: 234). It should be said that whether select analytic philosophers are positing a one-to-one ratio between variously specified symbols (including words) and concepts (Frege 1997: 130-148), or between words and objects of reference (Frege 1997: 151-171), a case can be made that this is meant to apply uniquely to an *ideal* language – not the words used in ordinary conversation. For example, a canonical essay by Goodman-Quine seeking to rid language of all abstract designations is explicitly prescriptive, and nominalist (Goodman 1972: 173-198). Critics who assail Frege for naively postulating that every (meaningful) lexical item or expression necessarily has some correspondent referent may have missed the following: “[T]his is not to say that to the sense there also corresponds a *Bedeutung* [i.e. reference]. The words ‘the celestial body most distant from the Earth’ have a sense, but it is very doubtful if they also have a *Bedeutung*. The expression ‘the least rapidly convergent series’ [within mathematic parlance] has a sense, but demonstrably there is no *Bedeutung*, since for every given convergent series, another convergent, but also less rapidly convergent series can be found. In grasping a sense, one is thereby not assured a *Bedeutung*.” (Frege 1997: 153).

³¹ This is obviously a criticism of André Gaudreault’s early film narratology, which divides the representational modes between showing/*monstration* and telling/narration – and moreover equates them with specific cinematic techniques and/or technical units, such that the shot always “shows” and editing always “tells” (Gaudreault 1988, especially 83-131). The problems with this structuralist approach, whereby techniques and other formal devices are hypostasized regardless of their multiple functions, has been noted elsewhere (Bordwell 2004). Suffice to say that Gaudreault in part appropriates and reduces a far more sophisticated insight in Percy Lubbock’s reputed analysis of Henry James’s *The Ambassadors*, where the showing/telling dichotomy is neither equated with medium-specificity, much less with the formal/technical devices of a given medium, but instead are (in this case) literary effects (1957: 157-169). Simply put: some novels show (James, Hemingway), while others tell, but they all use printed words. A filmic equivalent to Lubbock’s theory that misses this elementary point also, I think, disastrously misconstrues his prescient contribution to narrative poetics. For a preferred, albeit less widely cited, alternative see instead Gilberto Perez’s distinction between the narrative and the dramatic as two distinct modes freely and varyingly incorporated in film (1998: 50-91).

³² The contention that films distinctly provide their audiences with so-called “views” of the “world” derives from Stanley Cavell, as seen in this (somewhat pontificating) declaration: “Movies convince us of the world’s reality in the only way we have to be convinced, without learning to bring the world closer to the heart’s desire (which in practice now means learning to stop altering it illegitimately, against itself): by taking views of it.” (1979: 102). I do not wish to embark on an exegesis of Cavell’s admittedly distinctive ontology. Suffice to say that the position that the world, however defined, is simply given to be viewed through film, or even everyday (visual) experience, is

similar principles pertain to cinematic eventhood. However, in neither case are the identifications and predications reducible to or equated with purported essential properties of the medium or art-form.

The above outlines a preliminary explanation as to *what* cinematic objecthood is. What is needed now, however, is a detailed account as to the role the four cognitivist principles, outlined in chapter one, play in constructing cinematic objecthood – i.e. what we do when we identify and predicate cinematic objects. The rest of this chapter deals with identification; the next chapter, with predication, including constructions of objects with regards to more typically aesthetic concerns (e.g. metaphors, techniques, intertext). Finally, in securing answers to these questions, what do viewers do in constructing cinematic objects, it is also expected that we satisfy, at least tacitly, certain *why*-questions: i.e. why should objecthood prove so pivotal to the viewing experience, and why expound so considerably as to its construction?

We analyse cinematic objecthood in relation to the four cognitivist principles: schemas; mental processes, with a privileged cooperation between physiology and the preconscious; relations/functions; correction. These four principles allow viewers to construct (i.e. identify, predicate) and place objecthood in the face of screen phenomena. Positing these procedures of identification, predication, placement, and correction – the whole expedited by the preconscious – becomes necessary. This is so, because to simply posit that the film “shows” what is on-screen, even in the seemingly simplest shots and/or ostensibly mainstream films, is insufficient (i.e. it’s never simply a case of seeing “what’s there.”). Rather, “seeing” a cinematic object on screen requires an intervening interpretation. This interpretation begins with the activation of identification and predication-schemas. The identification-schema, to be addressed immediately below, allows one to select, merge and further interpolate with respect to screen phenomena, arraiging the whole under the designation of “object.”

Objecthood and Schemas

We must first consider cinematic objecthood from the standpoint of activations of the identification-schema. As previously stated, objects are delimited and designated by principles of what may alternately be termed reidentification, transitivity or continuity. More importantly, they

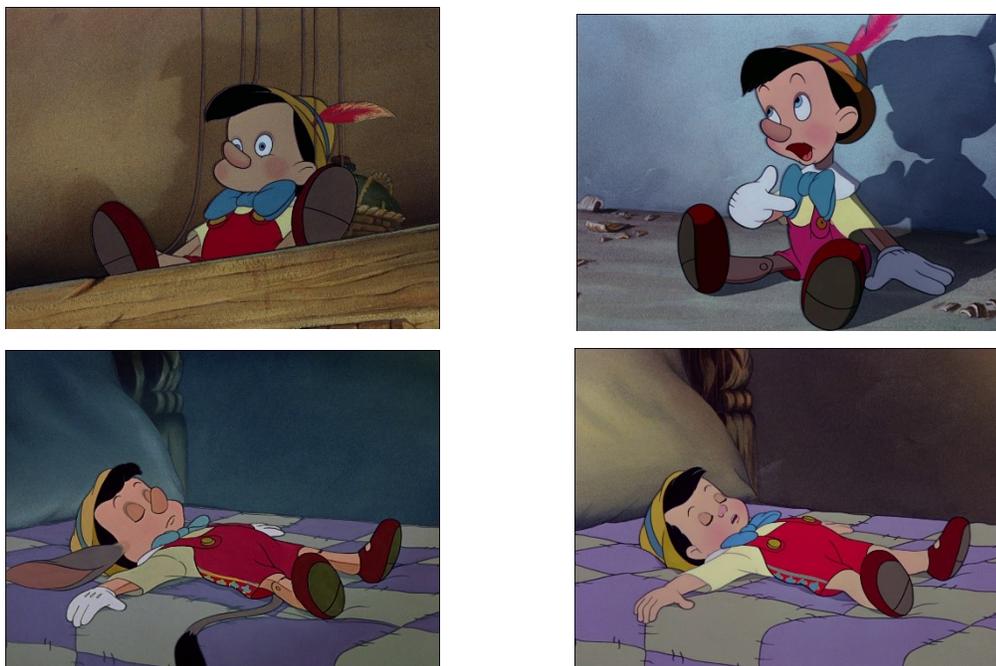
seriously challenged by cognitive constructivism (Bordwell 1985), perceptual psychology (Marr 2010) and analytic philosophy (Goodman 1976, 1978), as I’ve taken pains to show.

are first and foremost conceptual, and only understood secondarily as physical entities. What this means for film is that objects are not reducible to their physical instantiations, whether this applies to the diegetic context or the pro-filmic event.³³ No less significantly, the identification-schema can be activated by screen phenomena such that the constructed object far exceeds and may even be irrespective of the apparent (i.e. literally on-screen) audiovisual content. Both these contentions – that objects are not reducible to their physical instantiations nor the literal on-screen content – can be supported with examples below.

As already indicated, and has been maintained elsewhere, cinematic objecthood retains a continuous or transitive identity across what would otherwise seem incommensurable, material transformations. This applies as much within the diegetic context, as the pro-filmic event. Within the diegetic context, a character can change material bodies but retain the same identity. This is evidenced in a fairy tale such as *Pinocchio* (1940), in which the “little puppet made of pine” retains its identity, is reidentifiable as the same object, across the transformations whereby it gains anthropomorphic animacy, and, in the end, becomes anatomically human. In these instances, an identification schema constructs “object” across a multitude of physically incommensurable (i.e. within the diegetic context) presentations. See figures 6a-d:³⁴

³³ Used as a compound noun, and as defined by Souriau, the “pro-filmic event” commonly means the action occurring before and for the camera as it is being filmed: it has special relevance to Bazinian phenomenology and/or film theories invoking perceptual realism as well as the transparency thesis. I invoke it sparingly – and moreover rely on a far more capacious and subtly delineated conception of eventhood in chapters five and six (part three).

³⁴ A case could be made that the film’s poetics and more broadly narration – as much the story content, as the shot scale, composition and graphic matches – “cue” the viewer to decree transitive identity to Pinocchio across his transformations. Yet the issue of competence remains: viewers construct Pinocchio transitively, and the same interpretive operations could hold, were he fully and permanently transformed into a donkey, or other material, physical or anatomical form. Moreover, fictional contexts, such as fairy tales, need not be discounted for what they reveal about human interpretive activity (quite the contrary!). That, above and beyond quotidian percepts and utterances, there is also a scientific and ideal language that is defined and deployed differently to engage with extra-mental reality need not be doubted: what counts as “water,” in everyday parlance, is not necessarily the same as what counts for “H₂O,” for the chemist (see Chomsky 1996: 31-54 and 2000: 3-18).



Figures 6a-d: *Pinocchio* (1940), prod. Walt Disney

Within the pro-filmic event, a character can be ascribed identity irrespective of any correlating, physical presence in front of the camera. This goes above and beyond the obvious point that, in fiction, it takes an actress/actor to play a fictional part (e.g. once we accept that Musidora is Irma Vep in Louis Feuillade's *Les vampires*, 1915, we take every future display of Musidora as signifying the same). A character played by a live performer can be revealed to have been, diegetically, a ghost (*Ugetsu Monogatari*, 1953; *Carnival of Souls*, 1962), or a figment of someone's imagination (*The Other*, 1972).³⁵ More than one performer can play the same part, such that to varying degrees, viewers rationalize and accept these discontinuities (*Palindromes*, 2004; *Nymphomaniac: Vol. I and Vol. II*, 2013). More subtly, anomalous changes in the actor's physicality, or the character's voice, can and usually do go unnoticed. For the former, *Superman II* (1981) was notoriously filmed at separate intervals, such that Margot Kidder's complexion changes between shots and Lex Luthor is not always voiced by Gene Hackman. Likewise, in *David Holzman's Diary* (1967), *voix off* lines allegedly spoken by the title character (L.M. Kit Carson) were in fact read by the cinematographer Michael Wadleigh (passing as both Holzman

³⁵ I forego plot recaps of *Ugetsu* and *Carnival of Souls*, as these films are better known, but *The Other* merits mention. While the plot at first seems to feature twin brothers (played by real-life twins Chris and Martin Udvarnoky), it later transpires that one of the two characters is dead, such that the other has been imagining his presence all along.

and Carson).³⁶ In all these instances, viewers construct, identify and reidentify an object as the same, despite varied material and physical discrepancies. Even when this may occasionally mandate consciously maintained interpretations, an activated identification-schema prevails over other determinants and/or aspects of screen content.

This brings us to the next point. The constructed cinematic object or objects are not reducible to the literal, on-screen content. This applies equally to images and sounds. In what follows, I cite respective instances of objecthood constructed in the absence of said objects being present on-screen, in the form of images and sounds. I thereafter turn to an apparently more straightforward instance of literal depiction, in which even the presence of the cinematic objects on-screen still requires the intervening constructions decreed by viewers.

One can begin with constructed, identified cinematic objecthood, irreducible to on-screen visual phenomena. In the opening shot of *Jaws*, the camera tracks along the ocean floor. The literal content includes water, soil, aquatic flora and fauna. Nonetheless, the identification-schema may be activated such that viewers construct the object “shark” from these images. This apparently straightforward recognition of content in fact houses complex inferential procedures. Viewers first identify on-screen content – the aquatic content – but then grasp that this is of lesser import than some other presumed entity, which is not visualized. As already stated, this mobilizes prior knowledge of the world (i.e. sharks swim in water) and film (i.e. camera movement can indicate a point of view, in the optical sense).³⁷ Nonetheless, this knowledge necessarily derives from one’s interpolative abilities. Because physical and material paraphernalia are subordinated to and integrated into conceptual frames, one can construct the presence of an absent object from what little we can see on screen³⁸ – given the film’s title and the setting, the most “natural” decree becomes “shark.” See figure 7:

³⁶ As disclosed by the actor – he became tongue tied during what is now a celebrated ad lib exchange (Carson 1969).

³⁷ One is tempted here to state that the image represents the point of view of a shark, and thus posit a narrow and even mandatory correlation between on-screen literal content (ocean floor) and the depicted object (point of view of the shark). Hence, the decree would be: “this is what the shark sees,” But notice that this presupposes the presence of a shark, who is nowhere to be seen on screen; and it presupposes a point of view, whereas the camera is doing nothing more than tracking the ocean floor. Finally, it is worth remarking that sharks are near-blind, such that *no* real shark could see what is optically given to us in *Jaws*. Even when armed with this knowledge, a strong (or “natural,” as Goodman would say) inclination remains to construct the images and sounds as conveying a constructed object – our mind glosses over what we otherwise know must be a scientific impossibility.

³⁸ The above analysis necessarily touches on the formal/stylistic problem of off-screen space, as canonically theorized by Noël Burch (Burch 1967) and likewise invoked by Warren Buckland in his analysis of Spielberg’s films, including *Jaws* (Buckland 2006). Burch eventually frames his analysis as part of a so-called cinematic “praxis” that stands in contra-distinction to more mainstream cinema (Burch 1969; more generally, on Burch’s



Figure 7: Jaws (1975), dir. Steven Spielberg

It is worth pondering that while, in this context, the decreed object “shark” is the most natural, it is also highly contingent. In alternate contexts, the same images might have conveyed a scuba diver’s trek and/or the sheer expanse of oceanic life. Consequently, none of the cues and tropes need signify nor necessarily represent the object “shark.” Viewers make what would seem to be the most fitting decree, based in part on prior experience and superficially plausibly conjectures in the given context of an overall film. But this is no guarantee that the decree is necessarily correct or reducible to the visual phenomena on-screen – an insight driven home when Spielberg parodied *Jaws* in the opening of his notorious *1941* (1979).

Likewise, one need not visualize³⁹ the shark – i.e. determine its physical constitution in any exhaustive capacity – to identify it as an object. Instead, decrees do not require exhaustive, visual details, but fill in the gaps, in the face of incompleteness, with approximately constructed suppositions and even assumptions.⁴⁰

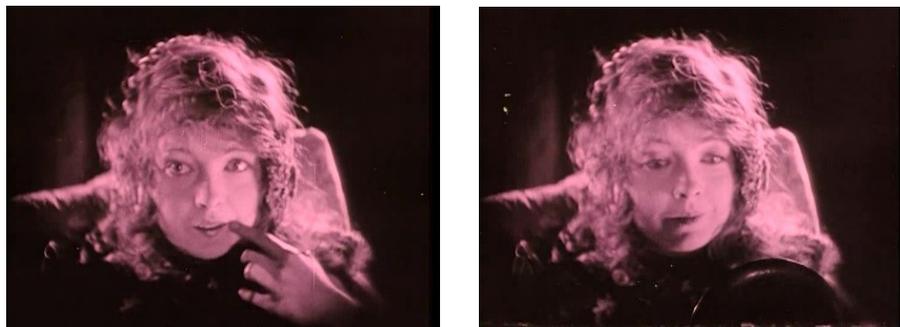
This incompleteness need not be only visual but can also apply to the soundtrack. One can then turn to constructed, identified cinematic objecthood, irreducible to screen-related audio stimuli. In D.W. Griffith’s *Broken Blossoms* (1919), there is an example of sound being evoked regardless of only minimal or even absent evidence on screen. Lines of dialogue are conveyed without the support of inter-titles, when the Yellow Man (Richard Barthelmess) cares for the

“oppositional” modernism, see Bordwell 1997: 83-115). By contrast, Buckland’s contention is that commercial cinema need be no less sophisticated than its avant-garde or modernist brethren. Theoretically, the current project is more inclined to Buckland’s judgement, even if Burch is arguably the more imaginative (and seminal) thinker. Regardless, the arguments in Burch-Buckland complement the analysis of cinematic objecthood.

³⁹ As to what happens to the ocean floor – the literal visual content – one needs the notion of macro vs. micro placement – to be addressed in the relevant subsection below: the shark is macro placed, while the ocean floor is micro placed.

⁴⁰ See also Johnson-Laird 1983 on so-called “mental models.”

ailing Girl (Lillian Gish). An inter-title reads “The room prepared as for a princess,” while in a succession of long, medium shots and then close-ups Barthelmess’s character grooms and devotes his attention to Gish’s Girl. In one moment, he hands her a mirror after he has made her up. Looking at her reflection, she points to the corner of her mouth, and comments while smiling approvingly. She looks a second time, points again, this time shaking her head while she loses her smile and her lips cast downwards: again, she makes a comment. See figures 8a-b:



Figures 8a-b: *Broken Blossoms* (1919), dir. D.W. Griffith

Here, an identification schema is activated despite absent and/or contingent content. There is a constructed audio object, i.e. “spoken sentences,” although nothing is heard.⁴¹ More importantly, coherent meaning is implicitly ascribed to these sentences, and the assumption is they must be grammatically correct, even if one never learns with accuracy what has been said. Instead, the audio object and its approximate significance are constructed with use of visual materials: the character’s gestures, expressions and presumed predicament.⁴² As with the example from *Jaws*, in an alternate context, the same materials might have yielded an entirely different object. If the Girl had been established as aphasic, the constructed object might have been “non-verbal sounds.” Had she been speech-impaired, but able to communicate with the Yellow Man through lip-reading, the constructed object would have ceased to be audio altogether.

⁴¹ On a separate note, recall that Strawson writes of “sound-particulars” (2003: 72) as conceivably individuated entities, even if they are ultimately not objects, as he has previously stipulated the term, i.e. as “material *bodies*” (emphasis added, as sound is material, but not a “body” as I understand Strawson to mean). See more generally Strawson 2003: 59-86. By contrast, the current constructive cognitivist would concur with Bordwell’s judgement that “the concept of a well-formed sentence functions as a schema in speech perception.” (1985: 31). In this regard, within the appropriate interpretive context, a linguistic utterance would count as a cinematic object.

⁴² For more detailed insight into the pantomime and general performance techniques of silent cinema, see Aumont 2010: 19-22.

These counter-examples, while seemingly fanciful, are not irrelevant. They indicate that cinematic objects are constructed to a degree that far exceeds literal, on-screen content. Nonetheless, while they have historically fallen within the Hollywood mainstream, they may not be adequate to the argument. Off-screen space and silent cinema can be taken as exceptions to the norm that in cinematic representations, object-recognition is at the very least equivocal with the literal content of the shot. Therefore, before pursuing one must enlist an example where it seems that the cinematic objecthood is limited to the literal content of the shot and confirm that schemas intercede to orient and determine our perception.

In Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* (1972), one of the three sisters, Maria (Liv Ullmann), is cruelly rebuffed by her former lover David (Erland Josephson), after she has tried to seduce him. In the scene, she has called upon him in his room during nighttime and he has her look at her face in the mirror. David then entreats Maria to a descriptive commentary of select features of her face: a physiognomic analysis of how her once guileless nature has soured, and left her a jaded, manipulative and unhappy person. Her "eyes cast quick, calculating side glances[,] while her "mouth has taken on an expression of discontent and hunger" and her "fine, broad forehead now has four wrinkles above each brow." The actors' gestures reiterate the content of the speech. When David comments on Maria's eyes, Ullmann throws a quick, sideways glance. Also, she frowns and lowers her head slightly as he remarks upon her wrinkles, apparently to inspect her forehead. Most crucially, the exchange occurs during a prolonged close-up, lasting nearly two minutes. See figures 9a-b:



Figures 9a-b: Cries and Whispers (1972), dir. Ingmar Bergman

Describing this deceptively simple passage is challenging. Accounts that privilege shot scale, or isolate other cinematic techniques, are inadequate, at least to a theory of the viewing experience.⁴³ “A close-up of Liv Ullmann,” although helpful from the standpoint of poetics, does not suffice for the current thesis, as this designation does not detail the content of the shot. The shot concerns the discrete and separately individuated parts of Maria’s face: her eyes, her mouth, her forehead etc. This qualification invites an alternative: “a close-up giving us to view, successively, the respective features of Ullmann’s face.” Yet these features are identified by David as composite of a unified person, and persona. We are meant to see more than the individual features of Ullmann’s/Maria’s face, but at any moment, we see no more than one feature at a time. The technical and visual language of film analysis (i.e. “a close-up of a face”), however pivotal to other scholarly projects, does not necessarily account for the viewing experience of the images and sounds.

Instead, the successive moments call on activations of the identification-schema to fix our attention and interpretive activity on select areas of the image. The identification-schema constructs, for example, her eyes as a relatively isolable and autonomous object, of privileged importance over her other features (her mouth, forehead, complexion etc.). The same operations are then enacted as we tour the rest of her face. There is a succession of identified, privileged and discarded objects, even though the screen phenomena and shot scale remain generally the same.⁴⁴

The above might be more conveniently supplemented with an appeal to sound – or, provisionally, verbal content as understood by spoken speech (and admittedly facilitated by the subtitled translation).⁴⁵ David’s spoken language is what, within a more literal context, guides us around Maria’s face. This argument seems to indicate that we need only postulate that this

⁴³ This would also invite criticism of Barry Salt’s historiography of film style, premised on statistical surveys of the preponderance of various shot scales across film and eras (Salt 2009). See also Bordwell and Thompson 1985.

⁴⁴ The emphasis on shifting attention recalls *mise-en-scène* criticism (Bazin 1958: 149-173, Mourlet 1987, Bordwell 2005, Aumont 2010), which does not mandate schema theory. But *mise-en-scène* criticism differs significantly from the arguments here. It begins with the long shot/take, and then “reads” the representation through these confines. This overlooks the evocation of Maria’s past: i.e. identification and predication-schemas prompt viewers, while looking at her eyes in the close-up, to understand how her eyes might have looked in the past. The shot does not make sense if one does not invite and allow for such considerations, for which terms such as staging and long shot do not account.

⁴⁵ The relationship of sound to meaning – which necessarily recalls Aristotle’s now axiomatic definition of language (i.e. sound with meaning) – raises further issues I simplify here for argumentative concision. Unpacking them, however, would only give further credence to a constructivist viewpoint: sound, by itself, need not signify anything, such that we *construct* meaning for audible percepts.

episode in the film can be summed up as a close-up of a face, plus a soundtrack's semantic content. That characterization, unfortunately, is insufficient, because identification and predication-schemas also filter our construction of meaning from sounds, above and beyond that they are identifiable as verbal language.

To briefly pursue, we are led to lend qualified credence to David's speech, accepting it as an authentic diagnosis of Maria's face. One contributing factor is that David speaks calmly and slowly – one ascribes a specified meaning to his speech, and moreover the whole scene, in part because of his tone, and not just the semantic content of the words used.⁴⁶ This is not necessarily a buffer to the harshness of those words: on the contrary, it is precisely because he speaks calmly that we can take the language as, if not kind, then at least approaching accuracy and insight.

Now consider instead if the exact same lines had been read with a tone of vehement rage. The scene would scarcely be about Maria's face, but primarily about David's anger. This interpretation would hold, even if the shot scale, visual content and dialogue remained the same. The upshot for a theory of a constructivist theory the viewing experience is that, whether David speaks calmly or had spoken hysterically, an inference from the viewer intercedes between his disquisition and Maria's face: in the actual film, his words “match” the face; in our imagined alternative, they don't. Either way, whatever else viewers take away from *Cries and Whispers*, few if no interpretations are exclusively reducible to literal audio and visual content, nor to audio or visual stimuli.⁴⁷

Consequently, the problems examined throughout the analysis of schema identification and cinematic objecthood can be summed up as follows. There is no necessary equivalence between, on the one hand, the identified content of images and sounds, and on the other, the screen phenomena. Thinking of cinematic representations in terms of “what we see” or “what is shown” is admittedly unavoidable in ordinary conversation. However, as a theory of the viewing experience, it proves inadequate. The examples above all posit the necessity of constructing objects from frequently inadequate, inconsistent or even absent screen phenomena. In some

⁴⁶ Another factor is that the *voix-off* seems to approximate a voice-over in the authoritative tradition of a voice-of-God narration. See Nichols 2010 for this practice in documentary filmmaking; see also the related notion of *acousmètre* in Chion 1982.

⁴⁷ It might be rebutted here that the acoustic/sonic properties of David's speech are part of the film text's phenomenal properties, such that viewers merely process what is “given.” But as previously noted (see n. 45, above), there is nothing “given” about the meaning or significance (i.e. verbal content) we construct from sound (i.e. phonemes). Invariably, one constructs representations in a way irreducible to what the film is “showing” or “telling.”

cases, the object is absent from the screen phenomena, but inferred via other interpretive means. In other cases, the object is among a plethora of what would seem to be competing and/or distracting details yet is successfully singled out by viewers. In still other cases, the object is reidentified regardless of ever-changing features and/or properties. Throughout, the conceptual intermediary of an activated, or multiply activated, identification schema indicates that viewers construct consistent objecthood across a variegated range of inchoate phenomena.⁴⁸

It goes without saying, however, that viewers need not be cognizant of the processes by which schema identification is activated and objecthood is constructed at any given moment in a film. The identification-type “objecthood” is activated automatically thanks to physiological processes: these require no conscious deliberation and remain inaccessible to conscious introspection. Within a token capacity, one frequently constructs a multitude of simultaneous and successive *individual* objects as a matter of course. One accomplishes this with expedience (and little to no conscious deliberation) thanks to the preconscious, operating in conjunction with physiological *a priori*s (see above) and occasional subsequent assistance from conscious processes. It is here, therefore, that we must consider the second of the four cognitivist principles, the division of mental processes, with attention here accorded to the preconscious.

Objecthood, Mental Processes and the Preconscious

As outlined in the first chapter, preconscious processes pertain to mental operations one executes by habit. Any ability such as riding a bike or even understanding a film may first have to be learned (in terms of knowing how or acquiring skills) consciously, but afterwards it can be executed unreflectively thanks to the preconscious. Mental content travels from the conscious to the preconscious, and then is assimilated to the latter’s operations, which function with near-immediate efficiency. The purpose of designating these cognitive processes *preconscious* is that, irrespective of mental content, it functions on a continuum with conscious reflection. Mental content processed by the preconscious need not quite cross into the conscious mind. However, with sustained effort, the conscious mind can accede it with approximation.

⁴⁸ They don’t always identify the *same* objects to be sure – you can construct “Bogart,” with subsidiary awareness that he is playing Sam Spade; I can construct “Sam Spade,” with subsidiary awareness that he is played by Humphrey Bogart. Further yet, the same viewer can switch between either construction, and then attend to other objects (including techniques *qua* techniques: a shot, an edit, etc.).

With regards to schema activation and filmgoing, the preconscious plays a crucial role. As stated already, the identification and predication-schemas are located physiologically, as are the operations that allow one to “frame” an x as an object (as opposed to an event). However, individuations of objects, as token objects – e.g. fedora hats, guns, lights, a sunset – of the type objecthood, usually operates as a preconscious process. One has already learned what these objects are (and how they are named) through language and experience. The preconscious allows that they can be identified, and further (token) predicated, with near immediate efficiency – it also assists, as we shall see in the next chapter, in reidentification and/or corrected predication. In this regard, the preconscious is indispensable to the viewing experience. It allows, along with cooperating physiological processes, unusually complex operations to be executed and experienced by viewers, successively and countless times, throughout the course of a film.

Nonetheless, because the preconscious is at once so fluent yet fundamental, one wonders on what theoretical basis one need explicate it in such detail. It would seem, at first, that little more is at stake than identifying (and predicating) objects expediently. However, several examples throughout this subsection will show how readily and unreflectingly one seeks to nominally recognize otherwise indeterminate perceptual phenomena. One does so even if the phenomena are, as it were, impoverished or underdetermining. Expectedly, in other words, the physiologically activated identification-schema should not yield an interpretation any richer nor more detailed than the (preconscious) recognition of phenomenal properties (e.g. colours, shapes, movements). Instead, one strives to lend greater substance, form and meaning than what can be literally seen on screen. In select instances, these efforts prove sufficiently challenging that the conscious mind cooperates as well.

Take two apparently abstract moments in otherwise narrative films. During the opening credits of Roman Polanski’s *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967), there is a tracking down shot against the background of slightly differentiated shades of light-dark blue, unevenly distributed in what seems to be various textures and circular patches. Apart from the concatenation of colours and shapes, the image’s content seems to lack further corporeal identity.⁴⁹ When the

⁴⁹ For Carnap (and I would concur) both perceptual properties and physical entities merit appellation “object.” One counter-claim may be that any “constructions” arising with respect to the Polanski film are due to a (culturally informed or mediated) narrative context. Yet, the analysis below of *The Flicker* will advance that, even in avant-garde and non-representational cinema, the viewing experience mobilizes flights of imagination not reducible to screen phenomena. Similar arguments are repeatedly and helpfully made throughout Danto 1981.

credits end, a cut to a new shot reveals that this abstract configuration represents the surface of the moon. See figures 10a-b:



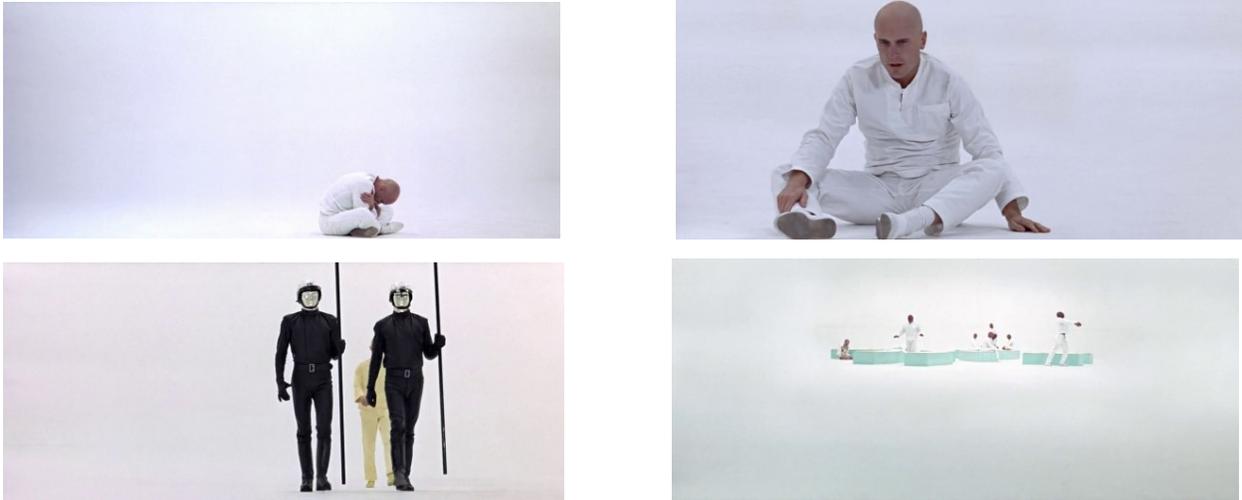
Figures 10a-b: *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967), dir. Roman Polanski

Prior to this revelation, any number of interpretive activities from viewers might be enacted. For the sake of concision, I consider two. Firstly, some will adopt a “wait and see” approach, suspending final judgement as to the physical/nominal identity of the object, of which we are glimpsing only a few phenomenal properties. One expects a revelation but does not form any further hypotheses until said revelation.⁵⁰ Secondly, and perhaps more ambitiously, viewers may already be attempting to read a physical and objective identity that is not reducible to the on-screen content’s phenomenal properties. Instead of, “let us wait and see what that thing is,” one instead thinks, “what could that be... it looks like an X or a Y.” In either instance, however, one’s default activity is to assume that there is greater substance and form to these dispersed entities – even if the word “moon” need not be forthcoming. One has become so accustomed, i.e. preconsciously, to correlating on-screen cinematic phenomena to some guise of objecthood,⁵¹ that it is a habit now deployed like second nature. A film like *The Fearless Vampire Killers* counts on this habit, without which the revelation of the moon would be a non-sequitur.

A comparable question arises with George Lucas’s *THX-1138* (1971). In one scene, the protagonist THX (Robert Duvall) finds himself incarcerated. The costumes (i.e. prison uniforms) and setting (i.e. the prison) are uniformly white. There are no visible cells, much less bars, and minimal differentiation between back and foreground. Instead, there is a seemingly endless monochromatic expanse, suggesting that the prison outstretches indefinitely. See figures 11a-d:

⁵⁰ See also Bordwell 1985: 38 and 245.

⁵¹ A similar point has been made by Roger Odin with “*figurativisation*” (2000: 18-19).



Figures 11a-d: *THX-1138* (1971), dir. George Lucas

At the same time, one's habit is to interpret objective entities based on whatever may be witnessed on-screen. In terms of schema activation, a phenomenal property – white – is constructed as an object. Varying antecedent experiences and background knowledge allow one to expediently recognize this object as a prison. Moreover, we interpret that beyond the open, monochromatic environment, there must be an outer limit (e.g. a far away white wall or dome).

In terms of mental processes, several operations are in place. Firstly, physiologically, an activated identification-schema constructs objecthood. Secondly, preconsciously, one recognizes this object as a prison. This latter operation enfolds two important habits. The first is that we make the *decree* unhesitatingly that the white must represent *something* (i.e. other than itself). The second is the nominal recognition, already flagged: we construct “prison” out of “white.” We again make this decree unhesitatingly, even though, by poverty of stimulus, the object “prison” is vastly underdetermined by the property “white.” Admittedly, in either case, conscious processes might surface intermittently: some viewers might hesitate in their interpretations and deliberate over their decrees. But plausibly, such deliberations are rapidly subsumed under preconscious processing. All interpretive activity which follows from the initial schema activation involves the setting within which the action unfolds. It is therefore *not* the exclusive focus of the viewing activity. Instead, all interpretations here must be processed with speed and economy, to shift focus to the characters' incarceration and hoped-for escape.

Admittedly, the sci-fi genre to which the film adheres informs our interpretation – as understood by the earlier mention of antecedent experiences and background knowledge. Alternate genres or filmmaking modes⁵² will elicit different interpretations (i.e. construct the white differently). But what is fundamental is that, these variations aside, one interprets phenomenal properties in terms of more substantively specified objecthood.⁵³ In a science-fiction film, the white may be a prison; in a religious-themed drama, it might be Heaven; in a psychological thriller, a character's hallucination. Regardless of variations in iconography distributed via filmic conventions and codes, what is more remarkable is that one should even construct such varied and richly specified meaning from such diminished stimuli.⁵⁴ The basis of one's aesthetic experience in this regard, across diverse cultures and conventions, is the construction of cinematic objecthood, rendered so immediately and unhesitatingly thanks in part to the preconscious.

This then opens the question as to what interpretations the same or similar phenomenal properties would yield in non-representational cinema: a mode quite distinct from classical and/or art cinema narration.⁵⁵ For this I turn to Tony Conrad's *The Flicker*, a well-known intervention in what is habitually termed the Structural film.⁵⁶ Recall that Conrad's film alternates for approximately a half-hour between monochromatic black and grey screens at varyingly accelerated rates. The result of these restricted stylistic or technical parameters is a stroboscopic – or “flicker” – effect: the increasing and decreasing rates at which the screen phenomena switch back and forth from black to grey register, for viewers, as black/grey flashes at a seemingly frenetic pace. The only other “representation” to which one is entreated are the opening credits, indicating the title, the director's name, and a warning that the resulting film is designed to induce seizures.

⁵² On the difference between genre and mode, at least within film studies, see Bordwell 1985: 150.

⁵³ See also Danto 1981: 1-6.

⁵⁴ This also entails, *pace* Metz, that in elucidating the construction of “signification” from cinema, one starts with the viewer's activity, and not necessarily itemized “codes” (Metz 1971b) or “syntagmas” (Metz 1971a: 95-146). Metz later attempts to construct a theory of spectatorship premised on psychoanalysis (1984: 7-110). I have endeavoured to show in part one why this is not a promissory route for film studies.

⁵⁵ On classical, art-cinema and other modes of narration, see Bordwell 1985: 156-310. On art-cinema, see also Bordwell 2008: 151-170.

⁵⁶ See of course P. Adams Sitney's canonical article on the subject (2002: 347-370).

In terms of representational content, therefore, it seems fair to advance that *The Flicker* has none.⁵⁷ On the contrary, it would seem to posit itself on the outer extremity of minimalist or self-reflexive poetics. It does not *represent*, but instead *presents* the material substratum and/or postulated “essence” of the film medium: light.⁵⁸ Put differently, there is extensional identity between medium (i.e. light) and message (*idem.*). At the very least, this is *The Flicker*’s reputation within authoritative accounts of avant-garde and/or oppositional cinema. As a case in point, Amos Vogel notes that Conrad’s film is defined by an “absence of image, content, or meaning” (1974: 114) insofar as it is a “‘pure’ film [which] deals with perception itself” (*ibid.*).⁵⁹ From this perspective, the argument that one’s experience of the film hinges on identifications of objecthood would seem a misnomer.

A similar objection would then hold for preconscious processes. *The Flicker* would seem to mobilize only physiological and conscious processes. In the case of the former processes (i.e. physiological), Kristin Thompson reminds us that “[s]ome films, and particularly modern experimental genres, play with our physiological responses and make us aware of them[.]” (1988: 26). She hints at the latter processes (i.e. conscious) when citing Stan Brakhage’s *Mothlight* (1963) as a film that “draws our attention to the flicker effect and the perception of apparent motion.” (26-27). In such an analysis, one transitions from physiology to consciousness as follows: one sees flashing grey/black (i.e. physiology) and becomes cognizant that habitually at the movies such flashes represent motion as a secondary property (i.e. conscious). One might afterwards conjecture, *as per* Vogel, that both *The Flicker* and *Mothlight* are about the putative nature of cinema.⁶⁰ Regardless, the role of the preconscious (i.e. interpretive habits assimilated to habit and near-automatic efficiency) seems to be nil.⁶¹

⁵⁷ See also Carroll 1996: 51, in which he cites “flicker” films as counter-evidence that within theories of medium-specificity, film can be defined as a representational, photographically based art-form. Carroll is correct – as far as he goes. The current project, as already stated, focuses on the viewing experience of films, such that one interprets avant-garde cinema in fundamentally the same way one approaches commercial, narrative and representational films.

⁵⁸ Even here, the argument does not hold entirely. To move from grey/black alternations to light, and further still, the essence of cinema, one requires several inferential maneuvers – which renders the contention that *The Flicker* is representational, albeit in a highly oblique and abstract sense, difficult to resist.

⁵⁹ See also Scott MacDonald’s helpfully detailed interview with Tony Conrad (2006: 55-76).

⁶⁰ This also follows from Greenbergian modernism – whereby action painting, abstract expressionism and the like are construed as being “about” the putative nature of painting.

⁶¹ See also Peterson 1994: 96, who draws on Wees 1992 to make a similar case: i.e. that flicker films mobilize chiefly, if not with near exclusivity, bottom-up processing. By contrast, a more tenable view derived from Danto 1981 would maintain that art-works which only invite bottom-up processing cannot verily be deemed art-works.

But this is to overlook that *The Flicker* invites a far more variegated engagement from the viewer. As Thompson suggests, the film does cast attention on the otherwise automatic perception of movement and light that defines its construction – such a viewing experience involves a cooperation between physiological and conscious processes. Yet it is preconscious processes that bridge the physiological to the conscious. Upon seeing the grey/black flashing, an initial decree is to identify minimally one object of cinematic signification, above and beyond our physiological experience. Physiologically, one sees the alternation of frames as continuous movement. Within a preconscious capacity, one lends identity to this continuous movement: these are flashing grey and black screens, and *this* is understood to have some import, cinematically.⁶² Understanding that the film is *about* a so-called flicker effect, invites conscious reflection. Overall, therefore, *The Flicker* serves as a compact illustration that the physiological, the preconscious and the conscious can and do operate in coordination.

More significantly, the conscious effort to interpret the significance of the film is undergirded by preconscious processes. As was indicated in the analysis of *THX-1138*, filmgoing habits incline one to postulate some greater significance with respect to perceptual phenomena. Within *The Flicker*, we do strain to interpret the film within an artistic context (e.g. “what is this film supposed to be about?”). However, what is undertaken preconsciously is the very decision to do so. The opening title cards, and even title of the film, serve to influence such meaning construction, regardless of whether one takes this verbal content as ironic or sincere. We casually accept that the title cards bear some relation to the ensuing phenomena and this becomes our tacit assumption as we further interpret the film.

By contrast, outside the preconscious, there is less readiness to interpret the screen phenomena – including identifying and predicating (e.g. “that’s flashing grey/black”). Alternately, viewers unable or unwilling to appreciate this mode of filmmaking might postulate that there has been some error (e.g. a fault in the projection) or that *The Flicker* is not a film, but another type of art-object. Regardless, the preconscious serves in these and other instances to express assumptions (e.g. “films necessarily represent photographically-based movement”) that feed further interpretations and/or actions (e.g. “this *can’t* be a film,” “let’s leave”). Even in so

⁶² I set aside whether (mis)identifying visible light as an object is strictly physiological or has implications as well for the preconscious.

hermetic a work such as *The Flicker*, the preconscious plays a pivotal role in constructing, denominating and experiencing objecthood.

So far, we have seen that identifying and experiencing representations in the cinema requires activating identification and predication-schemas which construct cinematic objecthood. Moreover, this is accomplished mostly unreflectively via the preconscious. Two questions arise. Firstly, given that a representation might thereafter contain several individuated objects at once, or alternately objects composed of heterogeneous, divisible parts and/or mereological terms, how can this be adequately rendered within an ideal language? Secondly, given that objects are both identified and predicated, does this not open the door to potential variations and/or asymmetries in interpretive theory (e.g. an object can be newly identified and *perforce* newly predicated; alternately, it can be previously identified, but predicated in a new way; still further, its construction can be constituted by previous identifications and predications etc.). For either concern, one must evolve an ideal language whereby schema activation functions within a system of relations. This calls forth the third cognitivist principle, to which we now turn.

Objecthood and Relations

As we saw in the previous chapters, cognitivism invokes, albeit via occasionally different terminology, the idea of relations and functions in terms of how its object of study (e.g. classical narration; erotetic narration; mood cues and emotional markers) is defined. In cognitivism an individual entity can be differently defined or interpreted based on its function within a construction of relations. The construction is divided between different levels, including but not limited to, respectively, global and local, or micro and macro, levels.

In the current sub-section, I indicate that one can differently identify and predicate objects along the distinction of **micro/macro composition** and **micro/macro placement**, as well as local/global contexts. I separately employ terms that in their respective and prior uses in cognitivism were defined equivalently: recall that Noël Carroll deploys micro/macro⁶³ in a manner that is at least synonymous to Greg M. Smith's invocation of local/global.⁶⁴ By contrast, as we shall see, micro/macro attends to demarcating an object of attention (macro *placement*) from other identified objects (micro *placement*); or that a macro object will be mereologically

⁶³ See Carroll 1996: 94-117. See also Carroll 1996: 89-90.

⁶⁴ See Smith 2003: 41-64. See also Smith 1999.

composed of micro parts – this diverges from the AT. I equally offer a revised account of local and global to avoid what I take to be theoretical mishaps in the AT.⁶⁵

Theorizing that cinematic representations incorporate objecthood, or even a privileged object, raises considerable argumentative challenges. The position already derived from constructivism and schema theory is that the same screen phenomena can yield multiple objects – and that conversely, any conceptually defined object will be mereologically composed, i.e. constituted of varied physical components⁶⁶ or instantiations.⁶⁷ In *The Fearless Vampire Killers*, the opening colours, shapes and movements are initially identifiable as parts and properties of an undisclosed whole object. An alternate reading might construct the phenomena as non-descript or amorphously defined objecthood – akin to the non-figurative imagery of some avant-garde film.

To this, one need add that more than one object will crowd a representation – but that not all objects will equally captivate one’s interpretive attention. For example, in *Cries and Whispers*, Maria’s eyes are constructed as a discrete object above and beyond the other features of her face – her brow, her wrinkles, her smile – to say nothing of the rest of her body. However, as one’s attention shifts to those other features, and then to her face, her eyes become less uniformly significant.

⁶⁵ Greg M. Smith’s descriptions of emotions and moods would seem to identify them with respectively local and global processes. This is borne out, for example, by his analysis of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. In the opening sequence, a (minor) character accompanying Indiana Jones on his quest screams at the sight of an unseemly statue. Smith implies this moment is local because its function “is to generate a brief burst of emotion.” (2003: 45). Equally, it participates within a larger (possibly global) structure, as it “helps maintain the sequence’s suspenseful mood.” (46). The distinction is explicitly made in a previous article, later incorporated into Smith 2003, titled “Local Emotions, Global Moods” (Smith 1999). However, in the opening pages of Smith 2003, he indicates instead that the global and local pertain respectively to: “the broader processes of emotion that operate across entire films [and] the more minute processes that govern scenes” (2003: 7). Here the global now becomes the entire film taken as the ensemble of its local sequences, itself animated by intermittent (sub-local?) emotions.

⁶⁶ A criticism of mereology involves imputing the strong view to Nelson Goodman that physical wholes are defined by their (equally physical) parts, by sufficient and necessary conditions (Putnam 1999, Chomsky 2000). This criticism is a straw man of Goodman’s project, in which “appearance,” as a concept, was defined as the sum of three abstract universals, or conceptual prerequisites: position in space, time and colour (Goodman 1977).

⁶⁷ In logic, metaphysics and analytic philosophy, it is understood that abstract universals, i.e. including concepts, are *not* divisible into parts, as individuated (i.e. physical, material) entities are: “love” cannot be decomposed, as a “chair” might. Several responses can be allowed. Firstly, in select cognitive approaches, with antecedents stretching back to Cartesian rationalism and beyond, physical individuals are first and foremost conceptually defined, such that discriminating them from universal concepts as warranted by their “parts” is a distinction without a difference (Chomsky 2000: 3-18). Secondly, while abstract universals do not have physical parts, they can be ideationally complex in the following sense: most, if not all, concepts (e.g. “death”) aggregate plural terms or distinctions (“termination/absence,” “life,” etc.), or, for lack of a better term, “parts.” Thirdly, in film, abstract themes (e.g. “intolerance”) are rendered physically (e.g. the storylines in Griffith’s titular work): they may not be reducible to their parts, but they are composed of, and evoked via, said constituents.

In all these instances, allowing that there can be multiply individuated objects, each one in turn mereologically composed, one needs a language to account for such divisions. In this context, a macro placed object is one that commands the viewer's activity and takes precedent in one's perceptual apprehension and construction of a representation. Inversely, a micro placed object plays some constitutive role in the context within which a macro placed object is constructed, either as a nominally separate object or an isolable part of a whole. We see this with several examples below.

Take again the analysis of *Fearless Vampire Killers*, as pertains to the revelation of the moon. As stated, upon first seeing the images of blue, one's decree could translate roughly as: "these colours and movement seem to signify an object, but I am not sure what." Upon the revelation that we have been witnessing the moon, after the end of the credits, the decree is shifted to account for the object's identity: "it's the moon." However, at this instance, a bat shows up and flies forward as the camera zooms out.

When the image of the bat looms larger in the frame, viewers typically shift their attention from moon to bat, such that the former recedes in importance, all the while remaining part of the depicted scene: it belongs to the nocturnal setting within which the bat's flight takes place. But has the viewer's experience changed in any way, specifically at the level of identifying objecthood? It is here that I contend one introduces macro vs. micro, both for placement (i.e. the viewer's interpretive focus) and composition (i.e. parts-whole relations). In the language so far defined in this chapter, the moon is first a macro placed object, and then changes to a micro placed object with the arrival of the bat. The latter thereafter constitutes the new macro placed object.

It is tempting to equate macro placement with foreground, and micro placement with background, but that is inconsistent with the cognitivist-constructivist approach.⁶⁸ Consider the previously discussed scene in *Cries and Whispers*: the close-up on Maria's face. In this case, each separately identified part of Maria's face would constitute, separately and successively, a macro placed object, while the surrounding features of her face are micro placed. Subsequently,

⁶⁸ Macro/micro does not replicate the Gestalt distinction between figure/ground. A macro placed object can be the figure, while the micro placed object is the ground. Yet additionally an object can retain its constructed identity whether it is macro or micro placed. In *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, Icarus (or his legs) is still identified as such whether one focuses on this content (macro places Icarus) or some other aspect of the painting (Icarus is micro placed). For a closer source of inspiration, see Arthur Danto's analysis of the same painting, and more generally his interpretive theory: Danto 1981: 115-135.

when attention is drawn to her whole face (i.e. Maria asks, “Can you really see all of that in my face?”), this becomes the new macro placed object; the previously enumerated objects (e.g. eyes, mouth) are no longer identified as individuated entities, but are recast as the constitutive parts of her face – i.e. **micro parts** of a **macro whole**.

Admittedly, both *Fearless Vampire Killers* and *Cries and Whispers* can be posited as relatively unconventional films. A more interesting question becomes, do such divisions merit mention in a more straightforward example? Fans and even casual viewers of the *Star Wars* series may recall the first glimpse of Darth Vader without his mask in *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). He is seen briefly from the back with the top of his head-piece off, as it is lowered onto him. See figure 12:



Figure 12: *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), dir. Irvin Kershner

The interest of the shot, albeit not solely, is that it offers the most direct corroboration at that point in the series that Vader, despite his mechanical demeanour, is a mortal man.⁶⁹ No less crucially, his cranium is badly scarred, intimating his violent history and perhaps wounded character. Depending on where one fixes one’s attention, the scar can be taken as a macro placed object, in predicating Vader as a battered individual, or as a micro placed object, such that one instead turns to the exposed head. These initial macro readings then feed into our interpretation of Vader. Identifying the macro placed objects in succession, the new macro composed whole becomes Vader, predicated jointly by his cranium and scar as a vulnerable and mortal man. In

⁶⁹ Admittedly, some viewers may remember that Vader is mentioned as a former Jedi (and therefore perhaps human) in the original *Star Wars* (1977). But this information is disclosed later in the film, when his initial representation has arguably made a stronger impression (see also Sternberg 1978: 95-102 and so-called primacy vs recency effects). That later representations can overturn prior impressions is a question of identification and predication: in the images discussed from *Empire*, the identification of Vader’s scar (i.e. as a cinematic object) plays a considerable role in subsequently predicating him anew and differently (i.e. as a separately identifiable cinematic object).

this regard, micro and macro placement and composition of cinematic objects always and unavoidably play an indispensable and ever-shifting role in the construction of meaning.

An additional distinction is obliged here, which is met by **local** and **global**. The interpretive corrections arising from seeing Vader unmasked are manifold. At this moment in the film, predicating him as unmasked and merely mortal constitutes a new interpretation. This also involves seizing on newly identified objects – his cranium, his scar – which (in this hypothetical, albeit plausible, interpretation) have neither been *previously* identified, nor even tacitly assumed. At the same time, Vader as a cinematic object remains previously identified, even if he is newly predicated – he has previously been represented in not only this film, but also the *Star Wars* saga. In this interpretation, he is newly predicated in a local context, but globally has already been identified. Conversely, his scar and cranium are both newly identified and predicated locally as well as globally. Therefore, Vader as a cinematic object is reidentified, albeit within the context of a new interpretation. By contrast, his cranium and scar must be identified (and equally predicated) afresh, as newly constructed objects.

From these distinctions, one can derive preliminary definitions of local and global contexts – to be explicated and clarified in the next section. Global contexts pertain to when an object is both newly identified and predicated at the same time, or inversely is reidentified and predicated in clustered or continuous terms: i.e. by synonymous or similar predications. Local contexts pertain to when an object has been previously identified but is now newly predicated.

Consider the following. When one first identifies Darth Vader in *Star Wars* (1977), he is a new object, both globally and locally. He is identified for the first time, and therefore “new” as relative to the film text (i.e. *Star Wars*). He is perforce predicated at the same time (e.g. as “evil,” “terrifying,” “monstrous,” etc.). Such predications may hold across successive constructions of Darth Vader throughout the film text: he becomes globally old, *as per* conjunctive and continuous predicates (e.g. as “evil,” etc.).

By contrast, in the above example from *Empire*, he is newly predicated, i.e. as “mortal,” “wounded.” At the same time, he has been previously identified, in either *Star Wars* or *Empire*: as the character Vader. As such, he remains globally old (a previously identified object) but locally new (a reidentified object predicated in disjunctive or corrected terms). “Locally new” therefore serves to demarcate changes in predication in a reidentified object. “Globally new,” by contrast, addresses a newly constructed object, within the film text. The more subtle or recondite

implications of this distinction will be unpacked in the next chapter – as local/global bears crucially on predication and predication-types. Suffice to say for now that one can delineate succinctly and precisely combinations of different types of identification and predication in terms of what viewers do in constructing cinematic content with varying degrees of consistency and differentiation throughout their experience of the film text.

Nonetheless, the analysis highlights a further interpretive ambiguity. The prior declaration – Vader is predicated in terms of his cranium/scar – is enfolded within a larger process. It is incontrovertible that in the moment one predicates Vader as such. However, no less crucially, this, as well as prior and successive predications of Vader – as mechanical and invulnerable; human and vulnerable; and eventually, the father to Luke Skywalker⁷⁰ – are alternately cumulative or contradictory. Hence, “Luke’s father” is congruent with “human and vulnerable,” while both undermine “mechanical and invulnerable.” A final feature of the viewing experience must be theorized, which is encapsulated by the cognitivist principle of “correction.”

Objecthood and Correction

As we have seen in the chapter one, schema construction involves correction. One constructs content via schema activation; one thereafter constructs content anew, as identification and predication schemas are re-activated in the face of old and new objects. What precisely is meant by “old” and “new” shall be specified in the next chapter. For now, it is important to grasp that perceptual phenomena, once constructed to form objecthood, can be corrected to yield new objects, or differently predicated objects. Several examples throughout this section demonstrate why correction is a pivotal and unavoidable dimension of the viewing experience of cinematic objecthood.

The significance of correction has already been hinted at in the examples so far addressed. One can see this as much in identifications of a new object from hitherto, differently named perceptual phenomena, and predicating a previously identified (and predicated) object differently.

⁷⁰ Common sense (and some analytic schools of reference theory, Strawson 1971: 1-27), would dictate that “Luke’s father” is identificatory, and not predicative. However, as identification/predication of objecthood have been developed throughout, “Luke’s father” would fall under the domain of predications: it posits a relation between one object (conventionally named “Darth Vader”) and another object (conventionally named “Luke”).

Let us start with the former instance: corrected identifications. In *The Fearless Vampire Killers*, the patches of colour and shapes reveal themselves to be the moon. Regardless of one's initial interpretation of the perceptual phenomena, this decree is then corrected to identify an altogether differently named and constructed object. One begins with relatively non-descript phenomena more appropriately suited to an avant-garde film. Viewers must then correct these (ultimately incomplete) interpretations with the decree, "it's the moon."

We can likewise turn to the latter instance: corrected predication. As seen at the chapter's opening, in *Citizen Kane*, Charles's sled is later shown to be the subject of his dying words – and/or *vice versa*. Here, the importance of the sled to Charles is reiterated but also expanded upon. It is no longer simply an object which he had to relinquish upon being separated from his parents. More importantly, it is interpreted as having loomed over his entire life, to the extent that it occupies his dying thoughts (and perhaps defines/predicates him as a human being). No less so than with the representation of the moon in *Fearless Vampire Killers*, viewers are expected to take an already predicated object (Charles's sled, to which he is attached) and predicate it anew (Charles's sled, which looms over his life).

As the above suggests, corrected identifications and predications intervene across a range of cinematic exemplars. This can be seen when likening similar operations in the viewing experience within respectively more atypical, experimental scenes and instances of relatively mainstream cinema.

In terms of the latter, most superhero fans will recall the sight of Batman's cracked mask in *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012): a victorious Bane (Tom Hardy), having just bested the Caped Crusader (Christian Bale) in a fight, tosses aside the mask. The shot in part derives its power from a putatively unbeatable hero (i.e. Batman) facing not only defeat, but having what can be taken as the core of his identity as a superhero destroyed (i.e. the cracked mask).

In the case of the former, Lars von Trier's *Nymphomaniac Vol. 1* (2013) opens over a black screen, with a medley of barely discernible sounds, including dripping water. Several images soon reveal presumably spatially proximate locations, outside, throughout which there is alternately snow and light rainfall, after which one sees the injured heroine Joe (Charlotte Gainsbourg) lying in the street. We return to this same setting and period in the story in *Nymphomaniac Vol. 2* (2013), in which it is revealed that, chronologically, not long before the shots of dripping water, Joe had been beaten and then urinated on. Among other responses this

latter event might invite, it partly serves to harken back to the motif of dripping water opening the film – a connection strengthened by the fact that both evocations of running liquids are linked in terms of setting, and approximate one another in terms of eventhood and time. For viewers who recall the audio-track opening the film, Joe’s defilement retroactively casts a tone of disgust or unseemliness on a hitherto serene opening, in part because these running liquids can now be taken as constituting a leitmotif.

As with the examples from *Fearless Vampire Killers* and *Kane*, these interpretations hinge on corrections. In *Dark Knight Rises*, the correction is predicative: contrary to expectation, Batman’s mask – and by metonymic extension, Batman – can be broken. In *Nymphomaniac*, the correction is both identificatory and predicative: that seemingly tranquil running water sounds also can remind one of less sanitary liquids. As has already been outlined, and will be further developed in the next section, in *Nymphomaniac* the object is new both globally and locally; in *Dark Knight Rises*, it is new locally, but old globally.

Moreover, the above analysis has illustrated that correction intervenes to identify objects from perceptual phenomena (*Fearless Vampire Killers*, *Nymphomaniac*). Nonetheless, it has retained a mostly ordinary usage of object to designate inanimate, solid entities (a sleigh, a mask, the moon). It will therefore be fruitful to consider by what interpretive means correction informs one’s construction of a panoply of different cinematic objects, moreover sourced from the same screen phenomena. In so doing, one begins to address the varied effects or experiences engendered by these interpretations.

Let us consider in detail Chantal Akerman’s *News from Home* (1977). Recall that it opens with an extreme long shot of an intersection in pre-gentrified Lower Manhattan.⁷¹ A car first crosses right to left, after which no new objects are liable to be constructed for roughly ten seconds. After, a second car drives forward; once it has left the frame, three men carrying boxes can be seen in the background. Once they have exited the frame, we cut to a new shot, in a different location, with vehicles intermittently passing from the fore to the background. This new shot lasts close to a minute and is followed by yet another image of a sparsely populated street, with occasional traffic. See figures 13a-c:

⁷¹ The footage was shot circa 1975, but using mostly locations Akerman discovered during her pilgrimages throughout New York when she lived there during 1971-1973: see Anderson 2010.



Figures 13a-c: *News from Home* (1977), dir. Chantal Akerman

However, one now hears on the soundtrack a voice-over: one soon gathers that the ostensible protagonist's mother is writing letters, from Belgium, to her daughter (hereafter "Chantal") as the latter is sojourning in New York. Viewers of the film may recall that the bulk of *News* is thereby comprised of seemingly aleatory images (and ambient sounds) of New York,⁷² including but not limited to: traffic, subways, buildings, streets, pedestrians, passengers, as well as various employees, customers and apparently random civilians. The soundtrack includes, at irregular intervals, melancholic letters from the mother,⁷³ to which the daughter responds – although the content of these responses is left vague. This can then inflect one's interpretation of the image-track: although this is left to the viewer's inference, it is plausible that the images have been filmed by Chantal.

In fact, the film invites multiple, occasionally conflicting, interpretations, many of which hinge on corrected objecthood. The opening image of the car would seem to position the latter as the macro placed object, while the surrounding city-scape is micro placed as an object. The city-scape is macro placed, until the arrival of the next car, and successively the three passers-by. Further corrective readings involve identifying the mother's voice, and Chantal's putative presence within the depicted city, if not behind the camera. These interpretations encompass a range of aesthetic experiences which, in the language of art criticism, would be designated as realism, expressivity and reflexivity.⁷⁴

⁷² By the filmmaker's own admission, *News* was not shot in synch, such that every sound was added during post-production. Few viewers seem to notice this until it is pointed out (Anderson 2010).

⁷³ Akerman herself is in fact reading letters written to her by her mother circa 1971-1973 (Anderson 2010). However, it is a common inference that the letters are being read by the mother – and there is no indication in the film as to whether they were scripted for the film, or borne from prior documents.

⁷⁴ Realism can be understood as an effect seeking to approximate one's lived (usually tactile) experience of the world. Expressivity is habitually thought of as conveying the emotions of a putative author or characters. Reflexivity involves underscoring the devices or techniques whereby an artefact has been made. I would agree with the criticism

In this respect, the apparently generic scenes of city-life approximate an ascetic variation on Bazinian realism: the extreme long shots and long takes seldom privilege any exclusive content, but allow one instead to pick out various details, either cumulatively or separately.⁷⁵ Conversely, these same non-descript images correlate to the mother's forlorn separation from Chantal: the barren streets, as well as alternately impassive or isolated individuals can be taken to exemplify the mother's own depressive state. This in turn is reinforced more generally by the apparent monotony: in common parlance, *nothing happens*, albeit such that this parallels the non-reciprocated nature of Chantal's and her mother's relationship.

Finally, there are multiple interpretations by which the images foreground the film's own construction – of which I cite only one, for the sake of brevity. At first glance, the images do not seem conventionally representational, in allowing one to construct any uniform meaning, or even denoted content, above and beyond a background or presumed surrounding. Rather, the extent to which their poetics are foreign to a so-called classical or linear paradigm⁷⁶ invites that one's focal awareness or even conscious processes privilege not the photographic reproduction of reality, nor the evoked fictional or documentary universe, but a constructed and delimited entity (i.e. a film).

Without rehearsing common critiques of the vague definitions surrounding terms such as realism or reflexivity (or expressivity), the above invites skepticism. The same representations – static long shots and takes – seem to mandate typically differentiated, if not antithetical, artistic strategies. Instead, constructed and corrected cinematic objecthood addresses the issue differently. In the most preliminary sense, the opening images can be taken as successive cityscapes, or a synecdoche of Lower Manhattan, or New York more generically – respectively macro objects. The representation of the mother's voice can thereafter be constructed as a separate object – as can the mother. If one posits a radical divorce between the image-track and sound-track, then the mother's voice and the cityscapes become alternately competing macro placed objects: each one vies for our attention, such that we cannot construct separate meanings

that these terms are frequently used approximately and indiscriminately – and with the cognitivist-constructive view that they speak more to one's interpretive engagement with a film, rather than the particularities of the film text *per se*.

⁷⁵ See for example Bazin's essay on William Wyler, 1958: 149-173.

⁷⁶ On the classical paradigm, see Bordwell's analysis in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 3-84. Noël Burch outlines his distinction between so-called linear and topological readings in Burch 2007: 155-174 (see Burch 1983 for an antecedent version). Burch's textual analysis is of interest, but I think he errs in pursuing the argument as a problem for film history (as opposed to interpretive theory).

from both simultaneously. If instead the cityscapes are expressive of the mother's loneliness, and their literal content is at best ostensible to her state, then these cityscapes remain micro placed objects insofar as they are constitutive of her as a macro composed whole.

In each case, these respective experiences source the same or similar screen phenomena, while constructing different objects and therefore representations. Moreover, throughout it is correction that allows one to differently identify, predicate and place these respective objects, such that one shifts between putative realistic, reflexive and expressive readings. However, we shall see in the next chapter that these aesthetic predicates can likewise be reduced, as we stipulate different types of predication, as applied to objecthood, and the combined effects of object identification and predication.

Most clearly, we will have to sharpen the distinction between new vs. old objecthood. It has been advanced that in locally old objecthood, predications can be synonymous or similar – or, clustered and continuous, to introduce terminology that will be defined and deployed in the next two chapters. For example, throughout moments in *Star Wars* and/or *Empire*, Vader is consistently predicated “evil” and in like terms (“terrifying,” “murderous,” “monstrous,” etc.). By contrast, the revelation that he is mortal, vulnerable and moreover, Luke's father, introduces initially dissonant terms. One might initially have difficulty squaring his battered physique (when he is without a mask) with prior decrees that he is potentially non-human and redoubtable in his power. One will equally have to correct interpretations upon learning that he is Luke's father – a revelation which can raise a prospect of doubt as to whether Vader is uniformly evil. These and similar interpretations – the establishment, aggregation and correction of predications – will be studied in the next chapter.

Conclusion

To sum up, the previous analysis has addressed the interpretive procedures whereby viewers identify cinematic objects – the first of the two most fundamental identification frames informing the viewing experience (i.e. objecthood, eventhood). These viewing experiences, being universal, remain invariant across otherwise seemingly incommensurable film texts – from experimental cinema (e.g. *The Flicker*) to more normative texts (e.g. *Jaws*). In all instances,

viewers ascribe transitive and continuous identity to conceptually delimited entities, whether said entity is identifiable as “light,” “shark,” or “Chantal Akerman’s mother” and “Batman.”

At the same time, the analysis has only briefly noted interpretive acts of predication, as pertain to constructions of cinematic objecthood. Such concerns are explored in chapter four, which constitutes the latter half of part two. Viewers predicate cinematic objects in affect-laden terms. The interpretive frame for predication (i.e. the predication-schema) is significant to the current thesis, not to mention recurring disciplinary aims in film studies (e.g. cognitivism and the AT), as it is what enables the more qualitative dimensions of cinematic textual artefacts to register within the viewing experience. In a nutshell: viewers experience emotions, affects, feelings and the like, with regards to cinematic objecthood, due to the predication-types *old* and *new*.

Chapter Four: Predicating Cinematic Objects

Introduction

In a review of the DVD release of Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs* (1971), critic Christopher Sharrett notes a disagreement he has with fellow scholar Stephen Prince.¹ Commenting on a moment which Prince takes as a harbinger to the film's notorious climax, Sharrett rebuts: "I don't see David [Dustin Hoffman's character] being 'drawn' to a bloody hand in an early scene – Dustin Hoffman merely looks overly startled in a moment of awkward acting." (2003: 59). The differences in perspectives, between Prince and Sharrett, cannot be settled here – and undoubtedly will never be settled definitively. What can be addressed is a conceptual language, ideal terms meant to convey fundamental interpretive procedures and related experiences, that undergirds Sharrett's and Prince's disagreement.

The disagreement in interpretation can be explained in the language delineated so far. Sharrett and Prince are constructing different objects. Sharrett is identifying "Dustin Hoffman," albeit with subsidiary awareness that Hoffman is playing "David." Sharrett macro places Hoffman, while micro placing David – as well as other screen phenomena, including the "bloody hand." By contrast, Prince is constructing "David," albeit with subsidiary awareness that David is played by Hoffman. Prince macro places David, while micro placing David, as well as the "bloody hand" and other conceivable objects. Nothing forbids either Prince nor Sharrett from shifting perspectives: i.e. macro placing other objects (e.g. a patch of colour in any of the images). Other viewers can experience the screen phenomena differently: they might grasp that an actor is playing David, but not know who Dustin Hoffman is, such that the identified object is "actor" and not "Dustin Hoffman." The significance remains that such varieties in the viewing experience will remain explainable in this ideal language: macro/micro placing of identified objects. See diagram v:

¹ Sharrett is replying to Prince's audio commentary of the film, although a fuller explication of Prince's analysis can be found in his book length study of Peckinpah: see Prince 1998.

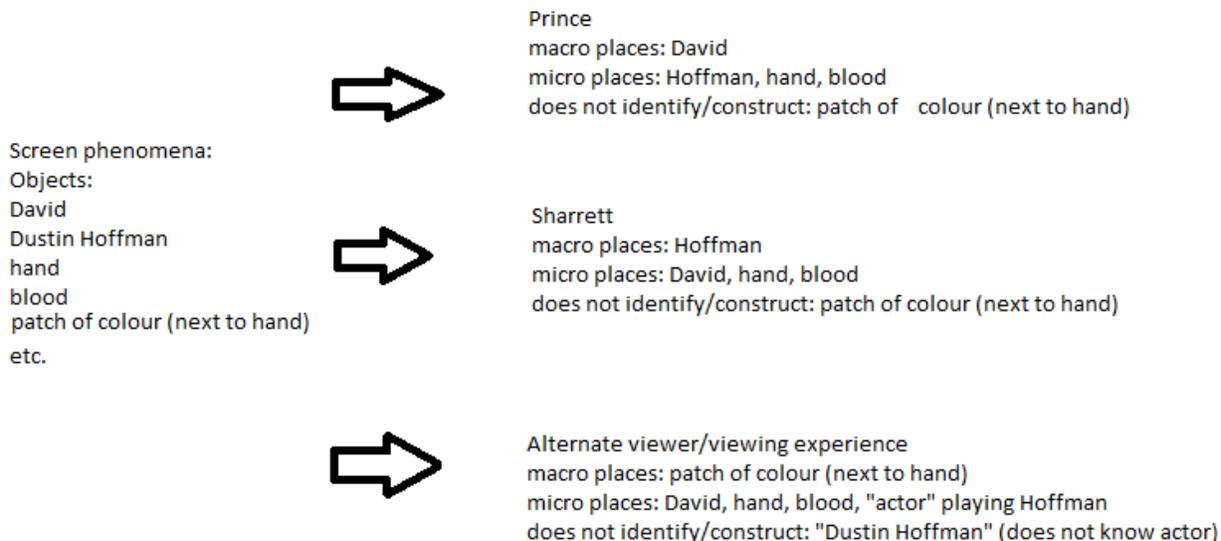


Diagram v: Identifying/predicating objects

More importantly, however, Prince and Sharrett predicate their respective macro objects differently. For Prince, object-David is predicated in the following way: he is “drawn” to the bloody hand. For Sharrett, object-Hoffman is instead “startled” or “awkward.” The question becomes: how to account for alternately synonymous, antithetical and any other hypothetical predications in the construction of objecthood? As there will be a potentially infinite range of conceivable predications, one must devise a reduced language that accounts for the frequent fluidity and efficacy of the viewing experience: how predications of objecthood function in terms of physiological and preconscious processes. This analysis should also explain the role predication plays in constructing objects in the film text, which in turn will illuminate how affects, emotions and/or feelings arise in the viewing experience.

Predicating Cinematic Objecthood: New and Old

The previous chapter was concerned with *identifications* of objecthood. In the current chapter, we now turn to *predications*. As seen with Prince vs. Sharrett, viewers do not simply identify content – e.g. continuous and transitive conceptual entities – from screen phenomena. They also predicate said content. The construction of the object incorporates decreed adjectives

or statives² (e.g. “drawn,” “awkward”), serving to characterize the object in affect-laden terms. Take the following example: Darth Vader is first likely to be predicated “evil,” “inhuman,” and “omnipotent” in *Star Wars*. By the end of *Return of the Jedi* (1983), he may be predicated instead as “good,” “human” and “mortally vulnerable.” The theorist here faces several challenges in accounting for the viewer’s experience. To retain conceptual parsimony, one must arraign any hypothetical predication, pertaining to the object “Vader,” under more restricted categories. In the previous chapter, it was advanced that all token objects are constructed based on the activated identification-schema for objecthood. In the current chapter, it is considered how predication-types are physiologically activated to incorporate or allow for preconsciously processed token predicates.³ See diagram vi:

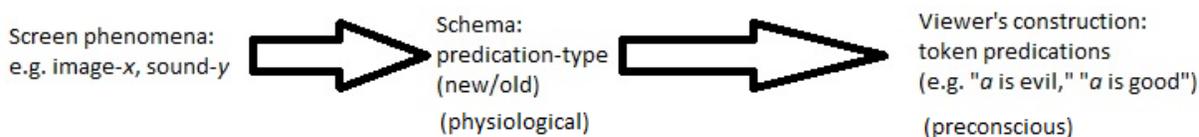


Diagram vi: Predication-types: old/new

There are only two types of predication for objecthood: new and old. However, there will be potentially infinite token predications. As shall be maintained, token predications for cinematic objects are understood and experienced (i.e. by the viewer) as statives serving to characterize the constructed object. These statives will equally be experienced, by the viewer, in

² What counts as a state, and how these may be distinct from other entities (e.g. actions, subjects) has proven a seminal issue, for example in linguistics since George Lakoff’s paper on stative adjectives and verbs (Lakoff 1966). Lakoff, however, distinguishes between actions and states to identify fundamental grammatical demarcations – state verbs cannot take the progressive form (e.g. “I am knowing”), nor the imperative mode (e.g. “Be know”) – insights that fall outside the scope of the current thesis.

³ That token predications of objects are processed via the preconscious suggests that it is intuitive, without necessarily being innate. Chomsky has advanced the stronger claim that the most significant semantic and conceptual content of thought is innate, such that our lexicon, in any natural language, is merely a question of attaching sounds to *a priori* meanings: “As anyone who has tried to construct a dictionary or to work in descriptive semantics is aware, it is a very difficult matter to describe the meaning of a word, and such meanings have great intricacy and involve the most remarkable assumptions, even in the case of very simple concepts, such as what counts as a nameable thing. At peak periods of language acquisition, children are acquiring (‘learning’) many words a day, perhaps a dozen or more, meaning that they are acquiring words on very few exposures, even just one. This would seem to indicate that the concepts are already available, with much or all of their intricacy and structure predetermined, and that the child’s task is to assign labels to concepts [i.e. inverting the Aristotelean dictum such that language is, in fact, ‘meaning with sound’], as might be done with limited evidence given sufficiently rich innate structure.” (2000: 61). It is hardly a stretch to suppose that innate concepts, as attached to words, encompass predication and even affective associations. Still, my appropriation of token-type distinguishes differently between essence (type) and experience (token).

affect-laden terms: i.e. how the viewer is affected by the object. This contention is expounded upon and justified later in the chapter. For now, consider the diagram vii:

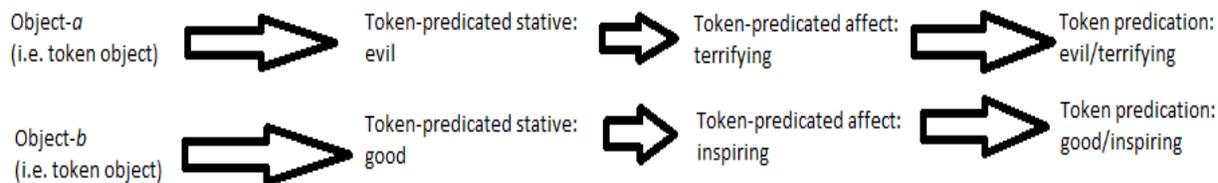


Diagram vii: Token predications: affect-laden statives

As with identification, the predication-types old and new are located physiologically. They are innate schemas which prove inaccessible to conscious introspection. The token predications are preconsciously processed. They are decreed and experienced with near-immediate efficiency. With some effort by the viewer, they can be recalled to conscious awareness. One experiences Darth Vader as “evil/terrifying” without necessarily verbalizing such an interpretation to oneself. Neither is one necessarily cognizant as to *why* Vader is “evil/terrifying” upon constructing and experiencing this object throughout *Star Wars*. If pressed or seeking to reflect on one’s experience, it is at least hypothetically possible to pinpoint the constructed statives and affects (i.e. the token predications). One might reliably report that Vader is “bad” and “scary,” or words to that effect.

By contrast, activations of the predication schemas old and new are inaccessible to conscious introspection. Their effects within the viewing experience can be felt after the fact. Within any aspect of the viewing experience, viewers do not consciously articulate, much less think, “I am activating the predication-type *old*.” Instead, they automatically predicate an object as per the types *old* or *new*, depending on how individual token predications function within the viewing experience. The distinctions between old and new objecthood will have to be defined and sharpened. The relationship of token predications to the predication-types must also be clarified. However, below consider these preliminary examples.

As Darth Vader is being constructed for the first time within the viewing experience of *Star Wars*, he is a new object, globally and locally. He may be predicated by conjunctive or

clustered token predications, including “evil” and “terrifying.”⁴ Such token predications form the baseline against which subsequent token predications are made. When Vader is constructed again, viewers can maintain clustered token predicates. For instance, viewers experience Vader as “monomaniacal,” “powerful,” and “unnerving.” Insofar as these experiences are clustered and continuous with prior constructions of Vader, then Vader becomes a (globally and locally) old object. The token predicates “monomaniacal/powerful/unnerving” function *as per* the predication-type old, or more simply: they function as old.

Alternately, there are constructions of Vader in which viewers experience him disjunctively, or in corrected and discontinuous terms. In *Empire*, it is revealed that Vader is battered and injured, and thus vulnerable. Viewers may also experience these token predicates – “battered,” “injured,” “vulnerable” – as surprising, even moving. Vader is now predicated in the token terms “vulnerable/moving.” Insofar as these token predicates conflict with “evil/terrifying,” they serve to locally predicate Vader by new token predicates. The token predicates “vulnerable/moving” function *as per* the predication-type new, in local contexts. More simply, they function as new. See diagram viii:

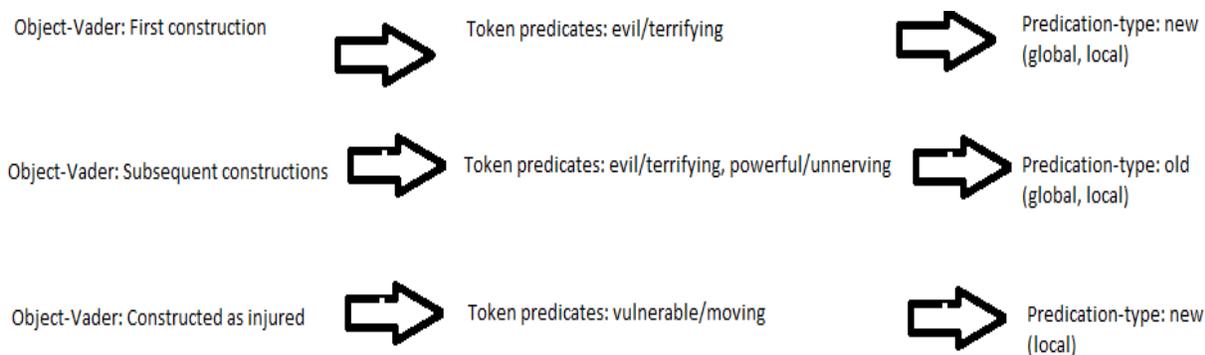


Diagram viii: local/global

⁴ “Clustered,” to signify semantic relations between terms, is from Bordwell 1989a – to which I return. “Conjunctive,” as borrowed freely from logic (and analytic philosophy) likewise indicates terms or entities that may be on a continuum due to complementariness or similarity. By contrast, “disjunctive” (see main text below) signifies terms or entities that are discontinuous, or at least initially force an interpretive alternative: “Vader is *terrifying* and *omnipotent*” (clustered, conjunctive); “either Vader is *terrifying/omnipotent*, or he is *vulnerable*” (disjunctive, discontinuous).

The above examples and arguments, including the terminology invoked, invite criticisms that need be addressed before delineating new vs. old objecthood. Firstly, it assumes tacitly that the token predications, which are ultimately assimilated to predication-types, are approximately rendered in stative and qualitative terms,⁵ which is not necessarily the case in subject-predicate logic, broadly construed.⁶ Secondly, it admits vagueness and contingency in postulating that viewers decree predications continuously or with corrections: how can the theorist be so sure that predication-*x*, of object-*y*, in film-*z*, really incorporates a correction, or not, and that moreover any given viewer will make it? Thirdly, doesn't every predication mandate some correction, such that all objects are locally new, and locally old objecthood is a null set?

One can start with the first criticism: the relation of token predicates and predication types to subject-predicate logic. As can be gleaned from the prior examples, in the ensuing analysis (and thesis), token predications will be explicitly rendered verbally as usually stative terms, moreover frequently conjoining and/or significantly incorporating the object's tertiary qualities. Modern logic is vast, while many of its distinct, epistemic contributions to languages both ideal and ordinary will prove accessory to a universal theory of the viewing experience of

⁵ Both "states" and "qualities" merit further explication. States shall here be understood as the way an object is, in terms of ascribed properties or qualities. Most commonly, states can be linguistically (or verbally) rendered by adjectives, but also, as shall be seen, substantives, such that they serve as complements of copulas. "Orlok is tall" expresses the state of "being tall," whereby "tall" is an adjective. "Orlok is a vampire" expresses the state of "being a vampire," whereby "vampire" is a substantive. Neither the current stipulation nor any of these examples ought to be taken as mandating that viewers verbalize such interpretations when viewing the film. Linguistic predications are ideal reconstructions of arguably more transient and perhaps inchoate experiences (see Johnson 1987 and 2007, Wollheim 1999; see also Johnson-Laird 1983: 2-3). As for qualities, they are typically defined as attributes we ascribe to an entity. Because this definition is epistemological (i.e. how the world is experienced by us), it ought to invite ambiguity for the more Cartesian minded: will it prove more productive to stipulate a division between properties (an entity's attributes) and qualities (an entity's presumed attributes as they are given to perception). Nelson Goodman, at least in some his earlier iterations, would be inclined to uphold this division (Goodman 1977, Goodman 1990) – which hinges on his dual, sometimes conflicting, commitments to extensionalism and nominalism (see especially Goodman 1978). This apparent dichotomy also informs his assertion that predication (as a technical term and logical operation) can only apply to "properties" (1976: 45-95). Instead, given the focus of the current thesis – the viewing experience of cinematic texts – I advance that it is perfectly acceptable to treat qualifying judgements, as well as experiences induced by qualities, as incorporated within the predication-schema as it is activated by cinematic objects. Such an ideal stipulation might at first seem estranged from everyday experience. However, its acceptability is reflected in the consensus, for example, that the sentence "it is hot" is to be taken as equally and co-extensively containing a predicate and a tertiary quality: "hot."

⁶ Strawson 1974 and 2003: 137-246, while intended as novel and even provocative, provide overviews of canonical contributors (e.g. Ramsay, Frege, Russell, Quine) and disciplinary questions (e.g. just how does one delimit the function of a predicate, insofar as subject terms, such as nouns and noun phrases, often occupy predicate places?).

cinematic texts.⁷ The examples thus far ought to make this clear, but one can briefly pursue the point.⁸

An acceptable position to be derived from the AT,⁹ as well as recurring concerns throughout film studies,¹⁰ is that predications of cinematic content (and cognate art forms)¹¹ remain affect-laden, to at least a minimal degree.¹² One does not execute exclusively rational operations upon the occasion of a film text.¹³ Rather, said operations always involve an affective constituent, no matter how vaguely felt.¹⁴ This proposition need not advance that said affects must be explicitly verbalized by sentient viewers; they may even operate beneath the threshold of conscious mental activity. Yet the postulate remains that with affects, as with cognition and perception, we are always experiencing *something*, even if this something remains tenuous or inchoate – a view that plausibly holds across sentient (human) life, but within the current context can at least be posited for the viewing experience of film text, including cinematic objects.¹⁵

⁷ In second-order logic, relations of transitivity, symmetry and reflexivity are capital to the logician (Russell 1926: 56-69; Carnap 1967; Goodman 1977). One wonders how they would figure in the *aesthetics* of the viewing experience, unless they are subordinated to affectively charged predications. Take the following: “Orlok is taller than Hutter.” For the logician, “is taller than” is asymmetrical, but transitive: an important insight for ascertaining truth-values. In the viewing experience, of specifically *Nosferatu*, “is taller than” is only of significance in predicating Orlok as ominous – transitive, asymmetrical relations would thus be subordinated to detailing this (affect-laden) predication but would have negligible import for other epistemic aims (i.e. in the context of viewing *Nosferatu*). Similar insights, I think, ought to apply for Fregean notions of singular/complex predication (see also Oliver 2010).

⁸ At the same time, Gregory Currie credits Frege with the discovery that predication need be defined functionally, a view from which the current thesis necessarily takes a page (Currie 1982).

⁹ See especially Smith 2003.

¹⁰ See chapter one.

¹¹ The remarks above are consistent with David Herman’s analysis of “quale” in his theory of narration (2009: 137-160). Silvan Tomkins’s positing of affects as “primarily aesthetic experiences” (2008: 12) supports a similar point.

¹² Viewers may experience boredom or mild indifference – but even these responses count as an experience. As with cognition and perception, one’s competence for affect (in the most fundamental sense) is always operating: not that one always feels the same affect, but that one’s affective system continually functions (and a corollary would hold for cognition and perception, both in the most encompassing sense).

¹³ See also Grodal 1997.

¹⁴ A counter-argument is that, under the guise of ideal language, I have conflated “affect” and “sentience.” Yet, the conflation need not be equivocal or viciously circular if it elucidates more fundamental problems of human sentience. Consider, by way of contrast, expressions such as “I feel nothing.” Such an utterance at least implicitly follows from common definitions of “emotion,” as a linguistically designated affect with an intentional object: e.g. Frijdean stipulations of action-readiness, Tan’s concomitant positing of interest as a dominant or principle emotion. Yet a huge gap of sentient life clearly does not involve consciously articulated emoting (i.e. one does not always remind oneself, “I feel happy/sad”), much less intentional objects (i.e. one is not always aware of what occasions shifts in feeling or affect). For “I feel nothing” to signal a genuine affective void, the following psychological reality must hold: one’s cognitive, perceptual and affective systems are intermittently shut on and off, or, more drastically, one’s mental operations are always restricted to conscious processes. Neither view strikes me as especially tenable.

¹⁵ A criticism may be that the cognitive theory advanced far exceeds the disciplinary scope – i.e. film studies. Such concerns may just as easily be lodged against cognitivists who place the viewing experience on a continuum with extra-cinematic perceptual and affective psychology – see Carroll 1990, Currie 1996 and 2008, Smith 1995, Tan

As a corollary, we can ideally reconstruct token predications of cinematic objecthood in stative terms such that these encompass adjectives and substantives, including common and proper nouns. Such token predications, in turn, will be varying experienced (i.e. by viewers) as affectively charged, whether this affect is intensely felt or more dimly intuited. Such viewing experiences, as we shall later see, may even enfold a “wait and see” attitude.¹⁶ Regardless, all such experiences of cinematic objecthood can be approximately and ideally rendered in the predicate terms already enumerated: i.e. affect-laden adjectives, as well as affect-laden substantives.

Concerning adjectives, “the Empire State Building in *Empire* is *tall*” ought to speak (among interpretive options) to the building’s majestic quality. Admittedly, other viewers will find that the building’s height induces other cognate or even clustered qualities: remoteness verging on monotony. Still, within the viewing experience of cinematic texts, adjectival designations ranging from the explicitly verbal to the intuitively processed will frequently hold affective and qualitative implications.

A similar insight holds for substantives. Take the predications “Pinocchio is a *puppet*,” or, “that character-*x* is *Charles Foster Kane*.” In the case of Pinocchio, such an interpretation can potentially convey the character’s endearing quality, as well as his equally pitiable or comical lack of volition. Comparable qualifying experiences can arise from the apposition of Kane’s middle name (i.e. the signal trauma in his life is that he is, indeed, fostered). Still other interpretations are conceivable – someone might have a phobia of puppets (!), or anachronistically (and eccentrically) associate “Foster Kane” with “Forrest Gump” as incarnations of respectively ironically and sympathetically rendered American enterprise and achievement. Such constructions likewise rise above the strict operations of ratiocination. Not every name, noun, or minimally experienced entity (i.e. as translatable into adjective-stative terms) is always grist for the predication mill.¹⁷ But prospective viewers and theorists must countenance that some semblance of the above can and usually is occasioned.

1996, among others. Claims to disciplinary purity – that one’s epistemic contributions are exclusively bound to a single domain (e.g. film) – seem to me a useless handicap. The alternative, broached in the conclusion, is to articulate how the work done here can prove germane to further inquiry in film studies.

¹⁶ See van Dijk 1979, as cited by Bordwell 1985.

¹⁷ Nonetheless, the temptation to ascribe some meaning (or predication) to proper names in fictional contexts is frequently overwhelming. Even a character named “John” will be understood as conveying some approximate *effet de réel*. By contrast, in real-world contexts, proper names do not typically predicate entities (Kripke 1980) – or do so in contingent ways. For example, “John and Justin are likely to hail from very different socio-economic

Throughout, I take it as uncontroversial that cinematic objects are continuously (or discontinuously) predicated in such stative, affect-laden, and/or qualifying terms.¹⁸ More importantly, token predications of cinematic objects can be stipulated in stative, and/or qualifying terms, usually of the form “*x, y,*” where *x* is an ascribed property and *y* a tertiary quality: e.g. “the shark is *x*-lethal/*y*-terrifying.” The added caveat is that such stipulations are explicitly rendered verbally by the theorist for principally expository purpose. They remain postulated as inchoately experienced, conceptual approximations and most often preconsciously processed by sentient viewers. That they are preconscious, however, entails that they are not inaccessible to retrospective analysis or reasoned explanation – imperfectly for viewers; more thoroughly within the work of the theorist.

In this light, the task of the theorist is exceedingly difficult¹⁹ – accounting for why a given cinematic object may be predicated continuously or discontinuously – in contradistinction to the physiological immediacy and preconscious efficacy of activated predication-types and token predications during the viewing experience. The theorist must operate by a terminological sleight of hand. They must verbally explicate what may be at best inchoate or conceptually approximate feelings in the viewing experience. What the theorist calls new/old predications, the viewer (roughly) calls “something feels the same or very different about Orlok (i.e. the vampire in Murnau’s *Nosferatu*) in this scene,” albeit such that this something is tangibly felt as viewers are watching the film.

This discrepancy between terminological detail is not mere methodological fancy. Nelson Goodman’s earlier cited remarks on decrees remain apt. Recall Goodman’s principled declaration that “we favor the more ‘natural’ decree, the one best supported by an instinctive feeling of hitting the mark” (1977: 99). One knows that the apple seen as red today is a different colour from the sky observed as blue yesterday. One might stipulate the contrary (i.e. the apple seen as red today is the *same* colour as the sky observed yesterday, which I now decree must have been red). For Goodman, this vacuous stipulation is not impossible, but does come “at the

backgrounds[.]” (Smith 1995: 112) to the degree that: “proper names bear connotations [i.e. in the semiological sense] of, among other things, nationality, gender, region, and class.” (30). See more generally Smith 1995: 29-31, and 193.

¹⁸ Again, what is at stake is not so much proffering corroborating evidence as decreeing the simplest and most plausible explanation as nearest to the truth (Chomsky 1980). For a recent and contrasting view in film studies (i.e. the priority of empirical testing and corroboration), see Smith 2017.

¹⁹ David Herman makes a similar point as to how readers construct eventhood from textual phenomena, in contradistinction to how taxing it is for the theorist to intelligibly explain such constructions (Herman 2002).

exorbitant price of reconstructing our whole picture of the past.” (*ibid.*). Maintaining that the sky must have been red yesterday, while not logically inconceivable, would involve sacrificing too many inductively reliable insights for the sake of an arbitrarily eccentric proposition – a taxing effort that undermines our otherwise ingrained (i.e. physiologically and preconsciously processed) ability to efficaciously engage with the world.

The above insight from Goodman also broaches how to engage with the criticism that locally old objecthood constitutes an empty category. On the contrary, old objecthood (no less than new objecthood) can be posited as a recurring, interpretive alternative within the viewing experience of cinematic objects. Most minimally, it can serve to reiterate prior token predications of an object – usually that have been occasioned within some close, antecedent proximity within the film text (e.g. the same scene). More comprehensively, as further examples later in this chapter disclose, old objecthood allows viewers to reactivate prior token predicates of an object and experience the object on a (potentially intermittent) continuum with at least one of its prior representations. Still, at a greater level of complexity, old predication can play an integral role in sustaining a more sophisticated engagement of a film text, for example, in the discernment of cinematic techniques, as well as the construction of metaphorical readings.²⁰

Underlying all these above distinctions, one can posit that once an object has been identified (and predicated), old objecthood serves as a default mode.²¹ One ascribes to an object,

²⁰ Space prohibits me from offering a detailed theory of metaphor, although I return to the topic in this chapter and the next. The point is merely to indicate that objecthood and eventhood are also reconcilable to metaphorical engagements with film texts. The examples and analyses advanced remain consistent with the earlier, pioneering studies in literary theory and analytic philosophy that arguably set the stage for later research: respectively see Richards 1965 and Black 1962. See also Ricoeur 1975, and Goodman 1976: 68-85. More recently, in cognitivism, see Kennedy and Chiappe 2005 (which leans heavily on Lakoff/Johnson). Ellen Dissanayake attempts a cognitive theory of metaphor as part of her work in anthropology, psychobiology and aesthetics, though her insights remain speculative, and beholden, albeit without attribution, to Richards (1995: 166-175). Finally, I find Metz’s psychoanalytic theory of metaphor esoteric and underwhelming (1984: 177-371), for reasons better expressed in Whittock 2009: 85-96.

²¹ The arguments that follow in the forthcoming paragraphs (i.e. the multiple examples drawn from *Nosferatu*) will resonate with prior cognitive theories of narration in literature (Sternberg 1978, Perry 1979) and more particularly film (Bordwell 1985). This similarity invites the criticism that I have recast Bordwell’s analysis of intrinsic norms in synonymous terms. Bordwell notes how the film text can attain/establish but also transgress norms, not unlike old and new objecthood. Despite similarities, the differences between either paired terms – established/transgressed norms vs. old/new objecthood – remain instructive. Bordwell’s conception of “norms” is tied to “mode”: narrational practices that privilege the film’s syuzhet (i.e. how narrative content is conveyed) and systematically deployed techniques (see especially 1985: 149-155, but generally 1985: 29-155). Norms pertain to how narrative content may be presented, such that fabula is always subordinated to syuzhet. Even when restricting the disciplinary field to narratology, this prioritization risks skewing the analysis. Meir Sternberg makes the point that characters might change throughout the fabula, eliciting altered predications from the reader. Alternately, characters might remain the same throughout the fabula, but invite altered predications *as per* their syuzhet presentations (i.e. we see different

to at least minimally legible and moderate degrees, approximations of the same or similar properties and qualities. Such properties and qualities, i.e. token predications, are maintained, as frequently and/or as intermittently as the film text will allow, i.e. until a change in the screen phenomena favours a corrected predication. One can cite a brief example from Murnau's *Nosferatu*. After his initial representation, it is increasingly intimated about Orlok (Max Schreck) that he is a formidable and potentially omnipotent adversary. However, viewers may also recall that an initial crack in his armor is revealed when he is shown to be vulnerable and curtailed in his vaunted omnipotence. These disjunctive predications, as shall be noted below, follow from activations of respectively old and new objecthood.

Moreover, an immediate implication of positing old objecthood as a default mode is that one must expand the range of conceivable or hypothetical experiences that might fall under this predication type. As such, old objecthood can encompass more vaguely indeterminate or dimly felt responses towards cinematic objects within the viewing experience, as well as the “wait and see” approach. Such encompassing inclusiveness remains consistent with a functional approach. If the predication type new mandates some potentially articulated revision in token predication, by argumentative parity, more indiscriminate or tacit experiences can be subsumed under the converse. One can cite again the depictions of Orlok in *Nosferatu*. From his first representation in the film text, a verbal description from a secondary character, he is associated²² with “blood” and then “ghosts” – an association that is strengthened and maintained, culminating in the explicit²³ revelation that he is a vampire.²⁴

facets of a static character in different scenes). See Sternberg 1978: 90-93; 101-128. Old/new objecthood ought to account for such cases and distinctions, as well as proving applicable to non-narrative and even non-representational cinematic texts.

²² Such associations also hinge on what Noël Carroll has termed “horrific metonymy” (1990: 52). A theory of how metonymic associations operate within the brain is, as with metaphor, beyond the scope of current cognitive theory.

²³ Explicit may here require qualification. Already in the verbal medium of literature, Menakhem Perry reminds us: “*Most of the information* a reader derives from a text is not explicitly written in it; rather it is the reader himself who supplies it by the mere fact of choosing frames. [...] A comparison between that which a reader understands without any difficulty from a text and that which has explicit bases in this text may startle anyone who is unaware of the phenomenon of supplying material ‘under the aegis’ of the frames. Most of what the reader infers from the text, it will be discovered, is the reader's own gap-filling” (1979: 45). Such gap-filling is at once so elementary yet fluent that one seldom realizes, as readers/viewers, just how inferentially informed basic acts of comprehension remain.

²⁴ There is also the prospect that viewers walk into the film with the expectation that Orlok is a vampire – this interpretation correlates to what Bordwell has termed “extrinsic norms” (1985: 150-155). I have dealt briefly in part one with the relation of antecedent knowledge to the viewing experience: antecedent expectations inform a broadly sketched context within which one experiences a more isolable film text.

In the context of actual viewing experiences, such stipulated distinctions between old and new objecthood will prove highly tenuous²⁵ and ought to vary from one viewing experience to the next.²⁶ One can experience each successive intimation that “Orlok is a vampire” as new predications. Conversely, one might decree his vulnerability as on a continuum with his prior depictions. Nonetheless, any delineations between locally old and new objecthood can be reduced to a more elementary rule of thumb. This rule coheres with cognate insights developed in cognitive theories of literary comprehension. The demarcation between old and new objecthood can be recast in terms of, on the one hand, attendant and confirmed expectations (i.e. old objecthood) and, on the other hand, disconfirmed and altered/changed expectations (i.e. new objecthood).²⁷ Disconfirmed and altered are equally defined as “correction.”²⁸

²⁵ For some theoretical schools, there will be no singular moment in the film text when any decree, especially of new objecthood, is occasioned. As Perry puts the point more forcefully: “At what point exactly in the text-continuum does the repatterning [i.e. of a frame] take place? The phrase ‘a frame was replaced’ is correct, but it refers to a process rather than a single simple operation. Is the repatterning point the one where difficulties first arise for the initial frame? Is it the point where the initial one crumbles down, or is it the point where those items occur which only in retrospect appear to the reader to start justifying the new frame? The question as to the precise point in the verbal continuum where repatterning takes place cannot be answered [...]” (1979: 61) However, such vaunted indeterminacy conflates separate problems. There will be no “one size fits all” moment in a film text when every viewer constructs the same object as new, or old. Yet such constructions do take place; one seldom experiences films as undifferentiated constancy. More importantly, proximate notions such as “decrees,” “attendant expectations,” “confirmed,” or “corrected expectations” articulate the alternately incremental or disjunctive processes of constructing and revising interpretations. A theory ideally reconstructs viewing experiences to illustrate these fundamental alternatives. That there are such continuities and breaks is likely, without which we would lack any sense that our experience of a film text has progressed or changed.

²⁶ This nominalist approach puts me at variance from prior cognitive theorists. For Perry, the reader is ostensible to the text: “In speaking of the reader and his responses I do not mean the subjective reactions of any actual reader. I am referring to a “maximal” concretization of the text that can be justified from the text itself [...]. What I term as the reader is therefore a metonymic characterization of the text.” (1979: 43). However, pages later, Perry reiterates the priority of the reading process over any prescribed reading of a text: “The principles I have enumerated are principles whereby one can justify the comprehension of a text [...]. Misunderstandings by specific readers stem from unskilled application of these principles, but not from failure to use them.” (1979: 46). He quotes a prior theorist: “all readings, ‘right’ or ‘wrong,’ even ‘misunderstandings,’ as well as ‘partial’ readings, employ similar techniques.” (Benjamin Hrushovski, as cited in Perry 1979: 46 and 359).

²⁷ Such a distinction would seem to annul the prospect of uncertainty or competing expectations, but this need not be the case. In the case of uncertainty, the question becomes whether a later predication (or identification) has been at least tacitly anticipated or not. Viewers watching the opening of *Fearless Vampire Killers* probably will not anticipate the colours and movements to reveal themselves to be the moon, even as these phenomena are meant to represent “something.” The moon becomes a newly identified object: the move from “something/anything” to “moon” counts as a correction (needless-to-say, the same would not hold for viewers successfully anticipating that the phenomena depict the moon). With competing expectations, these can be reduced to a single predication: either one favours one expectation or anticipates that none of the expectations will be resolved. For instance: “we will never learn what Rosebud even *is* [i.e. *de re*, not *de dicto*]!”; “we will learn what Rosebud is, but not what it really signifies...”; “maybe we will learn what Rosebud is and signifies, or maybe we won’t...” Viewers by the film’s end have had such anticipations confirmed or corroborated, even in the case of equivocating ambiguity (i.e. by the proximate laws of non-contradiction and the excluded middle, either Welles’s film *is* ambiguous or it *isn’t!*). Such principles hold for extreme variants of ambiguity in the cinema (e.g. *Meshes of the Afternoon*, 1943; *L’année dernière à Marienbad*, 1961, etc.). Perry 1979 and van Dijk 1979 deal with similar quandaries in literature.

Additionally, token predications that are reactivated continuously (even if only intermittently) need not entail exact duplication²⁹ – of either semantic content or other affect-laden experiences. Instead, they can be likened to what semantic theorists have posited as “clusters.”³⁰ As developed in linguistics and later invoked in cognitivism, a cluster can be thought of as a relation between nominally discrete concepts, lexical items or even predicates, that function to render coherent said concepts, items and predicates. Clustered predicates share “semantic overlap and a low degree of implicit contrastiveness.” (Bordwell 1989a: 115).³¹ Beyond nuances and subtle distinctions between individual predicates, a cluster allows one to posit relations of transitivity³² that encompass these nuances and distinctions.

Consider again the initial representations of Orlok in *Nosferatu*. One can pass from verbal mentions of “blood,” “ghosts,” “werewolf,” among other evoked content. There are discernibly finite differentiations of meaning that can be felt between this and other represented content. Yet within the viewing experience, they lend themselves to clustered relations under the token predication “ominous, mysterious, potentially vampiric.” Further decrees of this token predication function as old objecthood. Without becoming identical or isomorphic equivalents, these token predications foster the increasing expectation that Orlok will prove to be a vampire – and an ominous and enigmatic one.

²⁸ See also Meir Sternberg’s analysis of “surprise” as one of three major modes of narrative interest (Sternberg 1978). Unfortunately, Sternberg does not specify whether he means “surprise” *as per* its ordinary locution, or as an ideal term. If it is intended as an ideal term, then the stipulation is never made: he posits this nomenclature *ipso facto* without further elucidation. If it is understood ordinarily, then its usage is no less equivocal. Responses to the unpredictable, or the falsely predicted, come in different names and intensities, from surprise to shock, to more lukewarm or mitigated experiences of disconfirmation. Arraigning all these affects under the rubric of “surprise,” to say nothing of “interest,” becomes misleading, if not erroneous. The preferred alternative is to regard surprise in terms of sufficient/necessary conditions: it suffices to occasion correction or revised interpretations but is not imperative.

²⁹ See also Bordwell in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 3-84.

³⁰ See Cruse 1986, especially as cited by Bordwell 1989a.

³¹ In Bordwell’s analysis, drawing from Cruse, clusters can further be distinguished from doublets. Either clusters or doublets can be organized within a series of a hierarchy. See Bordwell 1989a: 115-126. I limit myself to (partly) relying on clusters for token predicates functioning as old. I also theorize contrast (new objecthood instead of doublets), as well as structure or organization (continuity/discontinuity instead of series and hierarchy) differently.

³² The transitivity operating in such interpretations is: “Orlok is ominous, and therefore mysterious,” “he is mysterious and therefore potentially vampiric,” “he is potentially vampiric and therefore a vampire,” all of which reduce to “Orlok is ominous and therefore a vampire.” This logic has little currency in the real world – not everything that is ominous mandates vampirism. But interpretive protocols in the viewing experience of film texts are frequently more polyvalent than logic treated as a branch of mathematics allows. This view accords with David Lewis’s emphasis on *variably* strict over *strict* conditionals in counterfactual reasoning (1973: 4-19). Lewis also linked his work on counterfactuals to theories of fiction. 1983: 261-280.

As a corollary, the explicit indication that Orlok is a vampire can also be construed as old objecthood. Such a predication fulfills antecedent expectations throughout the viewing experience. By contrast, the brief predication of Orlok as susceptible to Ellen's (Greta Schröder) influence can be experienced as disjunctive with his representation as an ominous and potentially omnipotent figure. This reversed predication becomes a new predication of Orlok. At the same time, following its construction at this corrective juncture in the film text, this "new" predication (i.e. "Orlok is vulnerable/susceptible to Ellen") is established and becomes one of many, attendant "old" predications. These points shall be more clearly developed. However, for now see diagram ix:

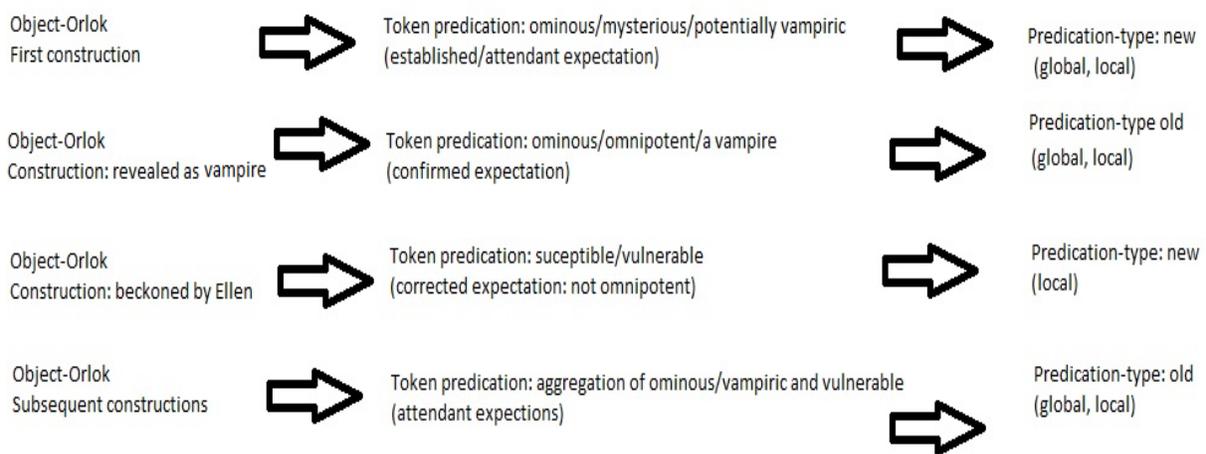


Diagram ix: Old/new objecthood: Nosferatu

One can turn to select representations of Orlok throughout the film's opening. These examples will run from his initial evocation, via dialogue, to his apparently mystical or telepathic encounter with Ellen. By no means can they exhaust any viewing experience, and neither must they stand as definitive, i.e. a preferred interpretation of the film. Due to their illustrative status, they will have to be understood as contingent. This contingency obliges that one must occasionally contemplate alternative and even antithetical interpretive contexts. Nonetheless, the theoretical priority throughout is to adequately explain the interpretive alternatives underwriting the viewing experience of cinematic objecthood.

One can begin with the initial representation of Orlok in the film. Prior to Orlok's first visual representation, he is evoked at least twice throughout the dialogue, as well as by other visual means. Orlok is recommended by name to Hutter as a prospective client at the real estate

agency. Hutter's employer Knock (Alexander Granach), whom we later learn is insane and under Orlok's spell, lets slip that the transaction might cost Hutter "*ein wenig Blut/a little blood.*" The line occasions that the viewer predicates Orlok as potentially ominous, and even vampiric. Even if it is not yet explicitly confirmed (i.e. within the film text) that Orlok is a vampire, it is difficult, within the context of this line, to take Knock's description in mere jest. A more likely interpretation is that some harm will come to Hutter.

This ominousness ascribed to Orlok is evoked alongside his mysteriousness. While Orlok is evoked via dialogue, he is not, at this point, present on-screen. Viewers can only wonder as to his demeanor, or even his participation in subsequent events. This wondering initiates a "wait and see" attitude. This "wait and see" attitude constitutes an attendant expectation. Orlok will be predicated "old," while awaiting future confirmation (he is still predicated old) or disconfirmation (he is momentarily predicated new). Such hypothetical "old" or "new" predications are functions of continuous or corrected token predications.

This "wait and see" attitude towards Orlok is again decreed while Hutter and Knock continue their exchange. After Knock first mentions Orlok to Hutter, he then references Orlok's homeland as "*das Land der Gespenster/the land of Ghosts.*" By at least one plausible interpretation, Orlok can be associated metonymically with his purported homeland. Orlok too is intimated to be ghostly, or threatening and unfathomable. Such a token predication can be experienced on a continuum with the earlier mention of "*Blut/blood.*" The intimation that Orlok might be a ghost complements and strengthens the earlier decree that he is liable to draw Hutter's blood.

Admittedly, this metonymy might warrant a correction in predication – one has appreciably shifted from "blood" to "ghosts" (i.e. Orlok is not just a murderer, but also supernatural). For such a decree to hold, viewers would need to construe the first mention of "blood" as strictly excluding any intimation of the occult. In this interpretation, Orlok cannot be the least bit supernatural. For "ghosts" to then strike a discordant note, i.e. a favour a correction, the prior decree of Orlok (e.g. "he is a mortal murderer") would have to be corrected by the metonymic association with his homeland (e.g. "no, he's not mortal; in fact, he's a ghost, or commensurately monstrous/supernatural").

Such a rapid-fire correction should strike the theorist (or anyone) as not only aleatory, but perversely atypical.³³ The prospective viewer would have to mandatorily associate any mention of “ghosts” in a film with supernatural content, all the while having remained oblivious to the intimation that Orlok might be vampiric (i.e. the implication that he might draw blood because he is a vampire *is simply beyond the interpretive spectrum*). The more forthcoming interpretation remains that one predicates “blood/ghosts” conjunctively, with the first predication (“blood”) underwriting the newly made decree of Orlok, i.e. “he is ominous/mysterious, and potentially vampiric.” The second predication (“ghosts”) now reinforces and supplements this decree.

After, the successive representations of Orlok can be readily predicated in terms of this initial decree (i.e. “ominous, mysterious, potentially vampiric”). This predication is reiterated such that one interprets the screen phenomena for further confirmation of Orlok’s enigmatic, threatening and supernatural qualities. A second verbal mention of “Orlok,” this time by Hutter as he stops at a tavern-inn on the way to the castle, incites startled and worrisome reactions from the surrounding customers and barman. The latter warns Hutter against travelling at night, for fear of a prowling werewolf. After this exchange, further images represent the said nocturnal beast roaming outside. See figure 14:



Figure 14: Nosferatu (1922), dir. F.W. Murnau

These above images and sounds do not exactly replicate, in terms of audio-visual, much less narrative or semantic content, the exact conversation between Hutter and Knock. Rather, as with the move from blood to ghosts, tangible increments in information can be interpreted on a

³³ I mean Goodman’s sense of perverse decrees (1977: 97-99).

continuum, or as clustered, with the initially decreed predication (i.e. “ominous, mysterious, potentially vampiric”). The startled response of the inn-dwellers telegraphs the fear provoked by Orlok. The mention of the werewolf – followed by a visual representation by what ought to be taken as a werewolf – reiterates the metonymic representation of Orlok as being from “*das Land der Gespenster*.” Finally, the tight-lipped concision of the exchange – i.e. nobody yet confirms that Orlok is a vampire – helps retain the latter’s secretive qualities.

Such clustered token predications clarify the viewing experience of Orlok in these representations as an old object (i.e. in terms of predication-type). An approximate spectrum of viewing experiences will range from the more intensely felt to the more indeterminate. Nonetheless, a continuity of at least intermittently felt experiences will favour the same or conjunctive token predications. At the more intense, and perhaps less likely, end of the spectrum, viewers might decree that Orlok is not only ominous, but indeed terrifies them (i.e. as viewers). All the same, this decree reiterates the prior predications of Orlok as ominous, vampiric and even mysterious.³⁴

These attendant expectations cohere with the more transparently evident predication that Orlok is a vampire. By this point, Hutter has chanced upon the allegation that vampires drain their victim’s blood. He has also awoken from sleep in Orlok’s castle with his neck punctured. These intimations help precipitate his realization that Orlok is one such creature: a reiteration and confirmation of Hutter’s insight includes images of Orlok standing outside his room, with a conspicuously placed tooth in his mouth. See figure 15:

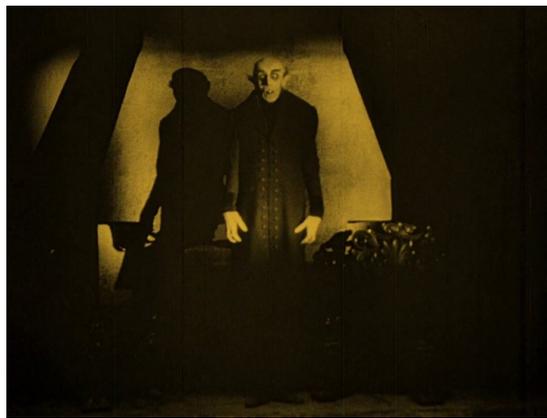


Figure 15: Nosferatu

³⁴ By contrast, viewers may decree a wait and see attitude: Orlok is likely to be ominous, even if he does not yet *feel* ominous to the viewer. The attendant expectation that a previous decree will be confirmed counts as old objecthood.

Among interpretations that the screen phenomena can occasion, one favoured predication is as follows: the cinematic object recurrently named Orlok is also a vampire. This confirmation of a prior expectation would seem to annul prior token predications that Orlok is equally mysterious. This apparent cancelation of prior predications (i.e. mysterious, potentially vampiric) by a current predication (i.e. explicitly vampiric) would seem to mobilize correction. Such a cancellation in turn invites some theoretical uncertainty as to just how “Orlok is a terrifying, ominous vampire” can function as the predication-type old.

While the above interpretation is not inconceivable, one can invoke Goodman’s discussion of conflicting decrees. What Goodman terms “discordant” decrees invite “the exorbitant price of reconstructing our whole picture of the past.” (1977: 99). The move from “potentially” to “actually” vampiric need not undermine our construction of Orlok. For “Orlok is a vampire” to hold as a token predication functioning as new, one’s viewing experience would have to mirror that of Hutter: i.e. *his* predication of Orlok was that his client was merely mortal. Within the viewing experience, the move from anticipated to confirmed expectations stands as continuous and conjunctive (i.e. the predication type remains old).

By contrast, consider when Orlok is beckoned away³⁵ from his attack on Hutter by Ellen’s transmitted calls and gestures. Recall that Orlok’s silhouette has been shown to be looming over Hutter. At this point, Ellen, miles away from Orlok and her fiancé Hutter, sits up in her bed, extends her arms and calls out the latter’s name. Orlok’s silhouette recedes, after which Orlok stands up and turns to look in the opposite direction, i.e. implicitly in Ellen’s direction. Subsequent images show Ellen again gesturing and calling, as Orlok turns and motions rightward, as if in response to Ellen’s exclamations. See figures 16a-b:

³⁵ This is a justly famous edited sequence in the film. See also Perez 1998: 130-134.



Figures 16a-b: Nosferatu

Again, one forthcoming predication is that Orlok is susceptible to Ellen’s influence, enough that she can sway him. Orlok is perhaps no less vampiric, but he can now be predicated by viewers as having an unexpected liability. Regardless of how viewers are affected by this new predication, it occasions a decreed correction as to how Orlok has been previously predicated. He is no longer felt to be so foreboding, due to his inability to overcome Ellen’s influence. Instead, he is newly predicated in a way that might translate as, “weakened” or “vulnerable.” This stated interpretation meets the criterion of a locally, new object – in ways that the above interpretation of Orlok’s confirmed vampiric nature need not.

The above analysis attempts to advance the theoretical viability of old/new objecthood, as it plays a fundamental role to the viewing experience. It has been confined to uncontroversial, if not trivial, narratological accounts of the so-called “viewer’s activity.” What is termed old/new objecthood remains consistent with acceptably entrenched knowledge, at least in cognitivism. Such narrative theory has been augmented with appeals to analytic philosophy – i.e. Goodman’s decrees – to more acutely explicate how one reaches a degree of epistemic assurance in identifying and predicating screen phenomena. This same analysis has also made room for affect broadly understood, or how one ascribes qualitative predicates to cinematic objects. Nonetheless, the focus on narrative comprehension has insinuated that old/new objecthood are exclusively narratological concepts. This view ought to be deemed as too limiting in scope within a universal theory of the viewing experience.

Above and beyond narrative telos, any number of details can catch the viewer’s attention, especially across repeated experiences of the same text. One could even hypothesize a viewing

experience in which every macro placed object is predicated by the type new.³⁶ Such consistently heightened awareness would no doubt feel exhausting, if not manic. Nonetheless, across the range of any screen phenomena, viewers will be wont to intuitively or spontaneously construct isolable and predicable details. These isolable and predicable details can then either be placed on a continuum of clustered token predications, or newly identified and/or newly predicated. One can cite examples of either instance immediately below.

As Orlok approaches Hutter's doorway viewers can also macro place the gaseous-like light cast on Orlok. See figure 17:



Figure 17: *Nosferatu*

Here, the light would be constructed as a new object, identified as “light.” Its predicated gaseous qualities invite affect-laden terms: e.g. “peculiar” or “transfixing.” Attending to narrative contexts, the temptation is to reidentify Orlok and predicate him in relation to the light. This

³⁶ Goodman once noted: “The aesthetic ‘attitude’ is restless, searching, testing – is less attitude than action: creation and re-creation.” (1976: 242). Kristin Thompson quotes approvingly from this passage, to bolster her pervasive notion of de-familiarization (1988: 10). By Thompson’s avowal, this emphasis on constant renewal and innovation echoes the doctrine, throughout Viktor Shklovsky, that all literary and aesthetic effects are to be defined as *ostranenie* – perpetually new predications of reidentified objects (Shklovsky 1990: 1-14). Such a view is appealing to modernist sensibilities, but it is also psychologically implausible. Shklovsky advances: “how thoroughly alien is generalization to art. How much closer it is instead to ‘particularization.’” (1990: 22). Yet on that very page, he devises several informing devices whereby artistic content becomes reiterative: e.g. repetition, tautology, parallelism (1990: 22-29). Changes in predication only make sense in contradistinction to antecedent (and subsequent) constancies (see again Chomsky 1999, as well as Eliot 1919a and 1919b). Ironically, it is one of Shklovsky’s closer disciples (in film studies) who notes “*outside* [a] reigning norm, all is not sheer heterogeneity” (Bordwell 1985: 150), and further still: “Before there are auteurs, there are constraints; before there are deviations, there are norms.” (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 4). Elsewhere, I have challenged the view that all artistic effects can be encompassed under rubrics such as “defamiliarization” or “transfiguration” (Lapointe 2016b).

maneuver is readily accomplished: Orlok is the one being lit. The light can be taken as representing his supernatural and ominous qualities. Token predications such as “peculiar” or “transfixing,” insofar as they predicate Orlok in conjunctive and/or clustered terms, would necessarily function as old.

Alternately, viewers can opt to focus on the light as a stray detail. Orlok would be micro placed, and viewers demarcate the light as a separately identified entity. The light can remain “peculiar” and “transfixing,” albeit without any bearing on Orlok. Similar activations of the identification and predication schemas might further define the light as a newly individuated instance of cinematic technique.³⁷ Orlok would remain micro placed, such that one might instead take the light as an instance of cinematic virtuosity.³⁸

Consider further examples. Orlok’s first visual depiction can be taken as occasioning token predications that function as old. Orlok emerges from a blackened background and is clothed in black, such that both usages of the colour bear nocturnal associations. Likewise, Orlok’s physical air and demeanour are distinctive. He takes short, quick nimble steps. He also clutches his hands to his chest and has an elongated body frame and thin constitution. One effect is that he looks at once rigid, yet mobile, as well as not fully a person, yet somehow animate.³⁹ One informing feature of the viewing experience is that Orlok is still predicated on a continuum with “ominous, mysterious, potentially vampiric.”

³⁷ Identifying a cinematic technique as a token object coincides with Bordwell’s speculation that there are “stylistic schemata” (1985: 36). Yet Bordwell’s use of Reid Hastie’s schemata-types is not germane. Stylistic schemata for Bordwell are posited as prototypes. They serve as frames to comprehension, which says little as to their construction within relations of continuity or correction. Bordwell might appeal to intrinsic/extrinsic norms. Yet this move – from “stylistic schemata” to “prototypes” to “norms” – creates convolutions in terminology that are absorbed in the current thesis: objects, including techniques, but also vampires and any other object, can be predicated old or new. The current approach also allows for affect-laden token predicates, which are downplayed in if not excluded from Bordwell’s emphasis on ratiocination.

³⁸ Reading the object “light” as an artistic flourish recalls Boris Tomashevsky’s notion of artistic motivation, as paraphrased by Bordwell. Bordwell singles out the identificatory process whereby “a component may be justified by its power to call attention to the system within which it operates.” (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 21). Yet he equivocates as to just how this “power” may register for the viewer. Minimally, the so-called “laying bare of the device” (1985: 22) can “make palpable the conventionality of art.” (1985: 21). That much ought to go without saying and need not entail any requisite *ostranenie* (i.e. a central concern for Tomashevsky). More phenomenologically, Bordwell adds that artistic motivation can register “as an appealing or shocking or neutral element.” (Bordwell 1985: 36). But since *any* aspect of a film might prove appealing, or shocking, or neutral, Bordwell is left with little insight as to how artistic motivation is to be predicated. Finally, Bordwell alters parts of Tomashevsky’s original definitions, rendering them more comprehensive and generically applicable, but also far less singular and insightful. See Tomachevski 1965: 282-292; Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 19-23.

³⁹ The implied paradoxes or anomalies in this depiction equally accord with Carroll’s characterization of horror fiction as representing putatively unnatural or even so-called “impossible” creatures (Carroll 1990, especially 1990: 34).

In the above analysis, one successively macro places the different image content – the background, the architecture, and Orlok’s body language – to cumulatively predicate Orlok by the predication-type old. By contrast, viewers studying Schreck’s performance might macro place only Orlok’s *body*, or his *physique*. They then predicate this object (i.e. body, physique) in disjunctive and corrective terms. His nimble walk and thin constitution now signal that he is effete, if not effeminate.⁴⁰ None of these token predications are readily taken as confirming the threatening and supernatural qualities previously ascribed to Orlok. Instead, one reconstructs one’s past picture of Orlok to accommodate these discordant decrees. Here, Schreck/Orlok activates the predication-type new.

The current analysis must also countenance unintended responses.⁴¹ For example, not every viewer will find *Nosferatu* scary – much less “a classic.” Select moments may elicit smirks or derision.⁴² Take viewers who are adjusted to more hyperbolic depictions of phantasmagoria. The mere sight of a striped hyena, representing a werewolf, will seem comparatively diminutive⁴³ and risible – even allowing that this object is metonymically identified with Orlok. One cannot predicate this object, “werewolf/Orlok,” on a continuum with prior predications of Orlok, e.g. as “ominous, mysterious, potentially vampiric.” The “wait and see” attitude is corrected, as expectations of subsequent horror are disconfirmed. One newly identifies and predicates the wolf – and by metonymic association, Orlok – as “risible.” Even if this token predication proves intermittently activated, any further ridicule by which one predicates Orlok now functions as “old.”

Finally, cinematic techniques, irrespective of their purported content, can figure as constructed objects. Take an example from *Nosferatu*. Recall that when Hutter travels by stagecoach to Orlok’s castle, the film briefly switches to a negative. By one interpretive context,

⁴⁰ Such an interpretation mobilizes gender and sexual politics (see also Wood 1979). The point is not to advance this interpretation as novel, but to illustrate that it functions within the current system.

⁴¹ By contrast, general models of the viewing experience posit such responses beyond their explanatory scope (Carroll 1990, Smith 2003, Plantinga 2009).

⁴² Unintended responses, including derision, remains a neglected topic within the AT (see above note) – although humour has been addressed (Eitzen 1997). One indication that non-congruent responses to horror fiction ought to warrant further study can be gleaned when this very topic is treated in a non-cognitivist, film studies perspective. Bourdieu disciple Laurent Jullier cites respective screenings of *The Exorcist* which elicited laughter (2012: 23-24). He barely mentions that in either case the humour functioned differently: in one case, as genuine derision; in the other case, as a pressure release for a tense audience. That laughter can function differently is a point made by Eitzen (1997: 94-95). This further warrants an ideal language, whereby ordinary expressions – i.e. “it’s ridiculous,” “we laughed” – are enfolded within an abstract yet discriminating terminology.

⁴³ The photographic reproduction of a wolf is an example of why Bazin championed Murnau as a realist (1958: 134-136), notwithstanding the equally salient use of tinting from which the image derives its power.

the inversion of darker and lighter colour gradients coheres with the metonymic association between Orlok and the “land of ghosts.” Viewers might notice the use of the technique, albeit in conjunction with the content. One predicates the inverted light-dark gradients as “ominous, supernatural,” in further metonymic relation to Orlok. He remains predicated by the type “old.”

Inversely, one might attend to the negative image as a technique, independently of any content (narrational or otherwise). “Image” is identified as an object and predicated “negative.” This predication can be augmented with continuous or clustered affect-laden predicates, e.g. “surprising,” or “unusual.” From the standpoint of predication types, the constructed object “negative image” would register within the viewing experience as new. Viewers might thereafter maintain their focus on the object “negative image” for the entirety of its duration. Alternately, they will more plausibly shift focus to the image content, which now becomes macro placed, only to thereafter return their attention reiteratively to “negative image” (i.e. it is reidentified and potentially predicated old).

The prior analysis has outlined how identification, reidentification, and differently functioning token predications all inform constructions of cinematic objecthood as old or new. Nonetheless, the examples have been confined to a single narrative film. This restriction does not adequately confirm how widely yet consistently cinematic objecthood is predicated by the types new and old across a wider range of texts. To more appraise how constructions of old and new cinematic objecthood are consistently recurring operations across all film texts, it is necessary now to consider each predication type separately. We shall do so in two separate subsections, with what ought to be a suitably eclectic selection of film texts.

New Objecthood

As already indicated, an object functions as new if it is a newly identified object, or if it is a previously identified (i.e. reidentified) object, albeit predicated in corrected (token) terms. In the former case (i.e. newly identified), it is globally new, such that it is newly identified and newly predicated at the same time. In the latter case (i.e. corrected token terms), it is locally new, such that it is reidentified, but predicated differently. In the analysis below, we shall start with global and move to local. Some additional and anticipatory remarks on old objecthood shall also prove unavoidable for contextual clarification.

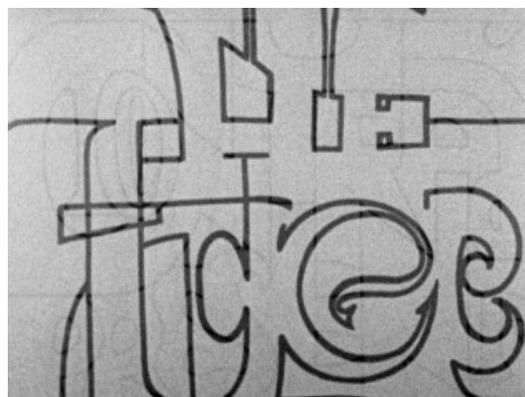
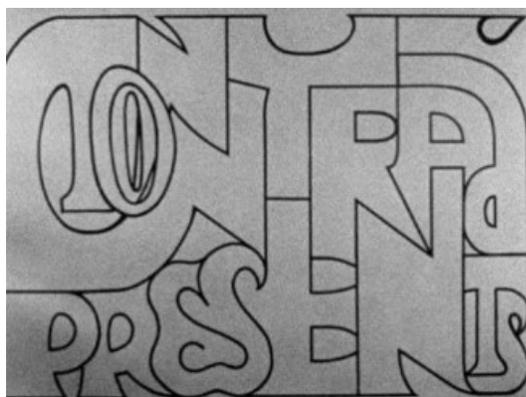
Globally new identification can be occasioned in the opening of a film. Consider the first purported image from *Jaws*: the tracking shot along the ocean floor. Recall that technically *Jaws* begins with the Universal Pictures logo (i.e. the film's production and distribution company), followed by the start of the opening credits (e.g. the headlined stars) over black. On the soundtrack, one hears John Williams's reputed two-note score, as well as, at a lower volume, vaguely aquatic ambient noises. These minimally convey that the artefact is a Hollywood-produced film, whose content incorporates an aquatic setting, which is in turn predicated by an ominous tone (i.e. the Williams score).

None of these antecedents foreshadow the transition to the representation of the shark. Visually, the new identification requires at least two interpretive changes. Firstly, one must move from identifying black to the identification of the ocean floor. This signifies a far more radical discontinuity than the mere description "cut from black to the ocean floor" would suggest. This transition seems like a prematurely terminated credit sequence. Viewers must interrupt one process of identification (black = preliminary or antecedent information as to the film and its content) to construct a predominantly new identification (flora/fauna/sand/water = ocean floor). This change then occasions a second identification: the already outlined construction of the shark, from the ocean floor. The shark becomes the newly identified object.

The soundtrack equally informs the new identification of the shark. The sparse use of sounds preceding the image of the ocean are consistent with the restricted visual content. Just as one sees only black and credits, the music and other sounds remain faint and dimly recognizable. With the new identifications of the ocean floor/shark, both the volume and tempo of the music rise. The soundtrack participates in the identification of new objecthood – i.e. the shark – following what can be taken as either a non-sequitur, or tangentially related content (i.e. dimly heard noises that sound vaguely aquatic, intermittently played musical notes).

A comparative process of newly identified objecthood is to be found in *The Flicker*. As with *Jaws*, there is an abrupt transition near the start of the film between its credits and its beginning proper, i.e. the first audio-visual content, independently of the credits. This transition requires constructing newly identified objects from screen phenomena. One can appraise the film's discontinuities by considering select passages in detail – again in terms of globally new cinematic objecthood.

The Flicker's credits are composed of a written warning, followed by two cards indicating the title and the author. The title sequence raises several interpretive challenges. In terms of object identification, either of the credit intertitles are only vaguely legible. The letters are at once massive yet compressed, with its shapes and outlines verging on abstraction. In "Tony Conrad presents," the "p" is partly superimposed over the "r," while the "e" merges into the "s," and neither the "n" nor the "t" are proportionately aligned. The same lines do double duty for nominally two separate letters at once. The "T" and the "C" for "Tony Conrad" are constructed from roughly the same screen phenomena. An identically identified "o" and "n" serve the corresponding letters in the filmmaker's respective given and surnames (i.e. *Tony Conrad*). These same identificatory impediments are compounded by the title card (i.e. "The Flicker"). The identification of the "F" proves indeterminate. Additional shapes and lines hover above and around the title.⁴⁴ See figures 18a-b:



Figures 18a-b: *The Flicker* (1965), dir. Tony Conrad

One also faces uncertainty in predicating the objects within a token capacity. The cryptic manner of the letters and words signal a playful quality, not unlike the scrawl of a child learning to write (i.e. unconcerned with calligraphic, or even typographic, consistency and elegance). This playfulness is at odds with the implied seriousness and mental vexation of constructing coherent and meaningful semantic intent from an avant-garde artefact. Such ambiguous predication is

⁴⁴ A series of jump cuts eventually widens the framing of the letters such that the whole title becomes visible, but only after this initial ambiguity. Also, the medical warning refers to the title of the film: this indication and other prior knowledge informing the viewer's experience (e.g. if, upon a screening of Conrad's film at the Anthology Film Archive, they've checked the program notes!) no doubt will favour the decree that the otherwise ambiguous lettering does represent the film's title.

reinforced by the opening proviso – that *The Flicker* may cause epileptic seizures, such that a doctor ought to be present at every screening (!) – which at least partly cannot be taken in earnest.⁴⁵ These images are scored to an approximately four-minute Charleston-style melody, whose antiquated quality (i.e. jazz music dated from the 1920s, and therefore long-superseded by later developments in the musical genre) is unusual, even ironic, in an experimental film, circa 1965.

This process of identifying and predicating objecthood must thereafter start afresh as the title fades into a white screen and the music comes to an end. There is then a cut to a grey screen, accompanied by a cranking noise. Viewers face select interpretive alternatives, a few of which will be delineated.

They may construct “grey screen” and “cranking noise” as two separately identifiable objects, alternately macro placing one or the other. For instance, they attend to the visual phenomena and likewise newly predicate it as “surprising” and “unpleasant.” Alternately and/or subsequently they might macro place “noise,” even constructing an off-screen entity. Thus, the noise is decreed to be emitting from an unseen object, such as “machine” or even “Tony Conrad’s camera.” Regardless, the forthcoming token predications is likewise, as with “grey screen,” “surprising” and “unpleasant.” The viewer will then alternate between macro placing “grey screen” and “cranking/mechanical noise,” the ease and fluidity in these transitions augmented by the overlapping token predicates (i.e. “surprising,” “unpleasant”) for either object.

Further still, the overlapping token predicates point to another decree. Viewers might take “grey screen” and “noise” as equally overlapping parts of the same object, however generically or even artefactually constructed.⁴⁶ In terms of a generically constructed object, viewers might intuit that the images and sounds are parts of a nominally unidentifiable whole: one can designate it “object-x.” Even in the absence of more restrictive individuation, the screen

⁴⁵ Scott MacDonald notes: “In our litigation-happy society, few programmers would be willing to take the chance of presenting *The Flicker*, even though, to my knowledge, no one has ever been injured by viewing the film.” (2006: 56).

⁴⁶ The significance of invoking both artefactual and diegetic (or content-based) perspectives in an interpretive theory of either film or fiction is well advanced in Currie 2010 – a briefer essay (Currie 1999) also theorizes the role of emotion to alternately artefactual and diegetic perspectives (e.g. one can feel aghast by the finale of *Oedipus Rex*, such that “aghast” functions as a diegetic emotion, but also satisfied as this is felt to be the only way for the story to end, whereby “satisfied” is an artefactual emotion). Currie’s analysis recalls aspects of Hume’s aesthetic theory and can be augmented with an appeal to Elster’s notion of second-order or meta-emotions (Elster 1999), whereby the experience of one affect generates a reflective response: one feels aghast at Oedipus’s plight, and admiring of Sophocles’s skill at eliciting said feelings from us. I address artefactual constructions briefly in the paragraphs below and return to this topic more fully in chapter six.

phenomena and token predications favour such a uniform construction. The grey screen and noise appear in the film simultaneously, intimating that they share some common source or determinant. Between their simultaneous appearance and the overlapping token predicates – they are both surprising and unpleasant – it is but a short step to decree that they are parts of the same macro-composed entity.

Additional decrees are yet possible – including, as noted, the construction of an artefactual object. Here, just as “noise” might have been constructed as “Tony Conrad’s (off-screen) camera,” the forthcoming object would simply be the film, *per se*. The entities “screen,” “noise” and like phenomena become parts of the object, “Tony Conrad’s film,” or “the movie called *The Flicker*.” Regardless, the film is now predicated differently – again as unpleasant and surprising – in contradistinction to the playful and even ludic opening credits. Subsequent phenomena – the black card, which alternates with the grey; variations in the grey-black alternations, as well as on the soundtrack – are then decreed to be aggregated parts of the same artefactually identified object, i.e. “Conrad’s film.”

The above analysis from *Jaws* and *The Flicker* has attended principally to new objecthood identified from the first image of a film. Alternately, one can have newly identified objects once the film is already underway. Examples cited from *News from Home* in the previous chapter – i.e. the representation of the mother’s voice – have addressed this. Below, I expand upon this analysis and offer a separate instance, the film’s final images of Lower Manhattan, taken from the sea.

News begins with intermittently heard traffic over a modestly designed credit sequence. The first images contain sparsely populated streets, with minimal traffic and little to no pedestrians. It is only after approximately three minutes into the film that Chantal’s mother’s voice is introduced on the soundtrack – which also reveals that Chantal is in New York. At this point, at least three conceivably distinguishable objects can be constructed, all arising from the mother’s voice. Firstly, one can take the sound of the voice on its own, as new perceptual phenomena (i.e. separate in kind from the images and street noises), irrespective of any content. We identify sounds – verbal language – regardless of any meaning that can be ascribed to the verbal language. Secondly, one can interpret the voice with respect to its ostensible source: Chantal’s mother (hereafter Mother) is communicating with her daughter. Thirdly, one can identify Mother’s letters, as these are what are being read on the soundtrack.

These considerations lead to a further object: Chantal, who is mentioned in the letter. In this interpretation, *News from Home* has only two macro placed objects, as newly identified from the mother's voice: i.e. Mother and Chantal. The images of New York cease to be cityscapes at the level of macro placement. Instead, these cityscapes become representations of Chantal, as macro placed object, as she travels throughout the city. Much like the shark's navigations in *Jaws*, the literal on-screen content is relegated to micro placement, and is ostensible to the newly identified, albeit visually absent, macro placed object.

Alternately, the film closes with a near ten-minute shot, which was taken from the Staten Island Ferry as it was leaving Lower Manhattan.⁴⁷ See figure 19:



Figure 19: News from Home

As the camera distances itself from the city, newly identifiable objects become available. There is the presence of water, heard on the soundtrack and then seen on the image-track, which signals the ocean or the sea. There is also a row of buildings, including the World Trade Center.⁴⁸ These edifices have occasionally been glimpsed in the background previously in the film. Yet these images now represent the object or objects “financial district” and “adjoining waters” such that they can be favourably macro placed for the first time.

More importantly, these objects “financial district” and “adjoining waters” can be experienced as favouring disjunctive token predications. On the soundtrack, there is little noise

⁴⁷ This is confirmed by the filmmaker (Anderson 2010), although it is apparent to anyone familiar with the locations.

⁴⁸ I have elsewhere speculated how such an image might register post-9/11: Lapointe 2014b.

other than the gushing of water and the cries of the seagulls.⁴⁹ One interpretation is that this area is void of human activity. This impression is also conveyed by the image track, as there is no visual indication that the edifices share any occupancy. Instead, they are uniformly coloured, lending them a pallid air. They are also under a clouded skyline, intimating ethereal or at least physically fragile qualities. The token predication that accompanies such token object construction is that this part of New York – or potentially the whole city – is lifeless and haunting.

Indeed, it is possible to reidentify objects in these screen phenomena, albeit such that they are locally new: i.e. if one constructs the object not as “financial district,” but more broadly “New York.” In the past images and sounds, the film conveyed at least some human activity. Even when the images are near vacant, there is usually some minimal presence that can be observed or inferred. If nothing else, one implication is that the images of New York preceding the ending imply Chantal’s inhabitation of the city – a *de facto* human animacy within New York that the finale all but relinquishes (i.e. as she is plausibly exiting the city).

By contrast, in the closing images “New York” or “financial district” can be predicated “lifeless/haunting.” The latter token predication functions disjunctively as relative to “active/animate” or even, “minimally inhabited.” The interpretation might translate as, “before, New York (in the film) had shown at least some signs of life, but now it is dead.” Insofar as “lifeless/haunting” corrects “active/animate,” then the concluding predication becomes new. This decree is only strengthened by the interpretation that the city is now empty of all people, including the previously sojourning Chantal.

Additionally, constructions of new objecthood can be occasioned among seemingly incidental screen phenomena. One image includes a deli chef at work shot from outside at night, such that the exterior blacks contrast the lighted interiors. See figure 20:

⁴⁹ In a provocative interpretation, Akerman herself has contended that the ending can be likened to the finale of *The Birds* (1963), with the seagulls now ready to take over a deserted city (Anderson 2010). Whether such an association was transparent to Akerman as she was making the film is less certain: she seems to have arrived at this reading reflecting upon her own work several decades later.



Figure 20: News from Home

More than once, he unwittingly places himself such that his face is under a red light reflected on the outside surface of the window. Viewers can firstly macro place the red light as a cinematic object. They can secondly and equally newly predicate the deli chef, if only that his face and overall look, temporarily constructed via superimposed red, is perhaps strange, humorous or stressful. As a cinematic object, “deli chef” becomes predicated by token terms that here function as new.

Turning now to *Jaws*, one can equally cite instances of new objecthood – in both dramatically significant and more incidental contexts. Recall that the opening image of the sea floor obliges a newly identified object: the shark. It also invites a new predication: the shark is lethal and terrifying. This predication is soon augmented with conjunctive or clustered terms. By its first kill, the shark can be decreed “methodical” and even “premeditative” in how it selects its victims. Such token predications are reactivated when a second swimmer falls prey to its attack. The attacks may prove immediate and surprising for individual characters. Nonetheless, insofar as viewers can interpret the shark as a killer, the latter is predicated “deliberate” and “self-willed.”

By contrast, there is a clear moment when the representation of the shark proves no less abrupt. At two-thirds into the film, Martin Brody (Roy Scheider) is feeding bait into the water. While his head is turned, the shark’s own head momentarily surfaces, just in time for Brody to catch glimpse of it. See figure 21:



Figure 21: Jaws

Viewers are inclined to share Brody's disquiet at the shark's seemingly impromptu manifestation and even daunting size.

Superficially, one might remark that the shark is now represented without the usual techniques and stylistic norms that have hitherto characterized it.⁵⁰ There is no extra-diegetic score, nor underwater tracking shots, putatively from the shark's perspective. However, from the standpoint of how the shark is predicated, a more elusive interpretive shift has been occasioned. Previously, the shark has been characterized by its methodical and gradual movements. In its previous incarnations it is typically represented as spotting a victim from a crowd, or among more broadly the flora and fauna of ocean life. It then rushes in for the kill, decisively and efficiently.

By contrast, as it sticks its head out of the water in response to the bait, such token predications have arguably been corrected. The shark, it can be inferred, is no longer (or is far less) deliberate and methodical. Instead, the more forthcoming interpretation becomes that the shark is overrun by its predatory instincts, rushing towards the bait, even though no food is to be had. Thereafter, such corrected expectations regarding the shark can inform its subsequent predications. At later moments, particularly towards the climax, the shark will fling itself onto the boat, eat any material in sight, and relentlessly reprise its assaults – a frenzied behaviour that ultimately seals its demise. Regardless, when the predication of the shark as “rash/impulsive” is first made, in contradistinction to its prior depictions as “methodical/premeditative,” this former predication (i.e. “rash/impulsive”) functions as new.

Moreover, as with *News from Home*, multiple, at first trivial screen phenomena can yield varyingly subtle constructions of new objecthood. One can here cite a seemingly insignificant

⁵⁰ I have previously considered this point in more explicitly Bordwellian terms: Lapointe 2013.

interlude of diegetic music on the soundtrack. The young boy Alex Kintner (Jeffrey Voorhees) exits the ocean and heads to his mother. He stops to speak to her, and then continues his trek, eventually leaving the frame. Throughout, the camera pans to enfold Alex's movement within a single, unbroken take.

Closer to our purposes are the on-screen audio phenomena. As Alex heads to his mother and speaks with her, one can hear a pop song in the background. The implication, given its low volume, seemingly random playing and its co-presence with ambient noises, is that it is diegetic music. Someone is playing the song on a portable radio, on the beach albeit outside the frame.

As Alex then gets back up, the music switches to a nominally separate classical piece. Given Alex's movement, from one delimited spatial area to the next, the implication is that he has entered the aural range of another unseen radio or speaker, this one playing a different piece. One might yet further dissect these and other screen phenomena. For the current purposes, one can limit the conceivable interpretations to a few forthcoming options.

Each musical piece can be separately identified as respectively new objects: e.g. "music-1," "music-2." They might also be predicated "pop song," and "classical," which invite further affect-laden terms. The pop song would sound "upbeat" and "current," while the classical piece resonates as "restful" and "antiquated." Both the pop song experienced as "upbeat," and then the classical music experienced as "antiquated," would each figure as newly identified and newly predicated objects. Either token predication (upbeat, antiquated) would function as new.

By contrast, one can envisage more uniquely specified interpretive contexts.⁵¹ For anyone acclimated to near exclusive uses of extra-diegetic music in film texts, the intermittent and background playing of the pop song could be predicated jarring. A similar predication could obtain for the classical music: it would be token predicated "jarring" or "dissonant" (i.e. because

⁵¹ The analysis of sounds effects in *Jaws* that follows might intermittently evoke so-called reality effects that have fallen under the province of formalist film analysis (Thompson 1988: 197-217) and its chiefly literary antecedents (e.g. the Opojaz, its Russian contemporaries, and structuralist sequels). Yet realism is a protean term – even if when one confines its application to purportedly aesthetic effects. Occasionally in the fine arts, the relation of pictorial details to representational contexts has been posited as arising from narrative requirements (Gombrich 1995: 99-125), ascribing temporal continuity to an otherwise a-temporal representation. By contrast in select literary contexts, realism (or *l'effet de réel*) instead inhibits if not interrupts narrative continuity (Tomachevski 1965: 284-289). Such inhibition may serve *ostranenie* (Jakobson 1971a), or remain, in approximately Sontagian terms, resistant to hermeneutics (Barthes 1968). Regardless, the same screen phenomena can yield alternately realistic, expressive and/or reflexive interpretations, suggesting that such aesthetic predicates, while useful as heuristics, disclose or rely upon ultimately more fundamental interpretive operations. It is some of these operations which I focus on below, notwithstanding that they may differently accommodate some of the more familiar terminology that pervades art/aesthetics criticism.

one does not expect fragments of diegetic music in a film text). Consequently, one might here retain two separately identifiable objects – i.e. “music-1” and “music-2” – which are separately predicated. Despite the apparent continuity or clustered relations between jarring and dissonant (or like terms), each activated predication would function *as per* the type new, insofar as new objects are being identified.⁵² See diagram x:

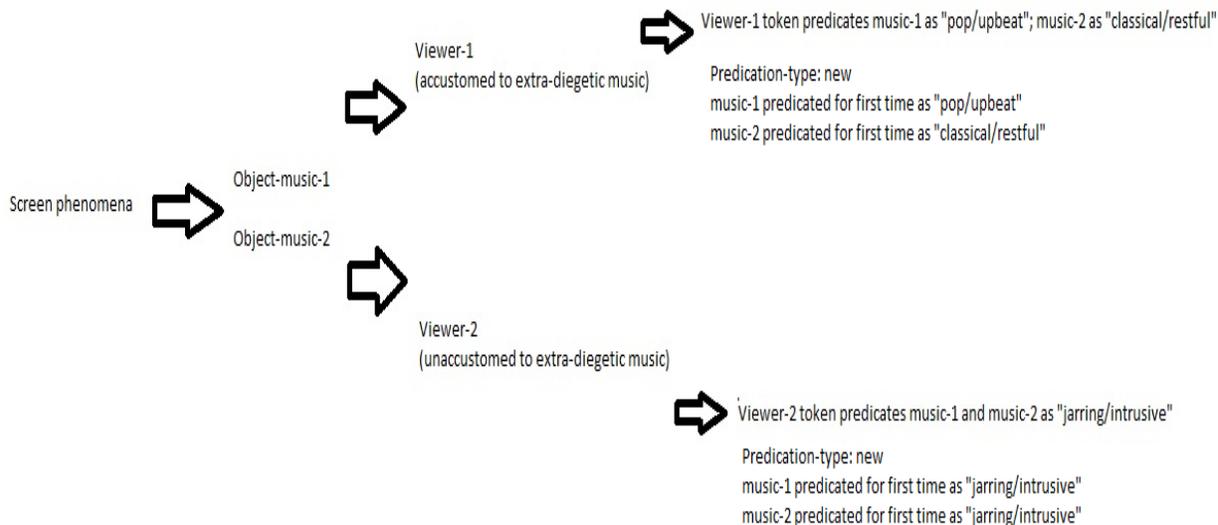


Diagram x: Old/new objecthood: Jaws

Such distinctions amount to more than technicalities. The problem is that calling the music “dissonant” – or “jarring,” “upbeat,” “antiquated,” or “clichéd,” or even “defamiliarizing” – is theoretically uninformative within a universal account of the viewing experience. There will be too many different shades of, for example, tangibly felt dissonance from one viewing experience to the next. Even if two felt predications of dissonance prove phenomenologically identical, they may be occasioned in distinct interpretive contexts. This raises the question as to whether the two feelings are really the “same,” if they function differently in our constructions of objecthood? The contended answer in the current thesis leans towards “no,” if only for the sake of a conceptually reduced theoretical model of the viewing experience.

⁵² A further interpretation can be envisaged whereby both pieces of music are constructed *de dicto*, as iterations of the same object: “diegetic music.” Here viewers construct “diegetic music” as “jarring” when it is pop music, and then as “jarring” again, when it is classical music: in the latter case, “diegetic music” is potentially reidentified and therefore “jarring” functions as “old.” Reidentification and old objecthood are reprised in this chapter’s relevant subsection.

Instead, these above interpretive contexts hinge on fundamental cognitive operations of continuity or correction – or, more prosaically, new or old. The implication for a (deflationary) functionalist argument is that one outlines such interpretive contexts, and how token predications will differently relate to one another within the viewing experience. If such deflationary functionalism sounds drastically elementary, it nonetheless stands as a more parsimonious yet universally applicable alternative to informally individuating select effects, or the hitherto outlined efforts of the AT.

At the same time, as the above analysis has already intimated, new objecthood is but one of two predication types for cinematic objects. The other type is old objecthood, to which we now turn.

Old Objecthood

When viewers first identify an object in the film, it is newly identified and newly predicated (i.e. globally new). When the object is reidentified, it can be newly predicated or reiteratively predicated, by conjunctive or clustered token predicates. With a reidentified, albeit newly predicated object, the object becomes locally new. With a reidentified, reiteratively predicated object, the object is locally old. An object is reidentified when it is identified on a subsequent occasion, i.e. after macro placing a separately identified object. Such a decreed reidentification can occur most minimally within the span of a single shot or a likely reduced technical unit. Viewers can shift their attention from one macro placed object to another. They can also focus on the different micro parts of a macro composed object. In these cases, every time they return to a prior (macro placed) object, it has been reidentified. See diagram xi:

First construction:	Viewer macro places	object-1 (object-1 identified)
Second construction:	Viewer macro places	object-2 (object-2 identified)
Third construction:	Viewer macro places	object-1 (object-1 reidentified)

Diagram xi: Old/new objecthood: reidentification

One can supplement these claims with examples from *The Flicker*. For instance, following the credits, the object “grey screen” can be favourably macro placed for approximately thirty seconds. At this juncture, a black screen appears, such that the viewer can prospectively construct a new object: “black screen.” Nonetheless, the object “black screen” registers as little more than a flash,⁵³ before the previously constructed object, “grey screen,” can again be constructed from the screen phenomena. Insofar as “grey screen” is reidentified, following the interceding, macro placed “black screen,” it activates the predication-type old. The object is globally old, as it is *not* being constructed for the first time within the film text. If the attendant token predications are conjunctive, the reidentified object “grey screen” is likewise locally old – an interpretation worth addressing briefly with respect to the film’s subsequent images.

Following, the first alternation between black and grey screens, a pattern is established. During select passages of the film, the alternations are sufficiently timed such that viewers can shift between macro placing the black and grey screens. Allowing that the attendant token predications remain clustered, the respective objects “grey screen” and “black screen” activate the predication-type old. Viewers may continue to find either screen “unpleasant.” Alternately, they may adopt a wait and see attitude. Further still, they may decree these objects, and the whole film (i.e. constructed as an artefactual object) as boring. Regardless, the construction of objects throughout requires such conjunctive affects, without which the ensuing film would fail to cohere.

Consider also *News from Home*. The first image includes a street perpendicular to the camera, and two further crossing streets in the mid and background. Among the traffic, at least three cars pass, and three pedestrians are shown walking. One can therefore separately individuate the following objects: “car-1,” “car-2,” “car-3,” as well as “three men,” and “street.” The “three men” can be interpreted as a collectively identified cinematic object, independently of how each these people might have been further individuated in other film texts or viewing experiences.

⁵³ The durational length of the phenomena and its impact on perception would seem to mandate that the current approach privilege psychophysical determinants: i.e. that either beneath or beyond a delimited threshold, mind-independent phenomena respectively won’t or will be experienced. While there is obvious truth to this claim, I address in chapter six why it need not be central to the current theory.

These objects can be constructed in varying degrees of succession and simultaneity. “Car-2” is visually noticeable only once “car-1” is no longer in the shot. However, “three men” can already be glimpsed in the background as “car-2” is still driving past the camera and “car-3” drives past in the mid-ground. Also, the “street” (i.e. as cinematic object) is obviously present throughout the shot, if not always micro placed. Viewers can differently divide their attention between these objects. When the “three men” are identified as a cinematic object, they are newly identified and newly predicated. Viewers can then turn their attention to the “street,” “car-2,” or “car-3,” before returning to “three men.” In this latter case, the three men are reidentified, and necessarily globally old. If they are equally predicated in conjunctive or clustered terms, they are also locally old.

One challenge the film poses is that such predicated content will initially seem vague. Other than noting that the three men look small in the background, it ought to prove vexing to more definitely characterize them. At the same time, such ambiguity can impart them with an enigmatic quality. The moment at which the viewer makes such a decree, translating as “these men are curious/enigmatic,” such a predication counts as locally new. No less significantly, the same token predication can then function as old. One can sketch an interpretive context below in which this would to be the case.

For instance, viewers might intermittently ponder other screen phenomena, or wonder how the off-screen space is occupied, before turning their attention back to the men. More plausibly, viewers might macro place a micro part of the three men. As an example, viewers here note that one is wearing red pants, or the middle of the trio is shorter than the other two, before reidentifying the three men collectively. In these cases of reidentification, a reactivated token predication (“these three men are curious/enigmatic”) functions as old.

More importantly, as the film continues, it is unlikely – if not unduly complicated – that viewers maintain such individuated (i.e. *de re*) constructions. Hence, by the second image, several cars are shown passing. Rather than numerically evaluate each automobile, the tendency – and more economical approach – becomes to construct a collective entity identified as “traffic,” which then recurs throughout the image (i.e. several cars and trucks pass by). Viewers can then, as with the “three men,” reidentify the traffic, after their attention has shifted to or strayed elsewhere – e.g. the street, as a macro placed object, or any of the cars, as micro parts of the macro composed traffic. Regardless, one forthcoming token predication is that the traffic is

only intermittent in its noise and volume. Again, the first time this predication is activated, it functions as new, whereas with its reactivation, it counts as old.

At the same time, there are interpretive contexts whereby such generic constructions of objecthood require correction. The most conspicuous correction involves the mother's (i.e. Mother) voice, as well as "Chantal." Mother's letter to her daughter is read by the third image, at which point both she and Chantal are experienced as cinematic objects. When Mother's voice returns, some two minutes and several street locations later, she can globally be predicated old, as she is reidentified. Depending on the interpretive contexts, she can also be predicated locally old.

In both letters, she reads in a plaintive tone of voice and relates generally melancholic content. On each occasion, Mother has fallen sick. Equally, she reiterates that Chantal is in New York, which can further be taken as an implied reproach that the daughter never should have left. On these and other occasions, it scarcely matters that Mother is speaking in different (i.e. semantically, syntactically, and phonologically composed) sentences, or that there may be individuated differences in content (i.e. in one letter, she mentions it's her birthday; in another letter, the utterance and its concomitant information are unrepeated). The more fundamental interpretive concern is that so much screen phenomena become fodder for predicating Mother as "sad," and/or "plaintive."

No less significantly, from one image and sound to the next, New York becomes collectively identified, irrespective of changes in location. After Mother has finished her first letter, one remains on an image of a largely inactive street. There is then a cut to another street. Most viewers are unable to identify the locations beyond "a street," "another street," or more collectively, "Lower Manhattan." In the latter case, one constructs "a street," "another street" and the like as so many micro parts of the macro composed whole "Lower Manhattan," that is reidentified throughout larger parts of the film.

In other words, viewers are liable to construct degrees of conjunctive or clustered reactivation. For instance, several images throughout the film, accentuate perspectival compositions. For viewers who construct "perspectival composition" (i.e. the pictorial technique, hereafter "perspective") as a cinematic object, its reidentification throughout the film can likewise activate and reactivate token predications. A clearer example of the latter, a reactivated

predication of the object “perspective,” is occasioned approximately mid-way through the film, and can be cited immediately below.

Across two images, one finds similarly composed street locations. The first image is daylight, and includes rows of parked cars, the occasional traffic and leisurely walking passers-by. See figures 22a-b:



Figures 22a-b: News from Home

The second image, while not a duplicate of the first, remains equally daylight, and likewise includes parked cars, intermittent traffic and occasional passers-by. If at any time during these images, viewers can momentarily macro place a separate object (e.g. a pedestrian, a random vehicle), then the previous object “perspective” can thereafter be reidentified.⁵⁴ See diagram xii:

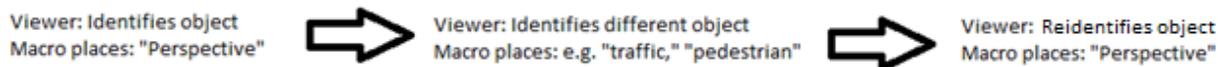


Diagram xii: Old/new objecthood: News from Home

More to the point, however, if one predicates the object “perspective,” on both occasions, as classically harmonious and enjoyable, then at least by the second token predicate activation, this predicate (i.e. “classically harmonious/enjoyable”) functions as old. Not all viewers will feel the same way – others might predicate the object “perspective” in an avant-garde film as “jarring” or

⁵⁴ As this is not the first use of compositional perspective in the film, the prospect remains that viewers macro place this object (“compositional perspective”) earlier: I opt to delimit the scope to the current example for concision.

clichéd.” Regardless, the predication of perspective that functions as old, as outlined above, remains an interpretive alternative.

So far, the analysis has confined the study of old objecthood to avant-garde and/or unorthodox cinema. By contrast, we can examine this facet of the viewing experience with examples from *Jaws*. The temptation, as with the analysis of *Nosferatu*, is to privilege narrative developments. Yet the theoretical challenge is to delineate how old objecthood can function across significant developments in the plot as well as other occasions of the viewing experience: e.g. in the construction of metaphors or understanding a nominal horror film instead as an ironic satire.⁵⁵

Take the opening images and sounds of the film, from the initial representation of the shark to the death of its first victim, Chrissie (Susan Backlinie). The opening image represents the shark swimming along the ocean floor. Before the shark is represented a second time, several intervening images and sounds include Chrissie running across the beach and into the water, while flirting with a young man. She is then shown swimming in the water, before the shark is evoked again. Allowing that the shark has been identified in the opening image, it becomes upon its subsequent reidentifications globally old. It is also likely for the shark to be locally old, albeit represented alongside other macro placed objects (e.g. Chrissie) that can be newly predicated.

Consider the image and sounds when the shark first spots Chrissie. She has already run into the water and started swimming. There is then a tilt-up long shot with a pan, presumably the shark’s perspective, as she traverses the surface of the water from right to left. See figure 23:

⁵⁵ Irony remains a protean subject in theories of meaning, including signification in literature. I propose no novel theory but hope to show how constructions of objecthood can accommodate such ambiguities in signification. The analysis is consistent with Wayne C. Booth’s seminal work on “stable irony.” See Booth 1974, especially 1974: 1-32.

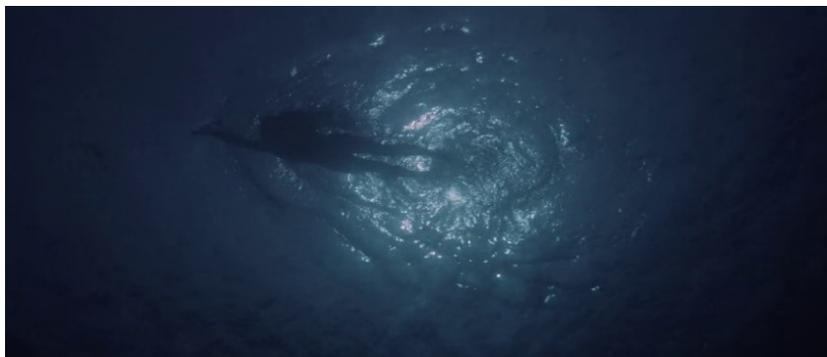


Figure 23: Jaws

Along with this image, extra-diegetic music is played once more on the soundtrack. The expectation that Chrissie will be killed can be constructed here. A token predication, translating as “Chrissie will die,” or, in more stative terms, “Chrissie is prey/vulnerable,” functions as new.

At the same time, the shark can be predicated by conjunctive or clustered terms that function as old. In the first images and sounds, the shark can be experienced as “predatory” and “terrifying.” These and cognate predicates are experienced again when the shark spots Chrissie. Additional terms may of course be conceivable, but the question remains to what extent will such terms favour correction or disjunctive decrees of past token predicates. Consider the interpretation that the shark first spots Chrissie, and then only approaches her moments later. This interpretation can predicate the shark as “methodical” or even “premeditative” in its predatory habits. For viewers who have already intuitively decreed that the shark will prove a redoubtable opponent, then conjunctive token predications such as “methodical” will mainly cluster with their attendant expectations. The shark remains an old object. See diagram xiii:

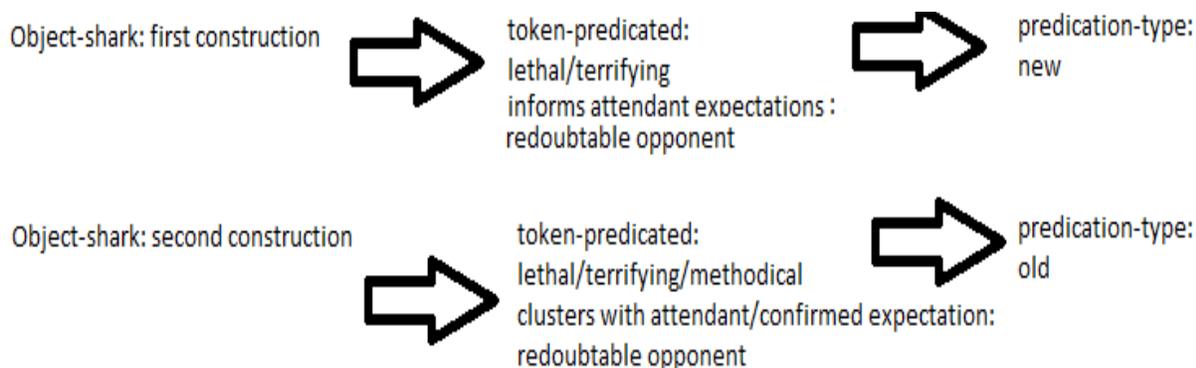


Diagram xiii: Old/new objecthood, token predications: Jaws

Similar token predications are experienced again when the shark is later reidentified. Consider the death of its second victim, Alex. The shark's arrival is again preceded by several minutes of other images and sounds. One sees mostly unnamed beachgoers, in overall increasing quantity, entering the water. Images and sounds of these bathers are continually linked to the lead character Brody's increasingly tense monitoring of the water and related aquatic incidents.

The implicit expectation remains that the shark will strike again. This expectation is soon fulfilled with an underwater tracking shot, accompanied by John Williams's score. The shark tracks past several dangling legs, only to settle on Alex. That the shark is scanning its prospective victims, before settling on one, reactivates earlier token predications. In addition to "lethal" and "terrifying," it is now again "methodical" and "premeditative." The observation that it is willing to strike twice (i.e. Chrissie, then Alex), and not just once (i.e. only Chrissie) may occasion a shift in predication. However, this shift will only count as corrective if one has posed the definite expectation that Chrissie's death was exceptional, as much for the shark as the other objects and events to be represented.

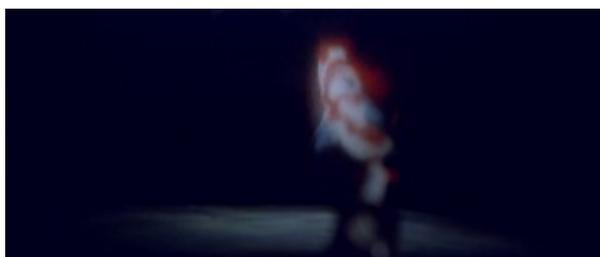
More ambitious constructions of old objecthood may be occasioned, which are only imperfectly reducible to plot. One reactivated predication is that the collectively identified townspeople remain oblivious and even obtuse to the threat posed by the shark. Such a token predication can be occasioned during Chrissie's death. As she is devoured by the shark, two images represent her would-be suitor passed out on the beach. See figure 24:



Figure 24: Jaws

Taken together, these two images can be read ironically:⁵⁶ suitor-*x* is made to seem ineffectual and risible in his unawareness of the proximate threat posed by the shark. These token predications – e.g. ineffectual, risible – are then reactivated as the townspeople react no less obliviously to the threat posed by the shark, such as when the mayor (Murray Hamilton) refuses to close the beaches. What prevails throughout is that one can predicate the collectively identified townspeople in terms that are conjunctive and clustered with one’s construction of Chrissie’s would-be suitor.

Within this interpretive continuum, a more ambiguous construction of objecthood is occasioned mid-way through the film. Once it has been long established that the shark is not only a chronic threat, but a formidable adversary, there is a brief interlude: a minor character is shown playing an arcade game whose purpose is to defeat a shark. The shark in the game is easily bested, which only serves to accentuate the disparity between one person’s encounter with an electronic shark, and the community’s experience with the shark terrorizing its beaches. See figures 25a-c:



Figures 25a-c: Jaws

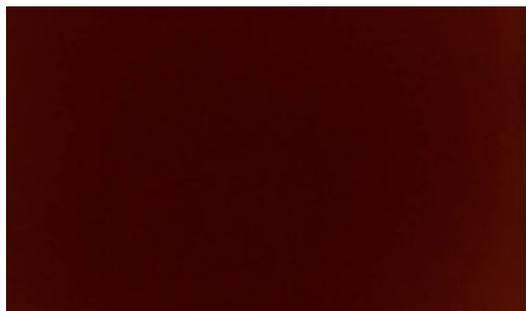
The irony is that the electronic shark evokes or broadly represents the real one (i.e. within a diegetic context), albeit through antithetical predications. Just as the electronic shark is fictitious

⁵⁶ Spielberg’s penchant for irony and satire has overall gone unnoticed by critics. See exceptionally Gilbey 2003: 67-88, who discusses these and other scenes. On a more ambivalent note, see also Britton 2009-144-145.

(i.e. as part of an arcade game), the shark in the water is actual (i.e. both anatomically-physically instantiated and an existing threat); just as the electronic shark can be beaten at the move of a joystick, the shark in the water has proven to be near indomitable. This irony is compounded insofar as this representation of the shark occurs during the fourth of July weekend. Even as the tourists and the townspeople rush unsuspectingly into the water, viewers can reactivate two distinct albeit mutually reinforcing predications. Firstly, the shark is near indomitable and will not be so easily bested. Secondly, the townspeople, including the young man playing the game, seem to be refusing any clear appraisal of this threat.

In short, however else this interpretation is pursued, the significance of old objecthood remains pivotal: as cinematic objects, both the shark (lethal, terrifying, indomitable) and the townspeople (oblivious, obtuse, risible) are being predicated by conjunctive, clustered terms. The construction of objecthood carries across otherwise differentiated content – both on-screen (e.g. the ocean floor) and diegetic (e.g. the shark, individuated townspeople) content. In other words, regardless of whether the character is “Chrissie’s suitor,” “mayor,” or “video game player,” these and other entities compose the same (collectively) identified and predicated object: “risible townspeople.”

A skeptic might rebut that all metaphors, such as can be cited in the above example (electronic shark = real shark), involve antecedent knowledge.⁵⁷ Yet, signaling that the above viewing experiences activate “old” objecthood is not theoretically superfluous. Some metaphors, or other means of recurring content (e.g. motifs, intertext), will prove disjunctive, or occasion constructions of new objecthood. For instance, the reiterative uses of the object “red motif” in *Cries and Whispers* oscillate between the blatant and the subtle: at times, the entire screen is red; at other times, there is a red prop that is but a detail in the whole composition. See figures 26a-d:



⁵⁷ Carroll 1996: 212-223.



Figures 26a-d: Cries and Whisper

In such viewing experiences, observing “red is a motif” explains less than articulating how the object “red motif” becomes predicated in disjunctive terms (e.g. blatant vs. subtle).⁵⁸ The most fundamental interpretive constructions of objecthood, as I have advanced, are arguably “old” vs. “new” – or constructions of objecthood in either continuous, clustered and conjunctive, or alternately, discontinuous, corrected and disjunctive terms.

Conclusion

The preceding part – chapters three and four – has focused on cinematic objecthood, a distinct and crucial part of the viewing experience of cinematic textual artefacts. We have seen how viewers mobilize the four cognitivist principles in constructing cinematic objects as an identification-*type*, from which one derives a multitude of conceptually delimited, *token* objects. We have also seen how identified cinematic objects are predicated by one of two separate predication-*types*: *old* and *new*. These predication-*types* in turn prove more fundamental to the viewing experience than any range of token predications. It is in accordance with *old* and *new* cinematic objecthood that one begins to outline a universal model of the viewing experience, incorporating questions of affect and/or aesthetic experiences, that makes fundamental distinctions between different experiences.

As already reviewed in part one, cinematic objecthood is but one of two identification-*types*: the other is cinematic eventhood, which can likewise be predicated by schema-*types*. That

⁵⁸ Throughout Bergman’s film, the motif red even extends to objects that are not literally red but are identified as such in everyday parlance: e.g. a glass of red wine; a character’s red hair (Maria, as played by Ullmann). I take this apparent anomaly to further warrant a constructivist approach (i.e. we construct meaning, as occasioned by screen phenomena, that is not reducible to visual and other perceptual properties).

cinematic eventhood is as pervasive and fundamental to universal experiences of cinematic texts as objecthood suggests that a parsimonious yet technical understanding of the term is required. The next part concerns the identification (i.e. chapter five) and predication (i.e. chapter six) of cinematic eventhood.

Part Three:

Identifying and Predicating Cinematic Eventhood

Chapter Five: Identifying Cinematic Events

Introduction

In the opening of *Jaws*, the shark's first victim, Chrissie, executes a graceful movement when swimming. In a way akin to synchronized swimming, she extends her leg upwards and allows herself to sink under the water. In keeping with the previous two chapters (i.e. part two: chapters three and four), one fundamental aspect of the viewing experience hinges on identifying and predicating Chrissie – e.g. as a previously introduced character who now exhibits newly demonstrated qualities (i.e. she is skilled and graceful, at least as a swimmer).

One identifies objects, and then reidentifies said objects as the same on subsequent occasions. One first identifies Chrissie when she is sitting by the campfire; one then reidentifies her as the same, as she is running on the beach. The viewer makes a decree as to the identity of an initially constructed object (e.g. “Chrissie,” “shark,” “swimmers,” “ocean”); the viewer in the same instant predicates this object (e.g. “Chrissie is exuberant,” “the shark is lethal,” “the swimmers are terrified,” “the ocean is expansive”).

Viewers then reidentify the object, premised in part on principles of transitivity (e.g. “this is the same Chrissie as seen before,” “before one saw swimmers, and one sees swimmers again”). Jointly, viewers decree a predication that is ultimately conjunctive or disjunctive with prior predications (e.g. “Chrissie is now terrified,” “the shark is still lethal,” “the swimmers are now threatened/no longer threatened,” “the ocean is no longer safe/is now safe.”). Such myriad – adjectival, substantive, or stative – token predications ultimately fall under the predication-types *new* and *old*. New and old stand as (physiologically activated) predication-types regardless of the (preconsciously processed) “content” of the predication: i.e. regardless of whether one constructs the cinematic content as “safe,” “lethal,” “exuberant” etc.

Yet the above analysis does not address key aspects of the images and sounds that are not reducible to cinematic objecthood. The initial identification of an object can also be taken as

testifying to some minimally noted transformation (e.g. previously there was only object-x, now there's also, or instead, object-y). As shall be elaborated, “Chrissie (or the shark) appears (i.e. for the first time in the film text)” can equally be constructed as an event. Viewers decree a transformation from a previous identification and predication, such that a conceivable entity is not the same one that was constructed before: the movement along the ocean floor signalled the presence of a shark; the people by a campfire in the next image signal “beachgoers,” and eventually “woman named Chrissie.”

More extensively one predicates reidentified objects – or, identifies objects as the same across myriad depictions and changes. Here too, these interpretive procedures mobilize separately identifiable occurrences that can be understood as cinematic events. “Shark kills Chrissie” can be constructed as an event, insofar as it implicates identifiable transformations upon Chrissie, as well as the shark. More minimally, comparatively modest transformations such as Chrissie’s aquatic movements – she extends her leg upwards and allows herself to sink below the sea’s surface – also testify to cinematic eventhood. In the latter instance, “Chrissie extends leg,” no less than the former “shark kills Chrissie,” viewers decree that an object-x is not the same as before: e.g. “Chrissie is above/below the water,” “Chrissie is dead.”

The next two chapters are concerned with cinematic eventhood. By eventhood, one means a presumably caused transformation that can be constructed with respect to a cinematic object – including the object’s introduction or first appearance within the cinematic text: i.e. “object-x appears”¹ is an event. Viewers construct an object via the activation of the identification-predication schemas: this construction calls upon, principles of transitivity, as well as cooperating mental processes (e.g. basic physiology and preconsciously assimilated viewing habits) and the other cognitivist principles hitherto defined. Concurrently, as to be studied in this chapter, viewers construct a separately identifiable transformation, which can be delineated, for analytic as well as viewing purposes, from constructions of cinematic objecthood. Any such transformation, including incidents inconsequential to a plot or the canonical storytelling format, is an event.²

¹ Throughout part three, “appears” and “introduced” will figure as stipulated terms, divorced from their counterparts in quotidian parlance. I mostly refrain from using “appear” and its derivations in any ordinary application.

² See Whitehead 1920: 165-173, whose expanded definition of eventhood significantly informs this portion of the thesis. I depart from more restricted definitions of eventhood as have been posited in narratology. See Herman 2009.

To return to the above examples, one decrees a transformation in the construction of objecthood as soon as Chrissie appears, and hence this constitutes an event (i.e. “*x* appears”).³ One likewise decrees a transformation in between her respective positions above and below the sea’s surface (i.e. “*x* executes, graceful aquatic movements.”). Finally, one decrees a transformation – of greater narrative import – when she is attacked by the shark (i.e. “*x* is attacked by *y*”). By argumentative and theoretical parity, the same insights apply to more esoteric film texts: e.g. the passage from night to day in *Empire*, or any range of apparent digressions in art cinema. In all such instances, one identifies and no less predicates transformations upon objects – i.e. cinematic events – which need be countenanced within a universal account of the viewing experience.

The above definition for cinematic eventhood – constructed transformations upon objects – nonetheless raises several pertinent and perhaps inter-related concerns. One key problem is that eventhood would seem to be parasitic upon objecthood: why can’t it be relegated to a different category or type of predication? By contrast, the view advanced in this thesis derives from a competing approach in analytic philosophy. At least one variant of analytic philosophy refuses that objects need have any priority over events.⁴ If events are admittedly contingent upon objects, it has been contended authoritatively that the dependence is reciprocated, or symmetrical: objects require no less the ontological participation of events.⁵

To briefly pursue, in real world contexts, living organisms are born; artefacts are made; dead organisms decompose; abandoned artefacts collect dust.⁶ At the very least, any appearance of an objectively identifiable entity testifies to some minimally occurring event, or caused

³ No doubt under the influence of logical positivism, Goodman comes close to arguing that appearances constitute the basis of one’s engagement with mind independent phenomena: before an object or an event is experienced within any phenomenal capacity, it must first have an appearance. See Goodman 1977. Constructivist cognitivism cannot countenance so resolutely empirical an approach, although Goodman’s reflections retain some influence on the thesis.

⁴ This contention is advanced throughout Davidson 2001. Donald Davidson is reputed for his disagreements with cognitivism, especially Chomskyan linguistics. I have adapted his insights into eventhood for the current project.

⁵ See Davidson 2001: 173-176, and more generally 2001: 163-180. Davidson is challenging Strawson’s argument that individuals, or objective particulars, have ontological priority over events. Adapting this disagreement to the current thesis, one can advance, *pace* Smith 1995, that events no less than objects (including characters) fundamentally inform the viewing experience. See also Chatman 1978.

⁶ See notably Whitehead’s reflections on the existence of Cleopatra’s Needle within a spatio-temporal continuum as an example of eventhood (1920: 166-167). Whitehead’s process philosophy also involves the stronger argument that events necessarily precede objects and/or other particulars – a debate which exceeds the current thesis.

transformation.⁷ Within cinematic contexts, viewers ascribe transformations, however inchoate and intuitive, to identifiable cinematic objects: e.g. a character might appear in a film for the first time; a lighthouse might change relative size following a change in camera position.

Nonetheless, the seemingly amorphous range of cinematic examples cited above invites two further criticism. Firstly, “cinematic eventhood” ought to strike one as a vacuous category, as it seems that anything can count as an event. Secondly, this very inclusiveness suggests that all events will prove of equal relevance to the viewing experience – an unlikely premise, even in ostensibly non-narrative and/or non-representational iterations of avant-garde cinema.

These last two points – the magnitude of cinematic eventhood as well as the inopportune equivocation between events – have already been met in the study of objecthood. Any screen phenomena can be a candidate for cinematic objecthood, following which one is confronted to a proliferation of cinematic objects. Nonetheless, just because *anything* can be a cinematic object does not entail that *everything* will be a cinematic object. On the contrary, screen phenomena activate an identification-schema involving principles of continuous and transitive identity. One demarcates colours, shapes, sizes, movement and the like as representing a conceptually demarcated object: something that remains what it is across varied transformations or predications. Consequently, above and beyond the identification of recurring phenomena (colours, shapes, sizes etc.), prior experience (as pertains to film and the real world) allows one to identify (and predicate) token objects: e.g. a shark, a building, a light, a swimmer.

Comparative constructions occur with cinematic events. If “objecthood” is one of the two types of identification, then “eventhood” is the other identification-type. Just as objecthood as an identification-type is premised on principles of transitivity and continuity, the inverse holds for eventhood. Viewers construct transformations – any transformation – as separately identifiable

⁷ The identification of events with respect to causal priors raises a twofold difficulty: whether one can have events without causes or priors of any kind, and how to separate reasons from causes. The first difficulty is a question addressed in quantum mechanics but remains indeterminate within a cognitivist framework: there are mind-independent phenomena that are most succinctly theorized as event without causes or like priors, while falling outside the purview of quotidian experience, including the viewing experience of film texts. Physiologically, we can't help but think of events as following from reasons/causes, even if scientific theory has discovered that this need not be the case (similar interpretive quandaries hold for the moon illusion, Gestalt-switches, the relativity of simultaneity, etc., whereby an aspect of reality is at theoretical variance from our observational capacities). Regarding the second difficulty, the separability of reasons from causes, Davidson famously argued, *pace* Wittgenstein, that all causes are ultimately reasons, and *vice versa* (2001: 3-20). Without wading into these analytic discriminations, I am content to stipulate reasons/causes, or more simply “causes,” as minimally implied priors within the construction of events. Viewers at least make an intuitive decree that an event has some reason, cause or other prior, which will ultimately be constructed as part of the event. See also Bordwell's analysis of causality, albeit in the context of classical narration, throughout Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 3-84.

events. Just because *any* screen phenomena will be a candidate for cinematic eventhood does not mandate that *every* screen phenomenon is constructed as an event. Quite the opposite, from colours, shapes, sizes, movement and the like, viewers perceptually apprehend changes of varying degrees: if shape-*x* appears, such that it was not represented before, the appearance is identified as an event. Above and beyond the preliminary identification of transformations, prior experience (derived from both film and the extra-cinematic world) allow one to identify token events: e.g. an attack, a passage from night to day, a flickering, a swim. See diagram xiv:

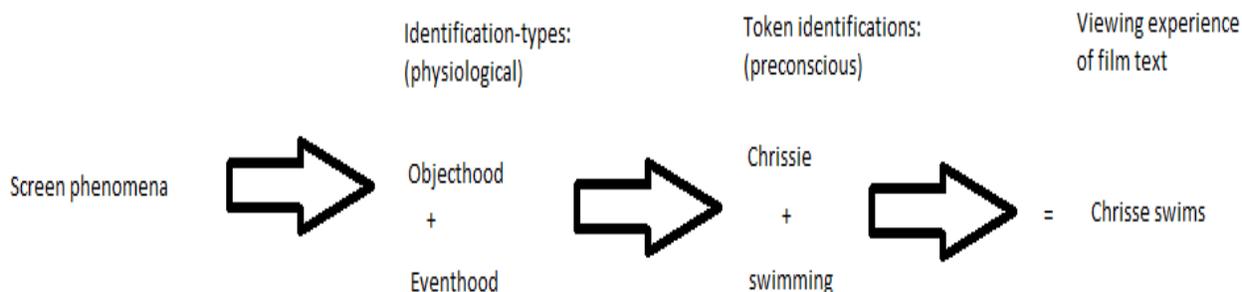


Diagram xiv: Identification: objects, events

No less than with constructions of cinematic objecthood, constructions of cinematic eventhood are decrees, in the analytic sense. Interpretive judgements are typically rendered rapidly and successively in how events are identified and predicated. Faced with screen phenomena, viewers identify a specifically individuated transformation premised on the intuition that the specified interpretation (i.e. “this is event-*x*”) “hit[s] the mark” (Goodman 1977: 99). We typically favour the more “natural” and/or coherent interpretation based on prior understanding and conceptual parsimony – again, as with constructions of cinematic objecthood.

For instance, consider the death of the titular antagonist in Murnau’s *Nosferatu*. When a character previously identified as a vampire stands before sunlight and disappears from the shot, we unhesitatingly decree – stemming from knowledge of the film’s world and more broadly vampire lore – that the identified transformation is “*x* disintegrates (due to the sun),” whereby *x* is the object “vampire,” or “Orlok the vampire.” We maintain this identification and would only correct it following subsequent disconfirmations – indeed, an appended twist might have revealed that sunlight provokes teleportation or invisibility in vampires (!). In the absence of such counter-veiling determinants, we settle with near-automatic expediency on the most

apposite interpretation – and one, as further examples reveal, that is not reducible to screen phenomena nor even its literal (i.e. perceptually recognizable) content.

Furthermore, for both cinematic objecthood and eventhood, the seemingly endless supply of token objects and events creates a concomitant difficulty. With so many cinematic objects and events being constructed, the viewing activity may prove overwhelming to one’s mental capacities. Therefore, upon constructing cinematic objects and events one necessarily ascribes them different interpretive weight. Macro objects are composed of micro parts. Comparatively, composed objects can be macro placed, such that they occupy the viewer’s attention at the expense of micro placed objects. In both instances, viewers retain subsidiary awareness that a composed object (e.g. a face) might be parsed into separately identifiable parts (e.g. eyes, mouth, etc.). Similarly, a macro placed object is tacitly understood as occurring alongside proximate but less significant objects: e.g. one can focus on a character’s scar at the expense of the rest of their body, to say nothing of the other characters, and/or surroundings.

In turn, the same cognitivist principle applies to cinematic eventhood: macro events are composed of micro parts. The token event-*x* may be identifiable as “object/character-*y* answers phone.”⁸ This event is macro composed of micro parts, such that its part may include “phone rings,” “character lifts receiver,” “character says ‘hello.’” See diagram xv:

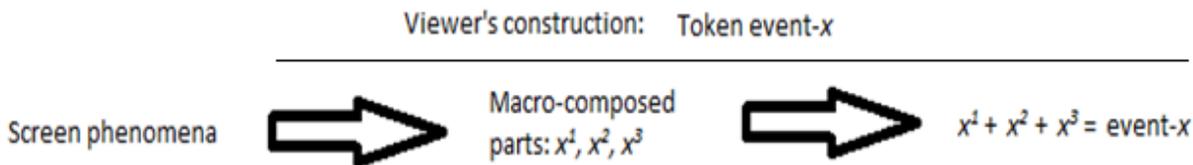


Diagram xv: Macro composed events and parts

The same screen phenomena may also yield different events. Viewer-1 may macro place event-*x*, while micro placing event-*y* and disregarding event-*z*. Viewer-2 may macro and micro

⁸ The analysis, from the argument right down to the very example, recalls Barthes 1966: 8-11. Yet Roland Barthes’s purpose is to discriminate between occurrences which play a decisive role in the narrative telos (e.g. the phone call dispatches the hero on a mission) and those which are superfluous (e.g. the phone rings three times, as opposed to twice). He termed such textual units *fonctions cardinales* and *catalyses*, borrowing from and amalgamating Boris Tomashevsky’s distinctions between bound and free, as well as dynamic and static, motifs (Tomachevski 1965: 269-272; see also Thompson 1988: 55, n. 6). Neither approach is adequate to the current thesis. Any event can be composed of multiple parts, regardless of whether it adheres to a narrative end – assuming the film even has a narrative. The question of how events are experienced within the film text must then be separately theorized.

place the identifiable transformations differently: event-*y* is macro placed, while event-*x* is disregarded.⁹ See diagram xvi:

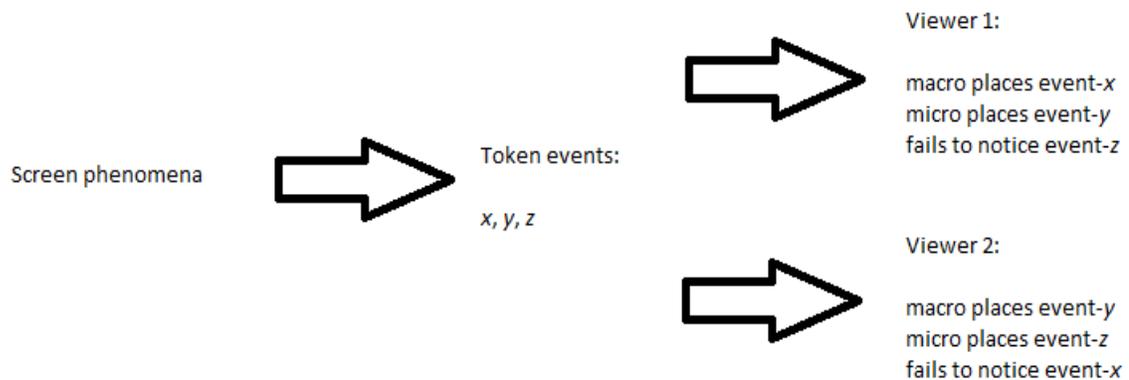


Diagram xvi: Events: macro/micro placing

The above arguments have brought us to the outline of part three: i.e. the current and next chapters. This fifth chapter requires that I stipulate a definition of cinematic eventhood. As with the account of cinematic objecthood, I establish sufficient and necessary conditions by which activations of the identification-schema construct screen phenomena as events. Equally, I specify why the constructions of eventhood can be reasonably qualified as cinematic. This analysis also entails enumerating the cognitivist principles as seen in the previous chapters. Readers who at this point are tiring of trudging once again through concepts and terms painstakingly laid out in parts one and two may note the brevity of the definitions. I presume foreknowledge of key terms and concepts, such that *schema*, the *preconscious*, *correction* and the like do not require further exposition. What matters is that they are deployed in constructions of cinematic eventhood.

Stated as such, constructing cinematic eventhood *as per* cognitivist theory raises at least one signal concern. Namely: one can entertain the suspicion that the arguments in this chapter and the next chapter amount to little more than narratology by other means, i.e. old wine/theory, new bottles/terms. Undoubtedly, the arguments as set forth will have resonance with prior

⁹ This distinction recalls Bazin's *mise-en-scène* criticism, particularly his analysis of William Wyler. See 1958: 149-174. Bazin's insight, however, is exclusively tied to the staging of simultaneous actions within the technical units of a long shot and a long take. By contrast, macro placed events involve any focused attention: e.g. metaphorical readings, whereby one retains subsidiary awareness of the image/sound's literal content while constructing an implied event.

narrative theory, especially as undertaken in cognitivism, including the AT.¹⁰ As should be clear by the deferral to analytic philosophy, however, eventhood will be conceived in a far more pervasive sense than has traditionally been allowed for in narratology. Once all transformations are identifiable as events, this raises the challenge of specifying different constructions of eventhood: e.g. how events can be composed and/or placed in relation to one another. The latter specifications – in keeping with analytic philosophy’s theory of parts-whole relations and cognitivism’s commitment to relations and functions – will more adequately cover a range of viewing experiences than if one reduces film texts to putative narrative conventions, or their absence.¹¹ The more pressing question becomes: how does one predicate cinematic eventhood.

This leads directly to chapter six, whereby I specify these predications. As shall be seen, cinematic events can either be “short” or “long.” Events are predicated “short” when they are experienced as disjunctive/discontinuous from prior and later events. Conversely, they are predicated “long” when they are experienced as clustered and conjunctive/continuous with prior and later events. Short events will be constructed by viewers as interruptions of ongoing or antecedent long events. By contrast, long events are posited as the viewer’s default mode for constructing eventhood or transformations across the film text. These points require significant adumbration. For now, see diagram xvii:

¹⁰ To varying degrees, narratological concerns are broached – sometimes for counter-argument – in Carroll 1990, Smith 1995, Tan 1996, Grodal 1997 and Smith 2003.

¹¹ This dichotomy pervades Bordwell’s definition of classical narration in Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 3-84. In Bordwell’s model, classical narration can most parsimoniously be defined *as per* representations of space and time that are subordinated to representations of causality. I have highlighted elsewhere internal inconsistencies as to how Bordwell both delimits and generalizes the so-called “classical paradigm.” (Lapointe 2016c). Within the current thesis, the question arises: can Bordwell’s model, i.e. hierarchical relations between space, time and causality, generate both classical and non-classical texts, as it was clearly meant to? Assume that classical narration systematically subordinates space and time to causality. Do art cinema, parametric film and the like (Bordwell 1985) systematically subordinate space and causality to time, *or* time and causality to space? If there is a principled distinction between narrational modes (i.e. art cinema subordinates space-causality to time, while parametric cinema subordinates time-causality to space), then Bordwell has not explicated it. If the answer is contingent (i.e. *sometimes* space-causality are subordinated to time; *at other times*, it’s time-causality to space, throughout art cinema, parametric narration, etc.), then we are left with a tautology: non-classical films are films that are not part of the classical paradigm. As Bordwell has noted, comparable problems arise in the work of Noël Burch (Bordwell 1997).

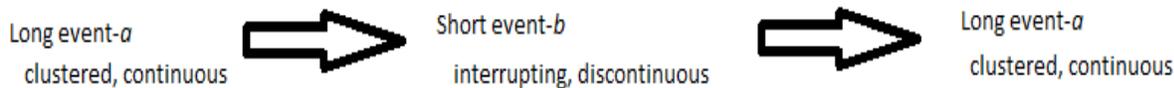


Diagram xvii: Events: short/long

Additionally, when an event is experienced as spanning most of the film text, it is globally constructed – and composed of multiple parts. Inversely, in local contexts, events can be experienced as **discrete from** or not overlapping¹² a globally composed event. Again, these points will be elaborated in chapter six, but can be introduced by way of diagram xviii:

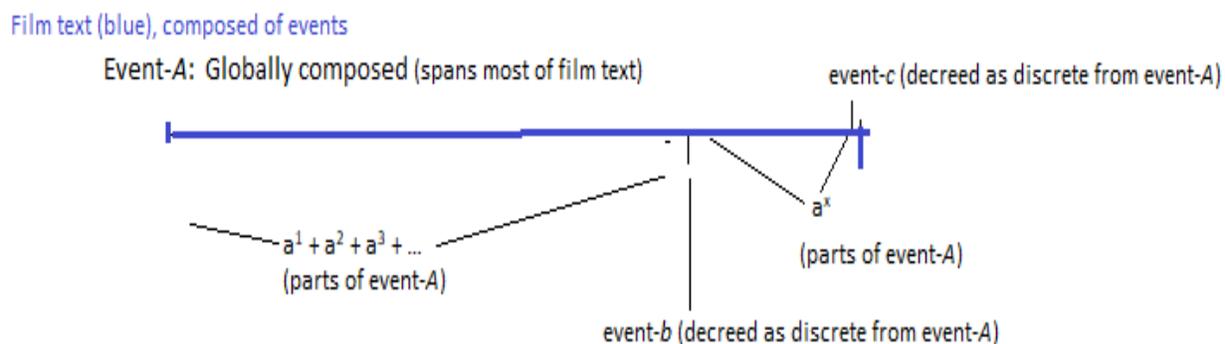


Diagram xviii: Events: local/global

In conclusion, part three (i.e. chapters five-six) provides an explanatory account as to how cinematic eventhood is constructed within the viewing experience, just as part two attended to cinematic objecthood. Both parts therefore pave the way for chapter seven, which synthesizes the constructions of cinematic objecthood and eventhood within the viewing experience of film texts.

¹² These terms are drawn from Goodman's mereology, although I adapt them to the current purposes. See Goodman 1977. See also Cohnitz and Rossberg 2006: 93-94 (more generally 2006: 93-97) for a helpful summary of "discrete" and "overlap." Goodman is also building upon, while emending, "part similarity relation," as seen in Carnap 1967.

Identifying Cinematic Eventhood

As already contended, objects retain their identity across multiple changes in appearance and/or predication. Pinocchio is always Pinocchio, whether made of wood or anatomically a boy. This raises the prospect that such interpreted changes – in *Pinocchio*, the doll comes alive; in *Jaws*, a bather is killed by a shark – separately activate an identification-schema, in the identification and/or construction of a transformation (i.e. an event). The construction of eventhood – what do viewers do when identifying and predicating transformations – therefore requires explanatorily adequate theorization.

The challenge of this current chapter is twofold. Firstly, one must define cinematic eventhood – and more precisely, indicate by what activities of the mind/brain events are identified within the context of cinematic textual artefacts. Cognitivism helps understand that nominally incidental (one might say in ordinary parlance, uneventful) or disparate screen phenomena can be constructed *as per* a distinct identification-type, i.e. eventhood. This invites the second challenge, whereby cinematic eventhood is posited as a distinct type of identification from cinematic objecthood, i.e. it is not of secondary or superfluous significance to cinematic objecthood. Select ideas derived from analytic philosophy will stipulate the pervasiveness of cinematic eventhood across a range of exemplars.

A cinematic event is any entity identifiable as a transformation upon one object or more, stemming from a presumed reason or cause. Occurrences of narrative import – “*x kills y*” in *Jaws* – count as events, but so do seemingly inconsequential changes: e.g. “*x swims gracefully*” in *Jaws*, “*night passes to day*” in *Empire*. The examples would seem to conflate key distinctions: there can be narrative works with alternately pivotal and superfluous occurrences (“*killing*” vs. “*graceful swimming*” in *Jaws*). Alternately, there can be non-narrative works divided between conceivable instances of stipulated eventhood (e.g. the first flash of black screen in *The Flicker*) and more incidental details (e.g. the subsequent flashes of black, once viewers have registered its presence). A common-sense approach would define events as transformations identifiable from screen phenomena that prove consequential to one’s experience of the film text: e.g. a plot twist (shark kills); a perceptually salient occurrence (light flashes).

Conversely, the current thesis posits the pervasiveness of eventhood across all cinematic representations. This approach allows that one can adequately account for the viewing experience of film texts above and beyond canonical storytelling formats. Instead, the same

interpretive procedures are mobilized for the construction of all transformations (i.e. cinematic eventhood). These same interpretive procedures – activation of the identification-schema for eventhood, recognition of token events, macro placing, etc. – hold across films texts that would seem incommensurably different. The theoretical challenge is to show that the viewing experience of seemingly varied film texts can be ultimately reduced to a range of interpretively invariant alternatives. These alternatives include not simply the identification of transformations, but also that different parts of a transformation might relate to one another – or not.

In *Jaws*, Chrissie’s death constitutes an event. Yet her first encounter with the shark is when it bites at presumably her foot or her leg, and she is pulled downwards. See figures 27a-b:



Figures 27a-b: Jaws

The question becomes: is the event “shark pulls on Chrissie” part of a larger event, “shark attacks/kills Chrissie”? Or, do viewers decree “shark pulls on Chrissie” as a separate occurrence, that nonetheless serve as a prelude to future transformations? Answering this question requires insight into parts-whole relations, as well as eventually the predication-types for eventhood (i.e. short/long). For now, one need only acknowledge that even within canonical narrative film texts

(e.g. *Jaws*), a theory as to the acts of the mind/brain whereby transformations are constructed by viewers requires terminological specifications.¹³

The same theory of cinematic eventhood must cover seemingly incidental occurrences, including those that are unique to constructions of identified and predicated content through film (i.e. independently of real-world referents). In terms of incidental occurrences, in *The Flicker* the grey screen can first be constructed as continually present, then as having its projection interrupted by black leader. All these representations incorporate events, such that they may translate as: “*x* is projected/displayed”; “*y* interrupts *x*”; “*x* interrupts *y*,” – whereby *x* and *y* are respectively the cinematic objects “grey” and “black.” For viewers watching the film, they become transformations or changes occasioned by the screen phenomena that are irreducible to the identification of the objects – i.e. these events play no less a distinct role in predicating the objects (light, blackness) as “startling,” “fascinating,” or “boring.”

In terms of seemingly incidental occurrences that are constructed as specifically *cinematic* events (i.e. irreducible to real-world referents), take the opening images and sounds of Yasujiro Ozu’s *Floating Weeds*. After the credits, the film starts with four successive images of a light-house.¹⁴ See figure 28:

¹³ Davidson argued for the individuation of events *as per* criteria of ontological identity (2001: 163-180). Very briefly, two events (Brutus fatally stabbed Caesar/Brutus killed Caesar) are co-extensive if they share identical causes and effects. Among the criticisms is that not all events have unambiguous delimitations: “imagine, for example, that a philosopher who thinks that events must have definite ‘identity criteria’ is unsure whether the event of sugar being rationed in 1942-1945 was a *part* or an *effect* of World War II!” (Putnam 1999: 179, n. 11). Whatever the justice of such criticisms, Davidson was already aware of such mereological uncertainties. He cites the example of poisoning someone’s water which causes their later death, such that one cannot determine whether the event “killing” is limited to the pouring of the poison, or its later consequence: the person’s death: “Two events are easy to distinguish: my pouring of the poison, and the death of the [victim]. One precedes the other and causes it. But where does the event of my killing the [victim] come in? The most usual answer is that my killing the traveller is identical with my pouring the poison. In that case, the killing is over when the pouring is. We are driven to the conclusion that I have killed the [future victim] long before he dies.” (2001: 177). Without resolving any controversies occasioned by Davidson, the current thesis recasts the problem in cognitivist terms: viewers make decrees, incorporating affect-laden predications, as occasioned by film texts. Some viewers might decree, in *Jaws*, that “shark pulls on Chrissie” is part of the event “shark kills Chrissie”; others, might decree that these are separate occurrences. The task of the theorist is to explain these varied interpretations, independently of how Davidson might have resolved the issue ontologically.

¹⁴ Such a passage corresponds to what David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson have termed “intermediate spaces,” in their influential study of Ozu’s cinema (Bordwell and Thompson 1976, especially 1976: 46-55). While the term is valid for Ozu criticism, it explains only incidentally that viewers experience Ozu’s films *as per* the same interpretive parameters that they experience all other film texts. Bordwell-Thompson’s aim is to demarcate how Ozu’s films are stylistically distinct from the classical paradigm. Conversely, I wish to explain that, between the classical paradigm, Ozu’s cinema and all other film texts, viewers ultimately experience the same constructions of objecthood and eventhood – i.e. within a delimited range of identifications and predications.



Figure 28: *Floating Weeds* (1959), dir. Yasujiro Ozu

From the first to the second image, the camera position changes such that the lighthouse appears first in the middle-ground, and then in the background. It remains in the background in the third image, and then recedes further back in the fourth. No less significantly, newly identifiable objects are present along with the lighthouse. The first image has a bottle in the foreground, yet which is dwarfed by the relative size of the lighthouse. The second shot foregrounds several docked boats, which loom in relative size. The third image includes a fisherman's boat passing, while the fourth takes us just outside a post-office. The soundtrack proves informative too: the engine sound of the fisherman's boat can be heard, gradually amplified over shots one to three, while in shot four there is the rising volume of crickets' chirping.

There are arguably multiple constructions of eventhood inferable from this sequence. We will settle on a single event. It can be approximately rendered, along with the identified object, as “ x recedes (into the distance),” whereby x is the object “lighthouse.” Within such a construal, one does not postulate that the lighthouse has *physically* moved.¹⁵ However, the following changes can be constructed from screen phenomena: the lighthouse has altered size and spatial occupancy as relative to its represented surroundings. Conversely, the presence of these newly constructed surroundings brings about a transformation in the lighthouse's scale. This transformation constitutes an instance of cinematic eventhood: as represented in the film, the changes in the surroundings have caused a transformation upon the relative spatial occupancy of the lighthouse.

¹⁵ Consequently, as we shall later see in chapter six, “lighthouse recedes” is an artefactual, not a diegetic event: it is constructed as relative to how the lighthouse is depicted in the film text (i.e. it looks smaller from one shot to the next), and independently of how it subsists within a fictional universe (i.e. in the story, the lighthouse stays put). Additionally, nothing prohibits viewers from constructing the event as “shots change,” such that the macro placed objects and transformations are the film's technical units, not the purported image and sound content.

As the above has begun to indicate, one constructs cinematic eventhood from screen phenomena in a manner analogous to cinematic objecthood: i.e. via the mental operations arising from the cognitivist principles outlined in the previous chapters. For example, when Chrissie is momentarily jerked downwards toward the water, one infers that the shark has pulled on her. When the lighthouse in *Floating Weeds* seems variably diminished, viewers impute to these changes an approximately designated token event: e.g. “lighthouse recedes into distance.” Such interpretations are experienced with near automatic efficiency, even if they are underdetermined by the screen’s literal content: one does not *see* the shark pull on Chrissie; the lighthouse does not actually shift locations. Instead, viewers effortlessly construct a transformation that far exceeds the literally identifiable visual content.

The above has also briefly invoked analytic philosophy, in suggesting that cinematic objects and cinematic events form representational wholes. The remainder of this chapter shall explicate the processes whereby cinematic eventhood is identified. Previous examples shall be reiterated and supplemented with additional cinematic exemplars. At the same time, I shall presume the reader’s familiarity with the four cognitivist principles – constructivism; cooperative mental processes; relations and functions; correction – such that they shall not be defined anew. Instead, I elaborate upon what should seem tacit at this point: one constructs cinematic events from screen phenomena via specified mental principles.

Eventhood and Schemas

The cognitivist approach to cinematic objecthood and eventhood is constructivist. Viewers construct transformations from impoverished and underdetermined screen phenomena.¹⁶ Recall that in *Jaws*, there is an underwater, tilt-up pan of Chrissie swimming. See figure 29:



Figure 29: Jaws

¹⁶ I mean “impoverished” in the sense of “poverty of stimulus,” as discussed in chapter three (see note 10).

The literal visual content may only indicate a silhouetted shape moving across a blue background. Yet viewers construct the images and sounds as representing, “shark *sees/spots* Chrissie,” and further still “shark *decides* to kill Chrissie.” The film makes use of images and sounds that have been associated with the shark’s predatory actions. In terms of images, the camera’s position can be recognized as beneath the water – recalling the tracking, point of view shots, opening the film. In terms of sounds, the shot makes use of extra-diegetic music, which has only played in conjunction with the navigating shark. Viewers can take these devices as conveying the events of *looking* and *planning to kill*, as enacted by the shark.

At the same time, the literal audio-visual content and cinematic techniques underdetermine the construction of token events. As with the opening images of the ocean floor, the same view of a silhouetted, aquatically moving figure might have yielded different constructions – the view from a submarine (!), or a woman swimming in the absence of any underwater presence. In the actual film, viewers spatially construct a transformation implicating a nearby object: before, the shark was roving the sea; now, it sees Chrissie. Temporally, they construct a subsequent event that can be clustered or conjunctive with the currently interpreted act of looking: the shark will kill Chrissie. More abstractly, either construction – spatial and temporal – coalesce in ascribing a mental state to the shark:¹⁷ it intends to feed itself. Here too, a token event is constructed: before, the shark was searching for food; now, it has decided on its next victim. Viewers experience the sounds and images in terms of implicit occurrences: shifts in the shark’s physical and psychological dispositions, as well as those of a future victim.

A comparable example can be seen with the lighthouse at the opening of *Floating Weeds*. As noted, the lighthouse becomes smaller over four images¹⁸ – which viewers experience in terms of transitive identity and transformation. Principles of continuous identity are required to keep identifying the object-lighthouse, from the second image onwards.¹⁹ No less significantly, principles of transformation (i.e. eventhood) allows viewers to experience the lighthouse as not

¹⁷ Changes in mental states are events, although Davidson’s intervention on this hews closer to the psychophysical than this thesis’s commitment to functionalism and constructivist cognitivism can allow (Davidson 2001: 207-228).

¹⁸ Such perceptual phenomena also hinge on the constancy of size – and its absence or mitigation in film. See Arnheim 1958: 20-21.

¹⁹ Whether “keep identifying” counts as “reidentification,” as has been stipulated in the thesis, depends on whether viewers macro place any interceding objects, including the object “cut” or “edit” (cinephiles are wont to attend to – i.e. macro place – technique and poetics, but not *all* viewers will necessarily do the same). Regardless, as this chapter is on eventhood, not objecthood, I do not pursue the matter.

entirely the same over the course of the four images: before, it was next to a bottle; now, it is beyond the further reaches of a post office. Throughout, the identification-schema “transforms” is activated and maintained, without which shifts in the lighthouse’s relative spatial occupancy would prove unintelligible.

The identification of this transformation is also animated by the presumed temporal relations between the images. One constructs each image with respect to the other in terms of proximate or immediate chronological succession. There is little to no temptation to interpret the images as anything but linear and durational, however much alternate readings might be hypothetically conceivable: e.g. the different views of the lighthouse are temporally simultaneous; or, mix future, past and present; or, are chronologically ordered, but are temporally interspersed (i.e. taken on different days, months, etc.).²⁰ Instead, as with the construction “shark sees/intends to kill Chrissie,” viewers unhesitatingly interpret a token transformation above and beyond screen phenomena:²¹ despite the cuts in the images, the event “lighthouse recedes” remains temporally unbroken. More precisely, the frame “token event-recedes” equally mobilizes script-like operations of continuity, above and beyond changes in the film frames (i.e. the cut from one shot to the next).

No less significantly, one can enfold “lighthouse recedes into the distance” into a more broadly composed event, translating as “time passes (in a coastal town).” The latter likewise mobilizes the temporal continuum inferred from successive images and sounds, as well as proximately identified and predicated objects and events. These constructions include the sight of stray objects, apparently deposited or abandoned: the bottle; the docked boat. Such events (x is deposited, y is abandoned) evoke the same impression of quietude conveyed by the receding lighthouse, or the slowly moving fisherman’s boat. One constructs a more largely composed transformation from these relatively minute phenomena in a way that exceeds their presumed content. The images and sounds of a lighthouse, a bottle, crickets as well as several docked and one moving boat(s) need not in themselves evoke quotidian life in a town, or the passage of time in the morning. Regardless, the identification-schema constructs transformations and changes

²⁰ A distant background to the analysis is Gérard Genette’s seminal work on temporal relations in the novel (1972: 77-182). For the correspondent account of temporality in cinematic narration, see Bordwell 1985: 74-98.

²¹ For this reason, in explaining the viewing experience of film texts, the theorist cannot premise their account on the medium’s technical units or even systems: e.g. shots (Salt 2009), “*syntagmes*” (Metz 1971a), or other typologies of editing (Pudovkin 1954, Arnheim 1958). Instead, such terms become relevant only once one has elucidated their function within the viewer’s construction of objecthood and eventhood. In other words: interpretation comes before description.

(e.g. the lighthouse recedes; somebody finished the bottle and left it on the quarry) such that this sequence now represents an aggregation of clustered and conjunctive transformations.

Two more examples help further the point that constructions of eventhood ascribe significance to what would otherwise seem to be inchoate or incidental on-screen content. For the first example, consider again *Jaws*: just after Chrissie's death, a nearby buoy floats leisurely up and down on the waves, while its bell intermittently rings. A lap dissolve then brings us to morning, with a shot of a presumably adjacent part of the sea (i.e. the buoy is no longer in sight). See figures 30a-b:



Figures 30a-b: Jaws

Multiple events can be read into this sequence, but for illustrative purposes, take the following: night has passed into day, such that Chrissie's death remains unnoticed, and at this point is insignificant within the scope of the town's life. From apparently inadequate screen phenomena – the increase in luminosity; the disappearance of the buoy – one constructs a detailed range of transformations, including a change in time (from night to day), a change in location (a different part of the beach). The further implication is that quotidian life resumes, ironically oblivious to a fatal shark attack.

A parallel, albeit more extended, example can be found in *News from Home*. As seen in part two, the film begins with seemingly random images and sounds of a relatively depopulated Manhattan: traffic passes intermittently; pedestrians walk along the sidewalks and streets. At the same time, there is a gradual increase in movement. In the first image, one sees only three cars, with an interval of almost fifteen seconds between the first and the second. By contrast, the second image includes some seven cars passing down the street for nearly a minute. Likewise, the first image contains a trio of men carrying boxes. By contrast, the third image includes at least three sets, each separate from the other, of lone or grouped individuals. In either instance, the change is identifiable, from relatively less to more cars, as well the incremental rise in individuals. While this crescendo is not unconditionally maintained – subsequent images include nearly empty locations – the increase in traffic and pedestrians is sufficiently marked. The (token) identification pervading these images and sounds translates roughly as “a city gradually wakes up.”

One can then construct this event within a broader continuum. At approximately eight minutes into the film, one passes to daybreak, and the subsequent images for approximately six minutes are set in early evening, as well as likewise containing greater numbers of people and traffic. Such conjunctive procedures of assembling smaller events into larger wholes continues as we pass to night, with the burgeoning of the city’s nightlife. When, at about a half-hour into the film, we return to sunlight, it becomes conceivable that the opening half-hour of *News* can be experienced as representing the event “a day in the life of New York.” Again, as with the cited example from *Jaws*, viewers construct consistently identifiable transformations across what should at best be inchoate disparities among the images and sounds. See figures 31a-d:





Figures 31a-d: *News from Home*

Finally, a more elaborate network of eventhood can be seen in what is typically designated as “montage sequences”: e.g. when characters partake in separately individuated, but nonetheless thematically contiguous actions. Take the episode in Murnau’s *Nosferatu* that follows the vampire’s trek on-board a ship from his Transylvanian castle to Germany. Depending on how these images (and sounds) are segmented, they can be construed as cross-cutting between any of the following components: the ship’s crew comes to realize they are carrying ominous cargo; an advised Thomas Hutter rushes on land from Transylvania to Germany; asylum inmate Knock (Alexander Granach) infers Orlok/Nosferatu’s arrival by sea when reading of a plague; Hutter’s fiancée Ellen anticipates the arrival of either Hutter or Orlok; Orlok arrives, having killed every member of the ship, which convinces the townspeople that they are now beset with the plague.

These actions and/or occurrences can be taken in conjunction with one another, identified as “Nosferatu travels from Transylvania to Germany.” The event-*travel* is a transformation upon the object-*Orlok*, which in turn impacts an array of other, equally transformed objects, such that each object is thereby constructed alongside or with an event: Hutter *travels*; Knock *infers*; Ellen *anticipates*; the crew *dies*. Viewers construct a causal network whereby each of these smaller events, or transformations, follows from the larger event of Orlok’s movement across the continent. Further analysis in this section will outline that this account can be simplified with a language of parts-whole relations (i.e. micro-macro eventhood). For now, one need only remark how merely describing these images as a “montage sequence” inadequately conveys different constructions of eventhood which can be occasioned by the scene.

Take the recurrence of water, as a motif and cinematic object. This continuity of objecthood can be strengthened by the identification of eventhood: Orlok *travels* by sea; at one point, Hutter *crosses* a stream. A newly identifiable event, “character(s) cross(es) water,” is evoked in, and/or encompasses these otherwise discrete occurrences: Knock reads a news bulletin detailing outbreaks of the plague at several sea ports; Ellen sits by the sea while anticipating the arrival of Hutter and Orlok; following his arrival, Orlok reaches his newly bought house by crossing a pond on a canoe.

Here, Orlok and Hutter are generically identified as the object-*character* which in turn is constructed alongside a broadly evoked transformation: character is in position-*x*, then in position-*y*, as relative to water. Viewers construct this as a capaciously encompassing entity, object-*x* undergoes transformation-*y*, which in turn can be parsed into finite constituents: the “object” includes Nosferatu and Hutter; the “transformation” includes crossing a stream, a pond, or a sea. Admittedly, still other continuous and discontinuous constructions of eventhood are conceivable. Regardless, what should be clear is that they would further call for an understanding of cinematic eventhood that includes but surpasses more conventional designations of narrative action.

Consequently, as with cinematic objecthood, we can see that with cinematic eventhood one constructs entities from screen phenomena by activating identificatory procedures. However, again just as with constructions of objecthood, this also invites interlocking mental procedures, which are either involuntary (i.e. physiology), drawn from habit (i.e. preconscious) or occasionally deliberate (i.e. conscious). This much has been implied in the films cited above and can be supplemented with further examples.

Eventhood, Mental Processes, and the Preconscious

At the most elementary level, the identification-schema constructs transformations from screen phenomena. As with identifications of objecthood, this activation occurs physiologically. In *Floating Weeds*, one cannot help but perceive the lighthouse as undergoing some vaguely apprehended change. A similar procedure occurs in *Jaws*. As the shark bites Chrissie, one cannot help but notice that a change has been enacted upon her: she is at shoulders length in the water and appears at once happy and relaxed; she has been jerked downwards and now looks alarmed and terrified. Even for viewers who have failed to interpret the film as being about a shark, one

invariably constructs Chrissie's movement as representing a change upon her and her surroundings – most minimally, one identifies an event.

These identifications of eventhood are automatic. Independently of the recognition of token objects – perceptual judgements such as, “that is a swimmer” (as opposed to, “that is a boat” or “airplane”) – the construction of transformations upon these objects occurs independently of prior experience or habit. One detects, via variously apprehended screen phenomena, that something is different from what it was before. In the case of Chrissie being yanked, constancies of colour and shape move (i.e. Chrissie), while new formations of colour and shape appear (i.e. the ripples and bubbles on the water's surface). These represent transformations in objecthood, even allowing for instances of impairment or even pathology where one cannot recognize a human body or face.

Similarly, with the lighthouse in *Floating Weeds*, one constructs transformations. Such interpretations are activated, regardless of whether the object-lighthouse has been successfully identified. For example, if viewers cannot identify a lighthouse, or other such nameable physical entities, one still constructs changes in colours, shapes and movement – either within an image, or from one image to the next. Viewers might identify the phenomena *as per a de dicto* designation for objecthood: e.g. “colours/shapes.” Alternately, they might individuate (i.e. *de re*) different occasions of the phenomena: e.g. “colour/shape-*a*,” “colour/shape-*b*,” etc. Regardless, physiologically and invariably viewers will construct transformations: either in the shifting appearances of “colours/shapes,” or the change from “colour/shape-*a*” to colour/shape-*b*.” In all cases, identifications of transformations are activated – as an invariable and fundamental part of the viewing experience. See diagram xix:

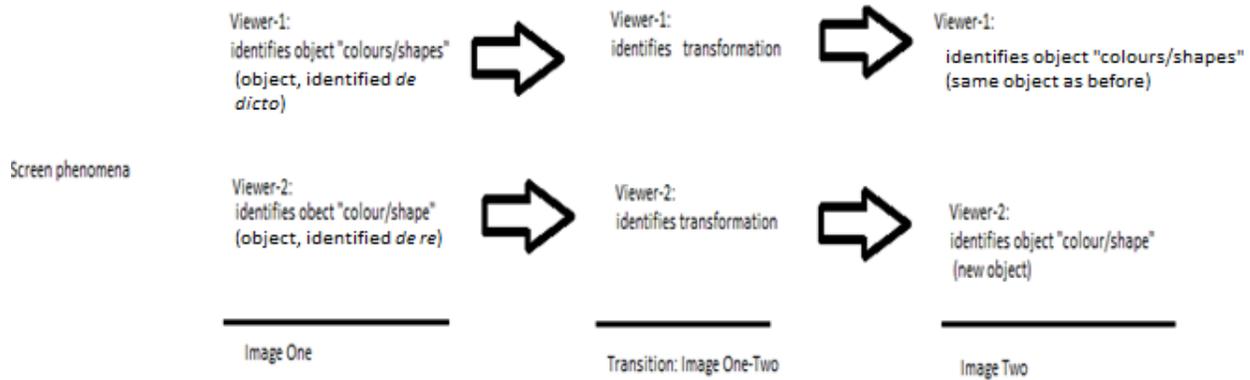


Diagram xix: Identification-type: eventhood

Viewers equally identify events preconsciously. As with preconscious constructions of cinematic objects, viewers unreflectingly decree a token identification of eventhood. Even and especially in the absence of corroborating information, by habit one makes assumptions, while dismissing or overlooking competing interpretations. Habit, as with identifications of objecthood, informs the viewing experience in at least two capacities. With minimally or inadequately evoked perceptual phenomena, one still identifies more capacious detailed transformations that far exceed what has been shown or heard on-screen. With literally observable occurrences, one identifies them in conjunction with prior and anticipated events in the film. This can be seen in more conventionally narrative, as well as abstract or experimental examples from cinematic texts.

A more conventionally narrative example can be found in *Jaws*. At one point, a stick can be seen floating in the water, while a young man calls after his dog. Prior and anticipated events in the film lead one to infer that the pet has been eaten by the shark. One arrives at this interpretation fluently, without deliberation or hesitation, despite that one has not seen the shark eat the dog, nor been lent more plausible corroboration that there has been an attack: e.g. blood; bodily remains; a fellow swimmer or beachgoer who felt, saw or heard something astray. An equally acceptable alternative is that the dog has drowned or succumbed to some random distraction – since it has disappeared so surreptitiously. Instead, one is likely to overlook or tacitly dismiss these alternatives and immediately settle on an event consistent with prior and later occurrences: one has already identified a prior shark attack and expects more will follow.

As this example is drawn from a canonical film text, it seems a likely assumption that eventhood can be equated with or reduced to narration – more technically, causally and thematically decisive occurrences that are interspersed throughout the narration (i.e. plot development and twists). Yet eventhood signifies any identifiable transformation, independent of its conformity to canonical filmmaking practices. An appeal to preconscious processes renders the explanatory adequacy of this stipulation explicit: the most habitual decree is to identify and thereafter predicate transformations that are irreducible to identifiable objects and their affect-laden token predications.

Such decrees prevail even in the absence of an articulated narrative context, as well as when the audio-visual content is indeterminate. Consider the sounds over the black screen opening *Nymphomaniac Vol. 1*. Despite the dispersed noises and lack of visual content, one constructs various token events, even if their import to the ensuing narrative is at this juncture unfathomable. Among audible phenomena, one notes the sound of a passing train as part of a continuum: the (aurally) represented train has already begun its trip and will continue after the sound has ceased.

Likewise, the object water is instantly recognizable, as is the event of dripping. This event involves proximate objects and changes – many of which can be inferred without effort. The water, it is assumed, is moving downwards. It is also presumably hitting a surface. More importantly, its pitch and rhythm evoke a controlled and minimal quantity as well as fall – i.e. the water is audibly dripping and not, for example, coming down in a torrent.

Lest viewers suspect that such abstract inferences surface exclusively in less conventional film texts, one can cite a comparable interpretation in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. In one sequence, the heroine and love interest Marion (Karen Allen) is thrown into a snake pit. The film then alternates between the following images: Marion grasps a statue as it begins to crack; a snake slithers through the open toe cap of her fallen shoe; the piece of the statue onto which Marion is holding cracks, and she falls. See figures 32a-c:



Figures 32a-c: Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981), dir. Steven Spielberg

Here, one can construct eventhood in a more phenomenal capacity, such that the objects and events are identified strictly in terms of movements and lines. The event translating as “Marion grasps the statue as it cracks” becomes “a line moves horizontally left to right” (i.e. the linear shape, movement and direction of the crack).²² Similar identification is constructed from the screen phenomena of the snake slithering through the open toe cap (i.e. the snake is a horizontal line moving rightwards) and the image of the statue finally cracking (i.e. the horizontal line has finished its rightward movement). Regardless of whether the screen phenomena are initially recognizable as a slithering snake or cracking statue, ultimately the event becomes a horizontal line’s movement: it starts, pursues and then finished its trajectory from left to right.²³

²² The line runs diagonally across the statue piece: the upper point is to the right, and the lower point is to the left. Also, the line is more perceptible on the right than on the left – suggesting a wider gap in the statue on the right upper side. Regardless of how a statue would in fact crack, the forthcoming interpretation is to attribute to the line a crescendo movement: rising from left to right. One reason may be visual anisotropy: one’s predisposition is to move from left to right in ascribing significance and weight to visual phenomena. This interpretive priority was first signalled by Heinrich Wölfflin and was subsequently refined with greater robustness within perceptual psychology. See Arnheim 1974: 33-36. Arnheim also maintained, with supporting evidence, that such perceptual modes are physiological, not cultural (1974: 36), although this latter claim has since been challenged (Gross 2009: 131-160). Whether these linear constructions favour preconscious or physiological processes, the sequencing of images – a crack more visible on the right than on the left; a rightward-moving snake; a crack that breaks on the right – strongly suggest consistency in linear movement and direction. The “recency” effect may also play a role (one retroactively experiences the crack as moving rightward, because this is what the snake is then shown to be doing).

²³ This montage incorporating motifs that verge on abstraction has a distinctly Eisensteinian flavour. Stylistic comparisons between Eisenstein and Spielberg have generally gone unnoticed – a poetics of Spielberg’s cinema scarcely mentions Eisenstein (Buckland 2006). One exception may be a stray (adulatory) comment in Kael 1976.

The perception of movement may be physiological – one cannot help but construct some linear displacement. What remains preconsciously processed is the ongoing identification of moving objects from one image to the next. Viewers note movement in image-1 (the cracking statue) and can unhesitatingly decree that the movement in image-2 (the slithering snake) is similar²⁴ (i.e. direction, linear composition). They then make an equivalent decree for image-3 (the statue cracks). If pressed for details, a viewer having constructed this event (“line moves rightwards”) might recapitulate aspects of their interpretive process. Within the context of watching the film, the images and their succession are too quick and phenomenally complex: in making decrees, viewers must identify and predicate a series of shapes and movements, all the while parsing among colours, nominally different objects and other phenomena. The preconscious assures that one can construct these objects and events in clustered and conjunctive terms, aided by the interpretive habit that a film may contain motifs and like patterns.

Finally, as with constructions of objecthood, conscious processes can intercede amidst physiology and the preconscious when interpretation proves vexing. This can be understood by considering two “primitive” films – the first shot by Auguste and Louis Lumière; the second only by Louis Lumière – which are reputed for their evocations of respectively incomplete and completed eventhood.²⁵

Among the interpretive challenges allegedly posed by *L'arrivée d'un train en gare à La Ciotat* is that the film is narratively incomplete. The train arrives, shortly after which the film ends, as passengers are either descending or embarking. In terms of cooperating mental processes, the viewer's conscious reflection plausibly intervenes as soon as the film stops. A hypothetical contemporary viewer might wonder, “what happens next?” or more dismissively, “is that it?” One's viewing experience feels aborted, because one's preconsciously processed expectations are equally abrogated: a train arrives without leaving, such that an anticipated event does not reach completion. The conscious mind then kicks in, attempting to supply more

²⁴ Carnap 1967 famously posits that relations of similarity (and their obverse) undergird all acts of comprehension (what Carnap also calls “quasi-analysis”) – a view which influences the current example, albeit not the entire thesis.

²⁵ Applying structuralist narratology to these and other early films by Lumières is the object of a famous analysis by André Gaudreault 1988: 38-41. Gaudreault's attempt to conflate film technique and narrative function has been criticized elsewhere (Odin 2000). It is worth noting that he invokes Todorovian principles of narrative transformation and closure in attempting to unearth the so-called “*premier récit filmique*” (1988: 37-51). Yet he seems to have missed, or been insufficiently mindful of, the following declaration from Todorov: “[i]l n'y a pas de ‘récit primitif.’” (1978: 23). Todorov then argues how an avowed founding text of Western literature – Homer's *Odyssey* – is categorically estranged from any received wisdom as to the so-called canonical, storytelling format (1978: 21-32).

reflective interpretations: e.g. “I suppose the train will keep going,” or, “that’s how films looked back in 1895.” Viewers need not verbalize such responses, but that some approximations of these interpretations reach the conscious mind of a perplexed viewer need not be in doubt.

Yet the above decrees hinge on viewers’ contingent expectations – as opposed to any determining effects inherent to the text. Viewers equipped with the insight that the film is to be about the arrival of a train – nothing more – are liable to experience *L’arrivée* differently. In terms of cooperating mental processes, the conscious mind need hardly step in. Instead, one constructs that the film’s principal event is the train’s arrival, and effortlessly reads all other occurrences as parts of this transformation: passengers wait, disembark, etc. By the time the film ends, there are no outstanding expectations – i.e. no interpretations requiring conscious processes. The constructed event, *as per* the film’s title,²⁶ is “train arrives” – not, “a train’s journey.”

By contrast, the event or events as represented in *L’arroseur arrosé* reputedly tend to closure: a prankster receives his comeuppance in the form of a spanking after causing a gardener to spray himself with a hose. Yet despite this apparent lack of ambiguity, here too different mental processes cooperate, such that the apparent finality is relative to the viewer’s initial and ultimately satisfied decrees. An obvious, albeit easily overlooked, point is that the title²⁷ announces a completed event; the film thereby represents this very event (the gardener is sprayed) and adjoins to this action two successive consequences (the prankster is spanked; the gardener returns to work). Viewers can preconsciously expect the initial event to be represented in the film, as given in the title (i.e. gardener is sprayed).

Yet once the spraying occurs there is no straightforward reason why the event cannot be identified as complete: the “*arroseur*” has been “*arrosé*,” such that the film could have ended as the prankster makes his getaway or stealthily exits. Instead a chase ensues, whereby for viewers mindful of the title, a conscious interpretation is at least intermittently raised (e.g. “the ‘*arroseur*’ has already been hosed, so what happens now?”). The event identifiable as “gardener chases

²⁶ Danto 1981 famously argued that titles play a determinate role in how one ascribes meaning to textual artefacts (see however note below). It is not always clear in Danto whether the insight is prescriptive (we should always seek out the work’s title before developing an interpretation) or neutral (when we become cognizant of an art-work’s title, this unavoidably determines our interpretation). Notwithstanding the “validity” of interpretations (Hirsch 1967), Danto’s claim, taken in its more modest guise, remains deceptively simple yet correct.

²⁷ Not all films contain opening titles, and neither do all prints of the films made by the Lumière brothers. Watching *L’arroseur* with no advanced knowledge of its title would only increase any narrative indeterminacy: the viewer’s physiological competence for constructions events would still be activated, but any preconsciously processed narrative telos would only be decreed in retrospect (i.e. once the film is over).

prankster” then ends: the prankster is caught, spanked and shamefully leaves, after which the gardener resumes work. Again, as with *L’arrivée*, preconscious and conscious processes differently cooperate, depending on the construction of token events with respect to the film’s text and the text’s other represented occurrences.

The analytic breakdown and/or distinction of events in *L’arrivée* and *L’arroiseur*, as well as previously in *Nosferatu*, has already announced the subsequent cognitivist principles: the importance accorded to relations and functions. Viewers construct events, to be sure. But events are also composed of successive parts: incremental transformations can add up to larger wholes. No less significantly, viewers make decrees as to which event proves most pervasive to the film text, such that variously constructed transformations relate, or not, to minimally one globally composed event. One must therefore consider cinematic eventhood from the standpoint of parts-whole relations, including local and global contexts as well as shifts in attention (i.e. macro/micro placement).

Eventhood and Relations

As with cinematic objecthood, constructions of cinematic eventhood require micro-macro relations, within global and local contexts. Moreover, again as with cinematic objects, events can be placed within one’s interpretive focus. For eventhood, macro wholes are composed of micro parts, and inversely micro parts compose macro wholes. Separately, macro events are placed such that they command one’s interpretive focus at the expense of proximate, micro placed events, and *vice versa*. Finally, local and global contexts differentiate between the degree to which such events pervade the span of a film text.

One can cite examples of macro-micro placement of eventhood in the films discussed so far. In *Fearless Vampire Killers*, Professor Abronsius (Jack MacGowran) snores at his desk such that he appears more machine-like than human: his already rhythmically patterned snoring partakes in a push-pull motion with a roll of paper, such that the latter unwinds and rolls back up in synch with his respective exhales and inhales. See figures 33a-b:



Figures 33a-b: The Fearless Vampire Killers

Viewers are required, to recap the vocabulary from part two (i.e. chapters three-four), to construct one or more cinematic *objects*. For example, “Abronsius” is identified and predicated “mechanical.” Alternately, a more comprehensively delineated “machine” can be identified (i.e. as an object), whose gear-like parts include Abronsius, the paper and even the breathing: this is predicated to approximate degrees as: “operational” (i.e. the machine works); “complex” (i.e. it has interlocking parts); yet “finite” (i.e. the operational parts perform, repeatedly, the same function).

No less significantly, the construction of Abronsius as machine-like mandates the identification and placing of an event. He is “snoring” (i.e. identified event) – or, alternately, the machine (i.e. comprised minimally of Abronsius and the paper) is “running” (i.e. identified event). The event moreover occurs concurrently with nominally separate incidents. Abronsius’s assistant, Alfred (Roman Polanski), is initially rummaging through Abronsius’s bag. The snoring can at first only be heard, until Alfred throws a glance towards Abronsius, and there is a cut to the image of him snoring. Plausibly, the viewer’s attention shifts from Alfred’s actions – looking through Abronsius’s bag; looking at Abronsius – to those of Abronsius, i.e. he is snoring.

From the standpoint of event placing, one accounts for these constructions in macro/micro terms. As Alfred looks through Abronsius’s bag and over to Abronsius, the snoring

is placed as a micro event to Alfred's macro events (i.e. looking through/over). By contrast, when one identifies and predicates Abronsius as "mechanical" in his snoring, then "Abronsius snoring" becomes the macro placed event. Viewers thereby shift their focus from one macro placed event to another, remaining tacitly aware of Alfred's presence while macro placing "Abronsius is snoring." Further interpretive alternations are then allowable. See diagram xx:



Diagram xx: Macro/micro placed events: The Fearless Vampire Killers

Another example of macro-micro relations can be found in *Jaws*. An early scene has Brody taking a call, in the foreground, alerting him to Chrissie's death, while in the background his wife Ellen (Lorraine Gary) tends to a wound incurred by their son Michael, and the two conversations pursue simultaneously. See figure 34:



Figure 34: Jaws

Several interpretive options are possible – depending on the placing and composing of the events within a macro/micro capacity.

By one reading, the images and sounds represent two unrelated events. One event is that Brody receives a phone call, inferable as the first indication that all might not be safe in the water. Another event is that Michael gets the blood washed from his hand, which he cut in a non-swimming-related incident. In this interpretation, the two incidents are discrete. One alternately places Brody's phone conversation, and Ellen tending to Michael's wound, in macro-micro relations. When one attends to Brody's conversation, this becomes the macro placed event, as relative to the micro event of Ellen looking after Michael – and *vice versa*, when one shifts the attention back to Ellen-Michael.

Conversely, one can infer a link between the two occurrences: Brody will soon appraise the threat posed to the entire town, including his family (i.e. the shark attacks). The theme of endangerment is evoked by his son's injury (once his wound has been tended to, he asks, "can I go swimming?"). In this second interpretation – the two incidents are related – one simultaneously constructs them as micro parts, composing a more comprehensively construed macro whole. The micro events remain "Brody takes a phone call (pertaining to police business)" and "Ellen tends to Michael's wound." However, the macro whole, housing either micro part, becomes "community fends itself against shark" – one that extends over most of the film text.²⁸

Viewers therefore construct micro events as composing a broadly identifiable macro event. In the above example, "Brody takes a phone call" and "Ellen heals Michael's wound" are part of "shark terrorizes community," or "community faces danger." Likewise, in *L'arroseur arrosé*, "gardener gets sprayed" and "gardener spansk prankster" are part of a more broadly composed event: "gardener's work is interrupted by prankster." Here, viewers make a decree as to which macro event most adequately covers most of the film text. Such a macro composed event can include the arrival of the train in a station (i.e. *L'arrivée d'un train*), or the passage from night to day for the Empire State Building (i.e. *Empire*).

²⁸ A significant, if not apparent, antecedent here is Goodman's inductive theory, whereby select predicates are decreed to be more *entrenched* and *projectible* than others (Goodman 1983). At the same time, not all viewers, *as per* Goodman's constructive nominalism, will share the same decrees (Goodman 1978). The argument might also recall narratology. Both Todorov 1969 and 1971 argue that narrative structures can be reduced to a single transformation – an insight which Todorov knowingly carries over from far more heterogeneous (and richly theorized) concepts advanced by the Opojaz and their Russian contemporaries. A signal difference with the argument posited here remains that not all events constructed by the viewer will globally compose the macro event: i.e. not every constructed transformation will always be incorporated into the event decreed to be the most significant or pervasive within the film text.

Alternately, any constructed event can be parsed into finer units. In *Jaws*, “Brody takes a phone call” is composed of the following: the phone rings; Brody picks up the receiver; Brody speaks; Brody listens, etc. Here too, viewers construct a macro composed event – “Brody takes a phone call” – as incorporating micro parts: “the phone rings,” etc. Similar procedures obtain in *L’arroseur*, as well as *L’arrivée d’un train*. In the former, “gardener spansks the prankster” is composed of multiple strikes. In the latter, a woman hurriedly boarding the train with her daughter is composed of her rushing towards the train and then mounting it.

Viewers can thereafter correct their constructions of eventhood to accommodate complementary and/or additional interpretations. As already stated, in *Jaws* “Brody takes a phone call” can be placed as macro relative to the micro placement of “Ellen tends to Michael’s wound.” Comparatively, in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the opening during which Indiana raids a statuette enfolds multiple relations of macro-micro placement: e.g. “Indiana takes the statuette” can be placed as macro as relative to the micro placed event of Indiana’s assistant (Alfred Molina) watching him.

Alternately, the entire event “Indiana raids a statuette” can (ultimately) be placed as micro as relative to the macro placed event occupying the rest of the film, i.e. Indiana’s pursuit of the ark.²⁹ Here, “Indiana raids the (lost) ark” is interpreted as covering most of the film text. By contrast, “Indiana steals a statuette” can only tenuously be linked to the previously cited, globally composed event (i.e. “Indiana pursues ark”). Similar interpretive principles hold for any range of cinematic exemplars. In *Floating Weeds*, the event “lighthouse recedes” might only

²⁹ That some events are experienced by viewers as more incidental or transient recalls the distinctions between motifs in Tomachevski 1965, as well as Roman Jakobson’s notion of the “dominant” (Jakobson 1971b). Unfortunately, neither proves adequate to the current thesis. For Tomachevsky, one pair of motifs is defined according to the fabula/syuzhet divide: bound motifs constitute the fabula, while free motifs are superimposed at the syuzhet level (Tomachevski 1965 269-270). Yet because parts of the syuzhet can be traced back to the fabula, and *vice versa*, this creates ambiguity as to whether any motif will incorporate bound or free elements. If “Chrissie swims” is a bound motif, at the fabula level, but “Chrissie swims *gracefully*” is a free motif, within the syuzhet, then by what interpretive procedures does the viewer parse this according to this model? Therefore, one needs to separate the identification of an event (or other entity) from its predication – an insight that brings us to Jakobson’s dominant, whereby one makes decrees as to what matters more, and/or less, when ascertaining artefacts. The approach has influenced film studies (Thompson 1988), yet upon inspection Jakobson’s stipulation remains vague. The dominant is invoked to address literary genres and favoured techniques (rhyme dominates poetry); historical eras and art-forms (painting dominates the Renaissance); the functions of language (the aesthetic subordinates all other functions in the literary arts), etc. There is no distinction as to whether the dominant excludes alternatives (e.g. in some eras, there could be no poetry without rhyme), marginalizes alternatives (e.g. if painting is the art of the Renaissance, then other art-forms receive less attention), or serves as a frame (e.g. one reads *Anna Karenina* for its aesthetic purposes, which determines how its phatic and conative content is to be experienced). Jakobson would have to distinguish between *functions* of the dominant, which his brief article does not attempt.

tangentially be incorporated into an event as covering most of the film text: i.e. an acting troop passes through the town. See diagram xxi:

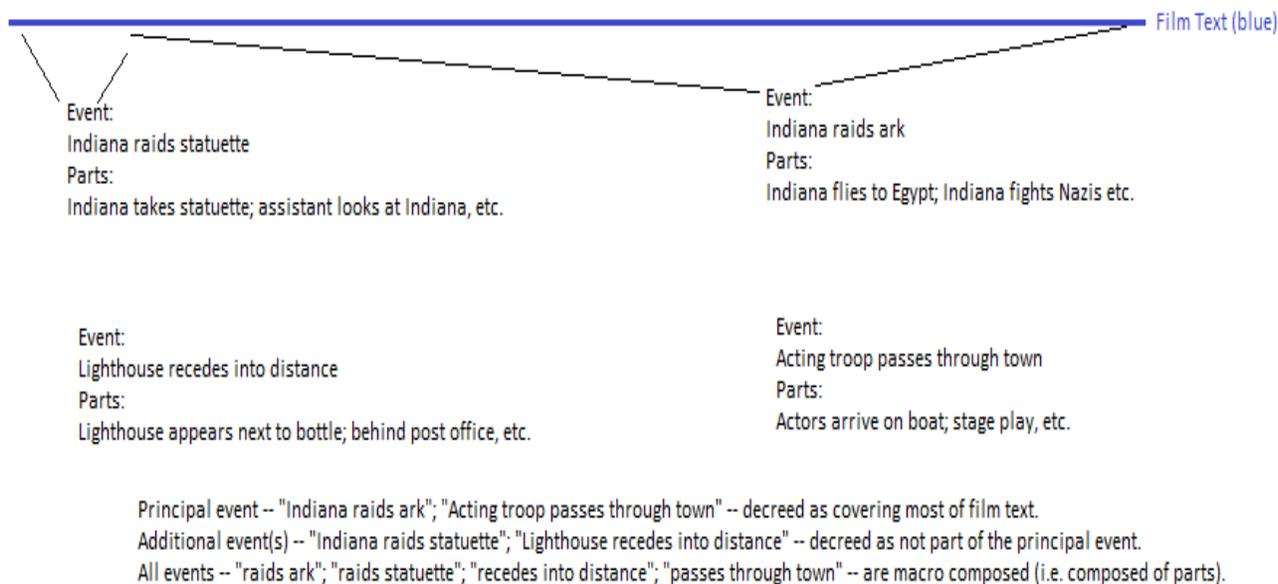


Diagram xxi: Global eventhood: *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Floating Weeds*.

In such instances, viewers construct and correct interpretations, insofar as events relate to one another, in terms of composition (e.g. micro events compose macro events) and placing (e.g. macro placed events command greater focus than micro placed events). Such decrees and corrections incorporate as much select images and sounds as the entire film text. Summarized as such, this viewing experience may sound laborious; the viewer's activity is nonetheless executed expediently and frequently unreflectingly, due in part to physiological operations as well as the assimilated habits of the preconscious.

Nonetheless, macro-micro composition and placement introduce a potential ambiguity, which is met with the terms local/global. Macro composition can signal an event constructed irrespective of any globally composed eventhood: i.e. an event decreed to be the most significant or pervasive to the film text. We have seen this in *Jaws*, whereby "Brody takes a phone call" can be parsed into "phone rings," "Brody picks up the receiver" etc., regardless of "Ellen heals Michael's wound" or "Chrissie's death." Likewise, in *Floating Weeds*, "lighthouse recedes into the distance" can be parsed into the successive appearances of the lighthouse, across the four opening images, regardless of how this pertains or not to other events in the film. Either example

becomes instances of local eventhood: when the event is constructed irrespective of the film's decreed globally composed event.

Conversely, an event is globally composed when it is decreed to be pervading most of the film text. For example, as seen in *Jaws*, "Brody takes a phone call" and "Chrissie's death" can both be interpreted as composing "shark terrorizes community," or more aptly "community defends itself against shark." An additional example might be the flashing black/grey throughout *The Flicker*. Above and beyond any individual flashes, these repeated occurrences are incorporated into the film's globally composed event: "black/grey flashes repeatedly." Here, despite the absence of narration in any canonical or orthodox sense, viewers invariably decree a mereologically composed transformation as the most significant to the film text.

Unavoidably, not all constructions of eventhood will be readily experienced in terms global composition. As noted, the transformations relative to the lighthouse in *Floating Weeds* may elude the composition of a global, macro event. Similarly, "Ellen heals Michael" in *Jaws* might not be initially or even ultimately constructed in terms of conceivable macro events at the global level of either film. In this respect, global composition pertains to whether individual events adhere or not to constructions of eventhood pervading the film. Moreover, as we shall see in chapter six, on predication, both local and global contexts play a fundamental role in one's experience of events as "long" or "short."

The preceding analysis has outlined that events are differently constituted and may variably occupy the viewer's attention. Nonetheless, as with constructions of cinematic objecthood, one must consider that shifts or alterations in constructions of eventhood inform the viewing experience of film texts. For such considerations, one turns to correction.

Eventhood and Correction

As previously stated, viewers construct events from screen phenomena by identifying transformations of cinematic objecthood. More importantly, constructions of cinematic eventhood require that token events – e.g. a gardener is sprayed; night passes to day; a shark devours a victim; a lighthouse changes apparent size (i.e. relative to its screen dimensions) – must be continually interpreted anew. These revised interpretations involve that events are either related to one another in proportions of importance (i.e. macro-micro placement). Alternately, they involve that broader constructions of eventhood be composed of smaller units (i.e. macro-

micro composition). In either case, the procedure that allows viewers to differently place and compose separately identifiable events is correction.

Recall that correction pertains to disjunctive or discontinuous mental operations. With eventhood, it can signal that one starts with an initially identifiable event- x , and then interprets it differently with respect to another event- y . Such corrective interpretations would still be premised on principles of composition (e.g. events- x and y may compose event- z) and placement (e.g. event- x may command interpretive priority over event- y , even as the latter still mandates one's subsidiary attention). See diagram xxii:

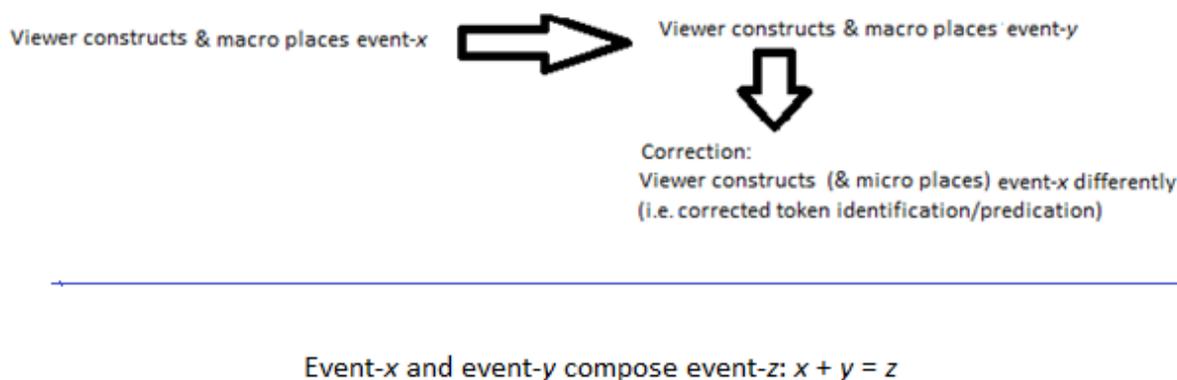


Diagram xxii: Eventhood and correction

Equally, correction can entail that a continuum within the construction of eventhood is interrupted. Within continuous constructions of eventhood, each frame (i.e. each activation of the identification-schema for eventhood) is assessed as adhering to relations of transitivity: event- x is decreed to be entailing y , which then entails z , such that all three frames (events- x , y and z) compose a whole. By contrast, with correction, the frames can be differentiated: event- x will be decreed to be continuous with y , but event- z is decreed separate. These concerns shall be reprised in the next chapter. However, see diagram xxiii:

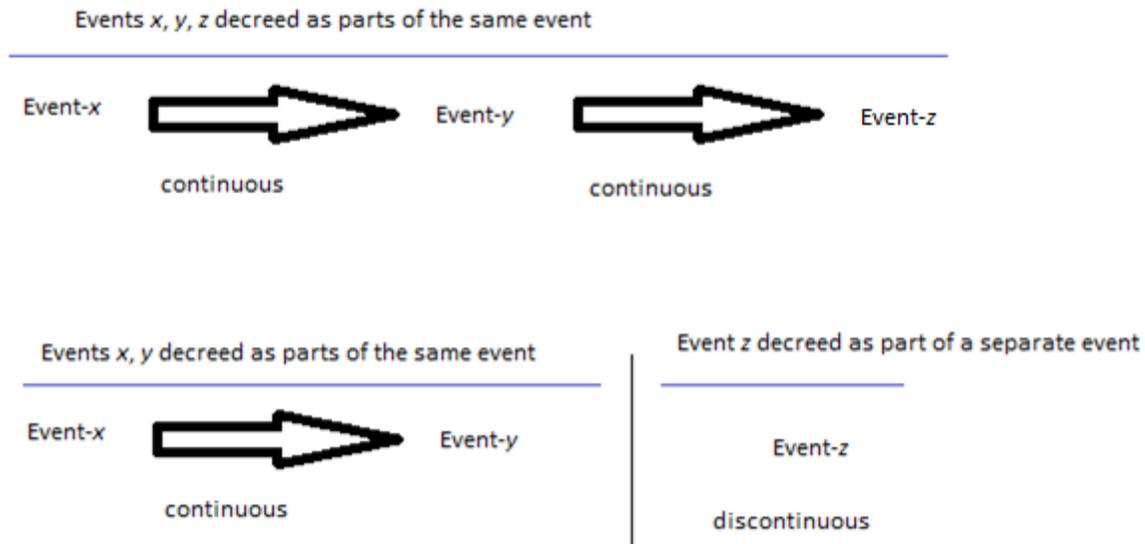


Diagram xxii: Eventhood: continuity, discontinuity

Nonetheless, decrees on eventhood can prove intuitive and even inchoate to the conscious mind – relying most often on physiological and preconscious processes. Examples below shall illustrate the subtleties whereby one either corrects or clusters screen phenomena into ever-varied constructions of eventhood.

One can start with a seemingly straightforward edit in *Jaws*. The shark biologist Matt Hooper (Richard Dreyfuss) is studying the remains of Chrissie and reaches a conclusion regarding Chrissie’s death contrary to the town authorities. Hooper opines, while looking towards the camera, “it was a shark.” At this moment, the film cuts to an image of a now dead shark, on the seaside docks, having its bloodied mouth opened by its presumed captors. The transition is a striking one, in part because a continuity in eventhood is constructed across the spatio-temporal disparities of the ostensible screen content. In addition to what seems to be happening at that point on-screen (i.e. “Hooper inspects a corpse”; “shark’s mouth is opened”), another pervading event is evoked: “Chrissie’s death.” See figures 35a-b:



Figures 35a-b: *Jaws*

Hooper's line (i.e. "it was a shark") is understood in the context of an event already represented in the film: "shark kills Chrissie." Of equal importance, however, is that the image of the shark having its mouth opened in the subsequent image does the same: it partly serves to represent the event, previously evoked in the film, "shark kills Chrissie." In the image of the shark's opened mouth, one sees the source of Chrissie's death (i.e. a shark's opened jaw) and a likely consequence (i.e. the profusion of blood around the jaw). Viewers can thereafter construct associations between different aspects of the representational content (e.g. a shark's opened mouth; a woman's death; blood on the shark's mouth), based on their understanding of the film's evoked world (i.e. sharks can devour victims; this results in blood loss).

These various constructions of eventhood mobilize mental operations of continuity (i.e. "Chrissie's death," constructed as an event) and discontinuity (i.e. the cut from Hooper's utterance to the opened shark mouth). More importantly, one requires corrective interpretations to mentally shift between relations of different macro-micro events: e.g. at first, event-x might be placed as macro ("Hooper inspects body"), while event-y is micro ("Chrissie's death"); afterwards, separate configurations are devised ("Chrissie's death" is micro placed again, over the course of a separate macro placed event, "shark's mouth is opened"). See diagram xxiv:



Diagram xxiv: *Macro/micro placed eventhood: Jaws-a*

Correction here intervenes for both macro and micro placement. One places an event as macro (i.e. “Hooper inspects body”) and then must, with the cut, place a separate event as macro (i.e. “shark’s mouth is opened”). One equally places an event as micro (i.e. “shark kills Chrissie”) and then *again* place this event as micro: it recurs across what is otherwise a stop-start effect of different (macro placed) events. Conversely, without the mental operation of correction, viewers would neither construct and macro place different events, nor would the same event be micro placed twice (i.e. against the differently constructed macro placements). See diagram xxv:

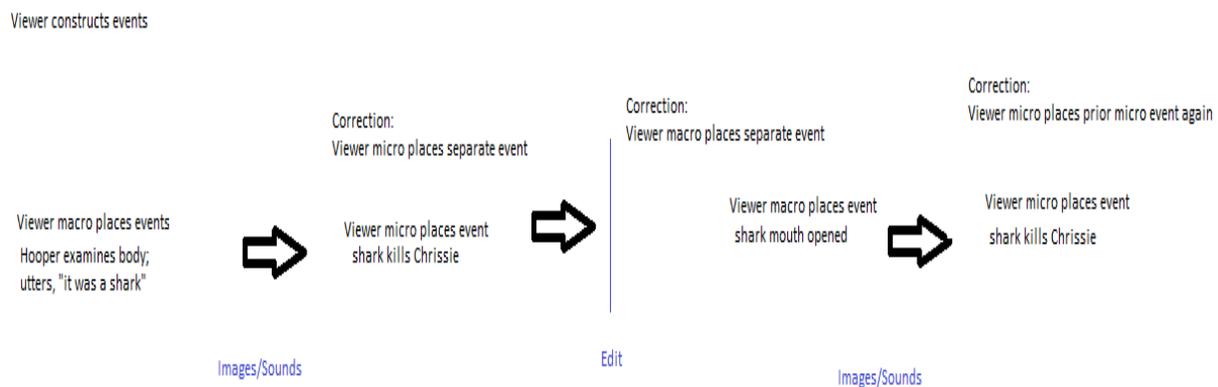


Diagram xxiv: Macro/micro placed eventhood: Jaws-b

Likewise, micro-macro composition requires that viewers make decrees and then potentially correct interpretations as to whether select events fit, or not, into larger wholes. This becomes especially apparent as, at the level of macro composition, an event can be distributed across intermittently occurring micro parts.³⁰ In Jean-Luc Godard’s *Le gai savoir*, Émile Rousseau (Jean-Pierre Léaud) and Patricia Lumumba (Juliet Berto) meet repeatedly every night in a darkened, empty television studio to discuss both the philosophical, political and even pedagogic import of how photographic, cinematic and televisual images and sounds are constructed. However, they lead lives outside of their periodic encounters. Viewers must decree whether and to what extent such extra-curricular occurrences, as it were, form part or not of their encounters (i.e. are part of this macro event): e.g. more than once, Patricia is prevented from

³⁰ Davidson makes an identical point, albeit in the context of a separate argument as to whether events need be defined as universals or particulars: “events have parts that are events, and the parts may be discontinuous temporally or spatially (think of a chess tournament, an argument, a war).” (2001: 183).

arriving on time for unspecified reasons; another night, Émile announces he is going to bomb a theatre for screening films dubbed.³¹

Viewers of the first event (Patricia's tardiness) might decree that Patricia was detained for reasons irrelevant to her meetings with Émile. In this regard, her lateness is caused by an entirely separate (unspecified) event, which is momentarily micro placed while the occurrence of "Patricia arrives late" is constructed and macro placed. At the same time, viewers can note Émile's complaints that it's respectively two or three in the morning by the time she shows up. One thereafter incorporates "Patricia arrives in the middle of the night" as composing the macro event "Patricia and Émile meet (repeatedly)" – separately from what might have caused Patricia's delay. In either case, corrective judgement parses as to which events compose the macro events spanning the film (i.e. "Patricia arrives late" composes "Patricia and Émile meet"), as well as which events are globally placed outside this macro event (i.e. "something detains Patricia" is globally micro placed as relative to the globally composed macro event). One shifts between these varied compositions and placements of eventhood thanks to corrective judgement.

The same interpretive operations hold for the second event (Émile's announced terrorism).³² Viewers might construe it as "propaganda by the deed," following his nightly seminars with Patricia, such that both the planned bombing and the meetings are composed as part of the same, identified entity: Patricia-Émile analyse and seek to revise their understanding of image-sound constructions. The purported bombing might also stand as a parallel or diversionary project for Émile, as his activity with Patricia are confined to their meetings within the television studio. In the first case – the bombing and the meetings compose a single event – the temptation becomes to understand Patricia-Émile's encounters, and everything that precedes and follows, in some jest or irony. In the latter – the bombing is a separate event from the meetings – one might still construct the bombing with some levity, albeit such Patricia-Émile's encounters retain a kernel of earnestness or pedagogical import.

³¹ In an otherwise valiant attempt to negotiate this challenging film (Monaco 1976: 203-212), James Monaco flippantly notes, of the two characters: "They meet for seven evenings (that is the structure of the film), and more often than not one of them is late (that is its plot)." (1976: 204). I take that it should be clear, at this point, why such parenthetical asides are at best woeful attempts to theorize the construction of eventhood within film texts. More exactly, Bordwell has sought to subsume potentially all of Godard's film corpus within a narratological model (1985: 311-334). Yet this approach remains explanatorily inadequate – not all constructions of cinematic eventhood, especially in Godard's cinema (!), can be assimilated to a narrative model.

³² Even if Émile's utterance is meant to be jocular – i.e. there will be no bombing – viewers still construct an event: i.e. "x makes a joke."

The above constructions of eventhood show that viewers need continually and expediently adjust and alter their composing and placement of cinematic events. Moreover, this may involve minimally specified conjectures (e.g. x caused Patricia to arrive late) or successive constructions following new screen phenomena (e.g. the shark having its mouth opened equally evokes, however obliquely, Chrissie's death). Further examples, to be considered below, confirm the extent to which viewers correct their prior identifications of token events: screen phenomena identified as event- x might thereafter be identified as y , if only by metaphorical association. Alternately, an otherwise, nominally single action can be parsed into separately identifiable events, as followed from variously noticeable shifts or changes on the image and soundtrack.

On metaphorical constructions of eventhood, take Sergei Eisenstein's *October (Ten Days that Shook the World)* (1928). When Kerensky (Nikolay Popov) assumes leadership of the Provisional Government, the opening of the Tsar's palace doors as he stands before them is intercut with the preening and spinning of a mechanical peacock.³³ One may first read the peacock as predicating the surrounding officers as risible and de-humanized. However, such a reading is corrected as the peacock executes its movements. It first cocks its head, then remains still, which is followed by images of Kerensky's boots and gloves. Over a rapid succession of images, it turns its head again. Subsequent images have it spinning and preening, after which the doors swing open before Kerensky. Throughout these events – initially identifiable as “peacock preens,” “doors open,” “Kerensky enters” – there are also reiterated images of the officers and guards. These latter images can be identified as “the officers-guards stare and smile,” or more simply, “the officials stand by.” See figure 36a-h:

³³ Excepting the Odessa Steps sequence in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), the montage of Kerensky and the peacock may be the most widely dissected moment in any Eisenstein film (see relevant analyses and citations in Bordwell 1993, Christie and Taylor 1993, Taylor 2002, and more briefly in Perez 1998: 152-155 – among other sources). Its theoretical import to the ensuing analysis is to specify that constructions of micro-macro relations and acts of correction underlie the viewer's experience of eventhood throughout. Such operations are crucial to one's experience of the sequence yet remain inadequately theorized if one only itemizes the technical units or poetics of the scene: e.g. there are reiterated images of the officers, yet these are micro placed if viewers are attending instead (i.e. macro placing) Kerensky and the peacock (i.e. see subsequent analysis).



Figures 36a-h: October (Ten Days that Shook the World) (1928), dir. Sergei Eisenstein

Within this reading, the viewer places the successive events of the preening, the opening and the entering as equally successive macro events. By contrast, the reiterated images of the officers and the guards remain micro placed, even as they appear on screen: they function as background filler to the macro events (i.e. the preening-opening-entering) which command one's attention. What imports within this viewing experience is not so much that each shot follows strictly from an antecedent within an edited sequence: even when the peacock has begun its preening, one is entreated to a recurrent image of the officers. What proves more fundamental to the viewing experience is that one selects, prioritizes and discards among images and sounds in first constructing, then correcting, an event: for viewers who link the peacock's actions to those undertaken by Kerensky, the reiterated image of the officers necessarily carries less force. See diagram xxvi:

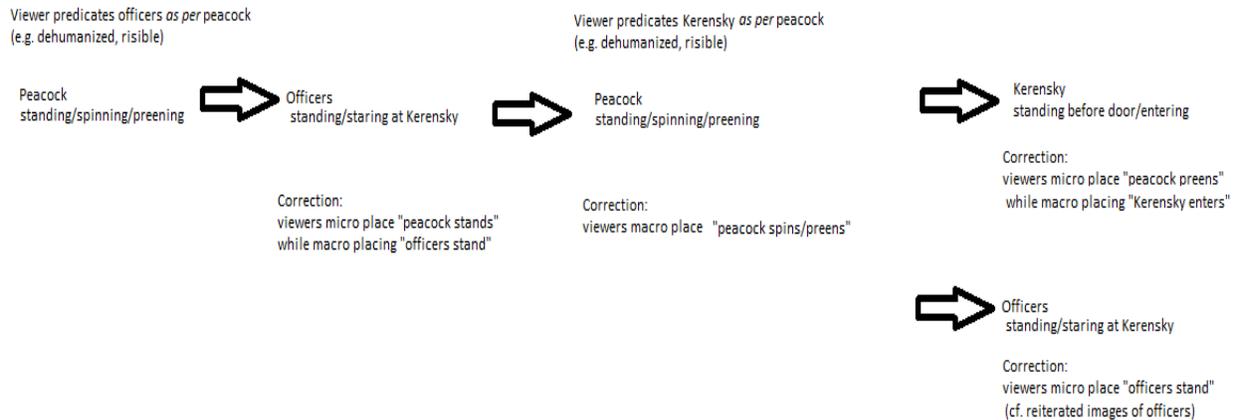


Diagram xxvi: Eventhood and correction: October (Ten Days that Shook the World).

Such corrections can also be noted when one constructs separate events from what would seem to be nominally uniform actions. In François Truffaut's *Tirez sur le pianiste* (1960), aspiring and virtuoso pianist Charlie Kohler/Edouard Saroyan (Charles Aznavour) arrives at the apartment-office of his prospective impresario, shortly after which the previous visitor, a would-be violinist of meagre skills, exits the building and crosses the court-yard below.³⁴ Truffaut scores part of the exit of the violinist to the rousing music played by Edouard once he has sat down with the impresario. One interpretation is that these screen phenomena represent separate constructions of eventhood: Saroyan plays; while the woman exits. Yet an equally pertinent option is that the start of Saroyan's music marks the start of an event, with respect to the departing violinist.

The start of the music indicates a categorical shift in the soundtrack and image content. In terms of the soundtrack, the disparity between the music and the sounds preceding it is flagrant. Because of its initial loudness, as well as its fast rhythm and the overall formal dexterity of Saroyan's playing, the music has an insistent and exalted quality. This quality contrasts with

³⁴ The ensuing analysis is illustrative of a universal theory – and is not intended as a definitive interpretation of any specified text (i.e. *Tirez*): I deliberately omit any mention that the woman is also playing an instrument upon Charlie/Edouard's arrival, which a more comprehensive account of this sequence would have to consider. Still, James Monaco argues that this content is primarily digressive. It strays from the protagonist, to feature "a woman whom [the protagonist will] never know, but with whom he at least has shared both a moment and a way of life." (1976: 46). Yet his analysis reduces *Tirez* to an approximation of Neo-realism: a purportedly goal-oriented narrative is interspersed with digressions, conveying the distractions and varieties of quotidian life. By contrast, the atypical soundtrack favours that viewers will construct eventhood differently from Monaco's account – which, in turn, ought to hold implications for poetics and film history (i.e. *la nouvelle vague* was more than an extension of Neo-realism within a different national cinema/decade).

what precedingly appears on the soundtrack: the discreet and predictably paced rhythm of the woman's footsteps as she walks. The music serves to lend the images that follow a grandiose and emphatic tone.

In terms of images, both the content and visual techniques participate in this stop-start effect. As the woman appears prior to the start of the music, she is filmed in medium close-up, with the camera tracking back in tandem with her movement. She has a demure and reticent air, looking downward and holding her violin case up to her chest. Yet both the visual content and the camera-subject relations shift with the start of the music. The woman stops walking, while the camera keeps tracking. She then readjusts her handbag and repositions her violin case. Her stature and poise now appear more confident, as she looks outward and holds her body up straight.

If the start of the music helps signal a shift in both how the woman and her departure are portrayed, this shift is then maintained in subsequent images and sounds. The film continues to depict the woman's exit once she is outside the building. Both her body language and the camera-subject relations secure continuity with her earlier portrayal in the hallway. In terms of body language, she maintains her upright posture. In terms of camera work, she is crucially filmed at first in a tilt-up, which helps lend her an air of prominence. The camera then pans to follow her movement and reframe her as she walks toward the building complex's exit. These images lend the apparently incidental action of leaving a building greater import. The implication is that the camera must be adjusted spatially so that the action may be prolonged and reach its near-completion. See figures 37a-f:





Figures 37a-f: Tirez sur le pianiste (1960), dir. François Truffaut

More importantly, the music continues uninterrupted across a cut from the woman inside the building to her now outside.³⁵ The music does not respect the ellipsis in the image-track between different locations (i.e. inside/outside) and time periods (i.e. the duration it would have taken the woman to travel from a hallway, presumably several floors up, to the middle of a courtyard). Such discrepancies indicate that, while this music is meant to be Saroyan playing, it now functions, irrespective of its diegetic source, to portray the woman's departure from the building. This sound-image coordination supports the interpretation that the music-playing and the woman's departure are part of the same event. This event, translating as "woman departs apartment complex," can be constructed separately from Saroyan's playing (i.e. within the diegetic context), as well as further demarcated from the woman's walk down the hallway prior to the music's start.

Corrective interpretation intervenes in the following capacity. Viewers can initially construct the woman walking in the hallway, as Saroyan enters the impresario's apartment, as an

³⁵ Following the cut to the exterior (i.e. when the woman is crossing the courtyard), there is an increase in the music's volume. A case could be made that the music is now extra-diegetic, in contradistinction to its diegetic function during the images of the woman in the hallway. Such an observation is valid, yet it neither obviates nor elucidates that the start of the music helps construct the woman's departure as a separate event. Parsing the soundtrack into diegetic and extra-diegetic sources is instructive for stylistic analysis, yet within the viewing experience, the more fundamental distinctions remain constructions of objecthood and eventhood (which can include identifying "film techniques" as objects).

identifiable event involving an object. The violinist is the object, while the event is that she is moving through a delimited spatial area: the hallway. This interpretation requires successive corrections as soon as Saroyan begins to play. Viewers are more likely to construe the previously cited transformations – the adjustment of the handbag and violin case; the stop and start of the walking; the start of the music – as micro parts composing the macro event, “woman departs building.” As indicated, such an interpretation requires that “Saroyan plays” – i.e. that diegetically he is in the apartment, playing the piano – is placed as a micro event, to the macro placed event “woman departs building.” Consequently, the music as it appears on the soundtrack composes the latter (i.e. “woman departs building”) and not the former (i.e. “Saroyan plays”) event. Such a construal might seem highly counter-intuitive, except that it accords well with the transition: the music continues uninterrupted, despite the apparent spatio-temporal discrepancies within the diegesis. See diagram xxvii:

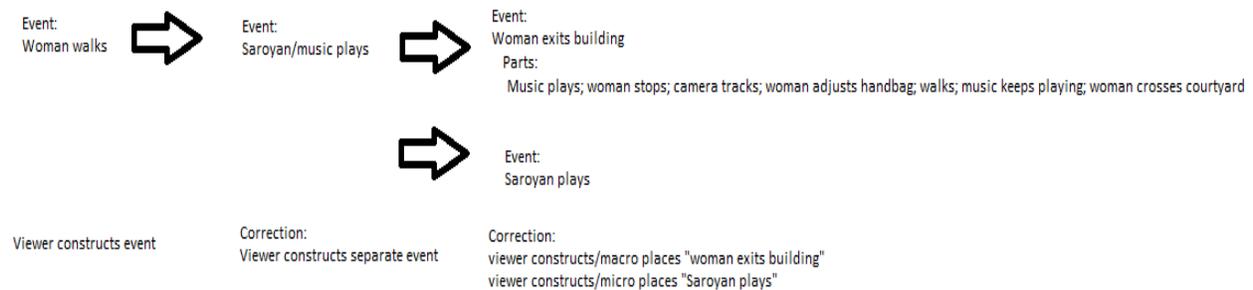


Diagram xxvii: Eventhood and correction: Tirez sur le pianiste

Throughout, viewers make decrees, which are thereafter maintained or corrected, mobilizing mental operations of respectively continuity and discontinuity. One constructs the images and sounds of the violinist in the courtyard on a continuum with the antecedent images and sounds of her in the hallway, albeit following the start of the music, based on sufficiently consistent identificatory factors: e.g. the unbroken playing of the music; the similarity in the woman’s demeanour and air. Conversely, one constructs the images and sounds following the start of the music as a new event, based on marked inconsistencies: e.g. the change in the soundtrack; the shifts in the woman’s posture and relation to the camera.

Conceivably, viewers might miss these screen phenomena, or decree an alternate interpretation: e.g. all images pertaining to the woman might be placed as a micro event, with

one's exclusive focus placing "Saroyan plays" as a macro event. Regardless, similar decrees and corrective procedures would intercede: one would still identify the start of the music with an event, and relegate the woman's appearance to micro placement, even as she is prominently featured on-screen. Underlying each interpretation, and concomitantly the viewing experience, one constructs transformations as pertaining to cinematic objecthood, in ways that are successive, complementary and/or conflicting.

Conclusion

The above concern – that successive events are constructed in the viewing experience as alternately complementary or conflicting – merits closer scrutiny. Just what viewers do when constructing differently identified events in relation to one another hinges on mental acts of predication. As with cinematic objecthood, events are token predicated in affect-laden terms. These token predications also function *as per* predication-types: i.e. short and long eventhood. The next chapter delineates the mental operations and affect-laden interpretations whereby events are predicated – in both local and global contexts. These operations hinge no less on cooperating mental processes – i.e. physiological based schemas, the predication-types short and long, as well as preconscious processes. They also mobilized instances of correction, whereby successive events are constructed in alternately conjunctive or disjunctive terms.

Finally, as with cinematic objecthood, viewers predicate events *as per* an interpretively invariant, delimited range of alternatives. Across an otherwise seemingly incommensurable variety of film texts – e.g. films by Spielberg, Godard, Lumière, etc. – viewers call upon the same fundamental competences in predicating cinematic transformations by type: i.e. short and long eventhood. More simply, the texts and token interpretations (including, the identified token events) will vary. The more fundamental (and theoretically rewarding) insight remains: the types of identification (eventhood) and predication (short/long) remain the same.

Chapter Six: Predicating Cinematic Events

Introduction

We have seen in the previous chapter that viewers can experience cinematic eventhood differently. In his analysis of *Tirez sur le pianiste*, James Monaco notes that Saroyan passes a female violinist on his way to an impresario. As they cross in the hallway, the film momentarily remains with the woman, with Saroyan entering the impresario's apartment behind a closed door. Monaco maintains that this episode is about Saroyan's chance encounter with "a woman whom [he will] never know, but with whom he at least has shared both a moment and a way of life." (1976: 46). The images and sounds featuring the woman constitute a digression from Saroyan's visit to the impresario: a visit that leads to his wife's suicide and his current predicament.

By contrast, an alternate viewing experience yields differently constructed events. One can still construct the woman's departure as narratively digressive. Yet the images and sounds occasion separately identifiable events. Prior to the start of Saroyan's music, the woman appears to be walking demurely and quietly. By contrast, with the start of Saroyan's music, her movement and posture change, as does the range of affects associated with her actions. She then exits the building more assertively. The booming music of Saroyan's playing on the soundtrack ensures that this departure is anything but quiet. Instead, before and after the playing of Saroyan's music, one can parse two events with respect to the woman: "x walks through hallway," followed by, "x exits building."

In this current chapter, I look more closely at these interpretive concerns. Initially, the start of the music playing marks an interruption as relative to the prior occurrences and transformations. Viewers who are following the docile steps of the woman must construct an entirely separate occurrence on the soundtrack with the playing of Saroyan's music. Their attendant expectations – the woman will keep walking with an air of quietude – are corrected, such that one must decree alternate transformations. These alternate events become identifiable not just initially as, "music plays," but eventually as "woman departs building." Beyond the interrupting effect of the music, "woman departs building" is a separately constructed event that

is integrated into the continuity of the film text – although viewers might place the same event differently in local and global contexts.

Predicating Cinematic Eventhood: Short and Long

In the language of this chapter, “music starts” is experienced as a short event – an interrupting or disjunctively constructed action. As with the predication-types for objecthood, the predication-type short, for eventhood, is physiologically based and inaccessible to conscious introspection. Equally, as with predication-types for objecthood, its determining effect can still be experienced in a preconscious and ultimately conscious capacity. Viewers grasp, however intuitively and inchoately, that something is different as relative to the prior continuum of events. This discontinuity can prove temporary, or thereafter initiate a separately identified continuity of events. In the latter case, the interrupting short event is incorporated into a separately identified long event. In the former case, the interruption stops and the previously identified long event resumes. See diagram xxviii:

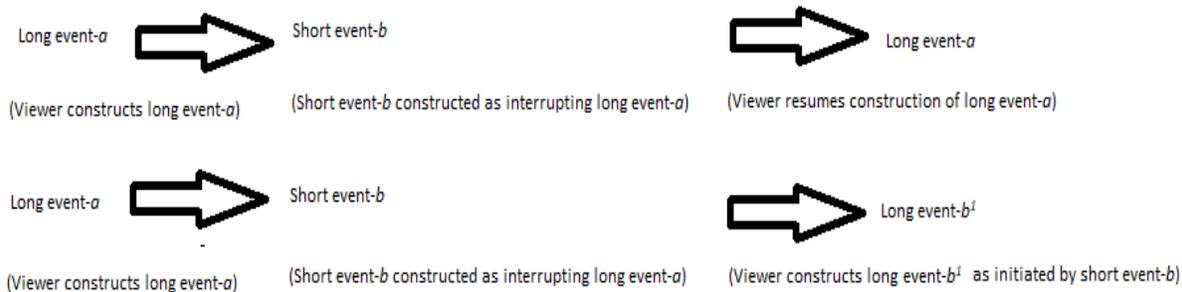


Diagram xxviii: Long/short eventhood and correction

Long eventhood, as with old objecthood, can be posited as the viewer’s default mode.¹ Viewers construct token transformations *as per* operations of continuity. Those transformations are token predicated in clustered, affect-laden terms. In the above example from *Tirez*, “woman walks down hallway” can be token predicated with the following (or like) terms: “demure” and

¹ Exceptions must be made, as already noted, for the first construction of objecthood in the film text, which is always new. Similar principles apply to the artefactual event “x appears,” as considered below.

“unassuming.” The event “music starts,” by contrast, is (token) predicated “rousing” and “startling.” In addition to constructing a separate event, viewers also decree corrected or disjunctive token predicates. Most plausibly, “demure,” “unassuming” and like predicates can favourably be clustered, while “rousing” or “startling” are experienced as discontinuous – even occasioning a reconstruction of one’s picture of the ongoing events, in approximately Goodmanian terms.²

The event “music stops” interrupts or is a non-sequitur as relative to “woman walks down hallway.” The former is a short event – as relative to the latter, which is a long event. Yet in the ensuing transformations, the woman walks differently, while the music keeps playing. The viewer resumes the construction of a long event, which is now identifiable as “woman departs building.” The token predications might include terms that are conjunctive with the music’s start, such as “rousing,” “virtuosic” or “exalted.” These token predications may then have implications as to the viewers’ construction of a globally composed event, deemed most pervasive or significant to the film text. Regardless, in the local context of one event constructed after another, viewers construct “music starts” as interrupting “woman walks.” They then incorporate “music starts” into “woman leaves.” See diagram xxix:

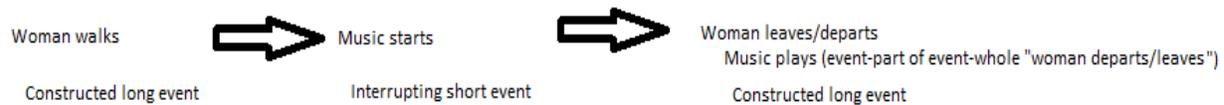


Diagram xxviii: Long/short eventhood and correction: Tirez sur le pianiste

The above analysis nonetheless raises potential difficulties. Firstly, one can wonder whether psychophysical determinants play a role in the predication-types short or long, given the temporal associations of either term.³ Some occurrences may feel immediate or finite (i.e. short),

² Goodman 1977: 97-99.

³ “Psychophysical” entails that external stimuli have properties (e.g. shape, size, etc.) that determine how they are experienced by sentient beings: e.g. the speed at which grey and dark alternate in *The Flicker* plays a constitutive role in our interpretation of the film. A psychophysical approach has implications as much for perceptual psychology as epistemology and philosophy of mind. Historically, its most significant advocate may have been Ernst Mach, whose influence on logical positivism was decisive (Carnap 1967; see also Currie 1982). Psychophysical or stimulus-based theories have since diminished in scientific relevance, due to competing approaches (e.g. Gestalt, ecological, computational models, etc.): see Rock 1995. In analytic philosophy, they resurface in identity theories of the mind (Nagel 2001) and related approaches (i.e. Davidson on “mental events” and related essays in Davidson 2001).

independently of their function within otherwise contingent interpretive contexts. Chrissie being pulled in *Jaws*, or Patricia bumping into Émile in *Le gai savoir*, can be decreed “short” due to their physical determinants: i.e. the temporal delimitation within which they unfurl. These determinants then register with respect to one’s perceptual capacities as “short” – as indicative of how many phenomena viewers can psychologically apprehend within a limited time span. Yet if the physical (i.e. temporal length) plays so crucial a role on the psychological (i.e. some lengths will always *feel* short), then such considerations run afoul of the commitment to constructivist cognitivism, where constructions of short or long follow from prior and later decrees.

The first criticism leads to a second concern: one must indicate that, beyond temporally restricted instances, viewers experience a succession of event-parts as adding up to an event-whole. Viewers can note the appearance of a lighthouse in *Floating Weeds*. Separate images then include the lighthouse in varied positions – gradually further away from the camera. Viewers identify the shifting spatial occupancy of the lighthouse. Yet can the theorist remain so certain that these separate shifts amount to a single event – “lighthouse recedes into distance” – as opposed to discretely constructed events? In the latter instance, the first image with the lighthouse, i.e. its positioning within proximity of the bottle, constitutes one event (i.e. “lighthouse appears”). Its spatial occupancy in the second image would be experienced as a separately identifiable event, as with its respective transformations in the third and fourth images. The mereological and clustered move from a prospectively short event (“lighthouse appears”) to a plausibly long event (“lighthouse recedes”) is hardly assured.

Finally, the durational quality of select events raises questions as to by what interpretive principles are these events experienced as having beginnings and endings. Viewers can construct an event in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* in which the protagonist Marion is thrown into a snake pit. Its parts include Marion being pushed by the Nazis, as well as her dangling from a statue and her ultimate plummet. Yet why must the construction of a token event (i.e. “Marion is thrown”) start and stop there? These same parts can be incorporated into separately identified transformations. Such alternate interpretations were addressed in the previous chapter, with the more abstract reading, “horizontal line moves rightwards.” One must determine criteria according to which viewers decree select transformations as parts of an event-whole, while decreeing *other* transformations as parts of *another* event-whole. To reprise the above example, “Marion dangles from the statue” can be decreed part of “Marion is thrown into the pit.” Yet “statue cracks” can

also be constructed as part of “horizontal line moves rightwards” – a potentially separate event from Marion’s fall. The theorist must explain these and other demarcations of token events.

One can start with the first criticism, i.e. the conflict between psychophysical delimitations and cognitivist constructivism. Take the event of the shark pulling on Chrissie, in *Jaws*, which lasts approximately a second of screen time – if not less. Viewers can note that a transformation has taken place. Prior to the pulling, Chrissie remains restful in the water, at shoulder length. After the pulling, she has returned to approximately the same spatial occupancy, as relative to the water, but now seems visibly and audibly terrified: her facial expression has changed to one of concern and she is breathing heavily. In between, the pulling occurs so fast, the viewer barely has the time to appraise the transformation in any detail.

The transformation incorporates several parts – Chrissie’s head jerks back; her body is pulled downwards; her facial expression changes to pained surprise; ripples and bubbles form on the surface of the nearby water. Yet the near simultaneity of these parts and the limited time span of their unfurling determine that viewers cannot parse the event in any gradual or incremental capacity. Instead, one experiences “shark pulls on Chrissie” as immediate and discontinuous with prior occurrences. Its predication-type short would seem to match its short screen duration. It stands as the kind of occurrence about which we commonly say, “it all happened so fast.”

Yet in the above example, one need not renege on the commitment to constructivism, nor relations and functions. The event “shark pulls on Chrissie” is experienced as short because of its discontinuity from prior occurrences. Before the shark pulls on Chrissie, it has spotted her and began its trek towards its prospective victim. The images and sounds include a tracking in shot, as the shark is meant to approach Chrissie from beneath. Viewers can form the expectation that the shark will attack and kill Chrissie. The subsequent pull, however, does not confirm this expectation – as do the later actions, composing Chrissie’s death.

As the shark attacks Chrissie, it resumes pulling on her⁴ and drags her across the water, only to pull her under, as she screams. These parts – “shark pulls on Chrissie again,” “shark drags Chrissie,” “Chrissie screams,” etc. – can be clustered with the event “shark attack,” *as per*

⁴ After the initial pull, the shark jerks Chrissie down two more times. I address this interpretive ambiguity (i.e. by what mental procedures does “shark pulls again on Chrissie” cluster, or not, with “shark attack”) in the ensuing analysis.

the viewer's expectations.⁵ Viewers can expect that a shark attack, particularly in a film such as *Jaws*, will extend durationally – the shark will repeatedly assail its intended victim, who in turn screams and resists until their death. These occurrences fulfill the attendant expectations that the shark will kill Chrissie, and can be experienced as part of the event, “shark attacks/kills Chrissie.”

Moreover, that the shark resumes pulling on Chrissie, after the first tug, can be experienced conjunctively with “shark kills Chrissie.” The first tug, as we shall see, may prove disjunctive in the viewer's anticipation of the attack. Yet, after its initial shock effect, subsequent occurrences of “shark pulls on Chrissie” are likely assimilated into the continuum of tacit or implied expectations. Once one has established the expectation that the shark will be pulling on Chrissie, the ensuing pulls need not occasion any corrections in the construction of the event “shark attacks Chrissie.” On the contrary, the stop-start effect of these potentially finite occurrences is mitigated.

By contrast, the event “shark (first) pulls on Chrissie” can more favourably be experienced as an interruption (i.e. *as per* the predication-type short). In terms of confirmed or corrected decrees, one expects the shark to bite and devour Chrissie. Viewers do not typically expect the shark to tug on Chrissie once, only to momentarily let go – without which, the latter incident would lose its shock effect. When the event “shark (first) pulls on Chrissie” occurs, viewers must correct their prior expectations. Instead, “shark (first) pulls on Chrissie” is initially experienced as a separate event. Subsequently, viewers can incorporate this and other tugs into the continuum of transformations. See diagram xxx:

⁵ The argument that viewers approximately anticipate a sequence of actions as associated with an event accords with Bordwell's application of “template schemas” to narratology (1985: 34-36). Both Bordwell's and the current approach follow from scripts, in schema theory (Schank and Abelson 1977), and mental models, in psychology (Johnson-Laird 1983). Still, Bordwell's implied equation of the viewer's activity to rational inquiry (see especially his heuristic usage of *Rear Window*, 1985: 40-47) runs afoul of Johnson-Laird's rejection of so-called “mental logic” in a theory of how the mind produces knowledge in quotidian contexts (1983: 23-125). The emphasis on cooperating physiological and preconscious processes puts me in the orbit of Johnson-Laird: viewers make near-immediate and successive mental associations without needing to deliberate over evidence or hypothetical alternatives. That those associations can be discarded or corrected, with comparable near-immediacy, lies within the mental competence of almost any viewer.

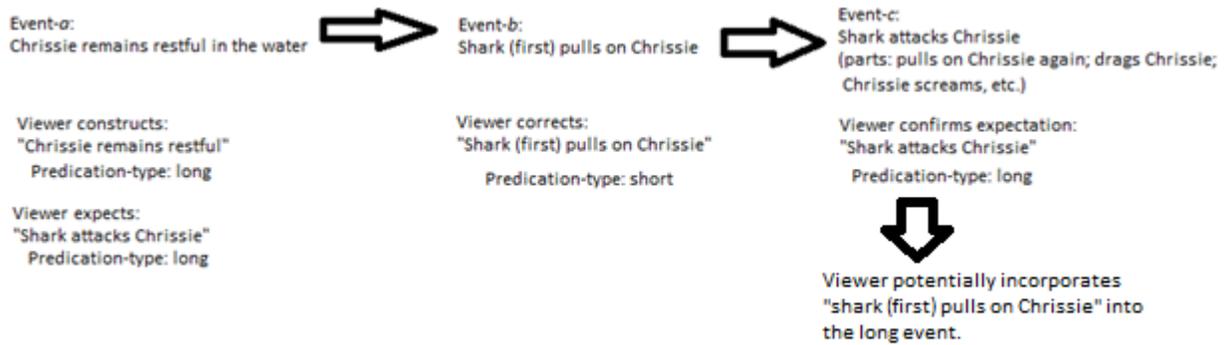
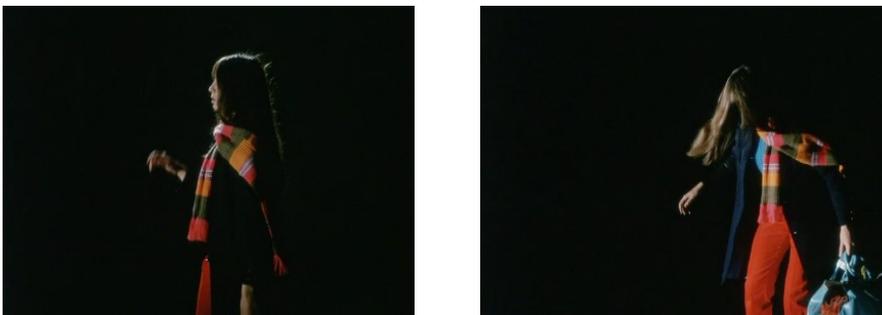


Diagram xxix: Jaws

Similar interpretive principles apply to a short event in *Le gai savoir*. Earlier in the film, Patricia can be seen walking across a blackened space, which Émile had previously entered. As she moves along, her pace is brought to a halt, in part, by a scream. Émile, who it turns out had been lying on the floor, lets out a cry. This cry can be experienced as conveying that Patricia has bumped into Émile – to his discomfiture. Between Patricia’s act of halting and Émile’s cry, there are minimally two parts of an identifiable transformation. This transformation translates (roughly) as, “Patricia bumps into Émile.” See figures 38a-b:



Figures 38a-b: *Le gai savoir* (1969), dir. Jean-Luc Godard

As with “shark pulls on Chrissie,” theoretically it seems unavoidable to explain “Patricia bumps into Émile” according to psychophysical determinants. The event lasts a second, or less. Its parts occur simultaneously, within restricted temporal limitations. The viewer does not have

the time to separately process a bump, a scream, and Patricia's halting movements – in addition to other parts that might be experienced (e.g. Patricia changes her body posture; various discordant noises disappear from the soundtrack). These transformations occur within near-simultaneity of one another, such that the viewer will invariably construct “Patricia bumps into Émile” as finite and immediate. No less than with the prior example from *Jaws*, Patricia's and Émile's fortuitous encounter matches the common sensical parlance, “it all happened so quickly.”

Yet, again, the predication-type short functions in relation to prior and later occurrences. Before Patricia bumps into Émile, she is walking – while Émile remains off-screen. There is no indication that she will step on him, much less that he is in her way. Viewers can construct the expectation that Patricia will continue walking. They might additionally expect that Patricia and Émile will meet. Neither of these expectations can be clustered with the transformation whereby Patricia's foot hits Émile, and he screams. These screen phenomena occasion a corrected decree – Patricia will not continue walking; a prior event will transpire, before Patricia and Émile meet. Viewers instead construct a separate occurrence: i.e. “Patricia bumps into Émile.” After, Patricia sits down to start a conversation with Émile. No less than with “shark attacks Chrissie,” Émile and Patricia's ensuing conversation fulfills attendant expectations: the two meet and talk.

Conversely, one can consider constructions of long eventhood to meet the second and third criticisms. As to one's experience of successive transformations in conjunctive and clustered terms (i.e. the second criticism), take again “lighthouse recedes into the distance” in *Floating Weeds*. It remains a hypothetical alternative that viewers might decree the successive images with the lighthouse as representing four separate events. The first event is identifiable as “lighthouse remains immobile next to the bottle.”⁶ The second event is then constructed as “lighthouse stands behind the docked boats.” Each event would then be experienced disjunctively, as short relative to a prior occurrence. As the viewer is constructing the presence of the lighthouse next to the bottle, the edit helps signal an interruption. The viewer then constructs the lighthouse's placement behind the boats as a separately identifiable occurrence. The viewing experience of these images and sounds, as well as prospectively the whole film text,

⁶ As with the titular edifice in Warhol's *Empire*, “x stands” may be experienced as an event insofar as one registers the passage of time (see chapter two, note 72). However, within the current analysis, the constructed event is artefactual: one can decree transformations in how the lighthouse is depicted as relative to the shot scale and image content (see also chapter five, note 15).

would be determined by this stop-start interpretive activity: one short event disjunctively following another.

While this interpretation is not impossible, neither need it signal any imperative within the viewing experience. The priority is to explain that the opening of *Floating Weeds* can be constructed as representing short or long eventhood, in keeping with the viewer's decrees. In the case of long eventhood, the successively identified transformations favour that they will ultimately be clustered – i.e. interpreted conjunctively, activating the predication-type long. Across the four images, viewers will sense changes in the lighthouse's spatial occupancy – and may even be cognizant of the edits. The determining question remains, does each change in spatial occupancy favour the construction of a separately identifiable event, i.e. as an interruption of prior, otherwise ongoing events. A likely answer remains “no” – allowing that perverse decrees are possible. The lighthouse shifts spatial occupancy from image one to two, no less than from one to four, and every transition in between. There is no principled reason why these images must represent four separate events,⁷ while principles of transitivity allow that they are instead experienced continuously.⁸

If transformations can be experienced as clustered and conjunctive, then a question arises, as broached by the third criticism: can cinematic token events be distinguished from one another, in terms of beginnings and ends? This concern houses a broader query: by what decrees do long events relate to one another? As the analysis below indicates, explaining that viewers experience continuity from one long event to another is understood in terms of local and global contexts. One passes effortlessly from a long event-*a*, to a long event-*b*, in local contexts, because they are both parts of a globally composed long event-*A*. This transition occurs, regardless of whether any

⁷ The images may yet represent locally new objects – i.e. viewers predicate the object-lighthouse in corrected terms – independently of any constructions of eventhood (i.e. the event “*x* recedes,” predicated long). Such insights hinge on the separability of objecthood from eventhood, addressed in chapter seven.

⁸ In second order logic, transitivity entails that relations between two terms will then hold between the first and any successive term: e.g. if *Empire* is longer (i.e. an eight-hour film) than *Empire Strikes Back* (i.e. a two-hour film), and *Empire Strikes Back* is longer than *L'arrivée d'un train en gare* (i.e. a one-minute film), then Warhol's *Empire* is necessarily longer than *L'arrivée* (see Russell 1926, Carnap 1967, Goodman 1977 – also Johnson-Laird 1983). Turning to *Floating Weeds*, the proposition is that if Lighthouse-1 (i.e. first image with the lighthouse) can be clustered with Lighthouse-2, and Lighthouse-2 with Lighthouse-3, then the relation between Lighthouse-1 and Lighthouse-3, and beyond, is assured: they are continuous parts of an event. The distinction within the current thesis remains that this interpretation need not hold for every viewing experience – unlike the logical necessity that relations of length are always transitive (and asymmetrical). The emphasis of competence over performance, however, means that one need only specify *what* viewers can do when experiencing a film (explanatory adequacy) – not *how* every viewer experiences a film (descriptive adequacy).

intervening short events are experienced as interrupting the ongoing or prior long events. Examples below, including from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, will help elucidate this point.

In *Raiders*, consider again the event “Marion is thrown into the snake pit.” The Nazis drag Marion towards the underground tomb, where Indiana is already trapped. She is pushed in the direction of the chasm. One sees her shoe fall, while Marion catches hold of a statue. The statue cracks – leading Marion to fall, after which Indiana catches her. Still other constructions of objecthood and eventhood might be experienced as relative to these images and sounds. Allowing that “x is thrown (into a snake pit)” is a pertinent decree, a question becomes: by what decrees do viewers experience this event as having a beginning and an end, while retaining some continuity with prior and later occurrences? As we shall see, the answer hinges at once on affect-laden predications, as well as local and global contexts. One can start with affect-laden, token predications, which play signal roles in the construction of cinematic eventhood no less than cinematic objecthood.

Several of the images and sounds help maintain clustered and conjunctive affect-laden predications. As Marion is being pushed towards the pit, her situation is evidently one of danger and anxiety. Her captors explicitly have every intention of throwing her – the dialogue has already established this anticipated occurrence. The prospect that she will be thrown into a pit full of snakes conveys that her predicament is to be transformed. Physically, she will travel from above to below ground. Psychologically, she will face a mortal threat, both her immediate fall, and her subsequent entrapment in a closed area full of poisonous snakes.

Such token predications of danger and anxiety recur throughout her fall. On the image-track, one sees Marion repeatedly dangling from the statue, as if to impede or even reverse her plunge. On the soundtrack, she screams, while Indiana desperately shouts. To these phenomena, one can add the extra-diegetic score, which begins as Marion is being shoved, and continues largely uninterrupted as she falls. In all these cases, these different parts – “Marion clings to statue”; “Indiana shouts”; “music plays” – can be associated with token predications of fear and imperilment. As noted, Marion grasps the statue in direct response to her impending plummet. Likewise, Indiana’s exclamatory manner in part conveys panic as elicited by Marion’s threatened state. Finally, the score, while starting low, overall quickens in rhythm and rises in volume. One

effect is that its pace and loudness correlate to the urgency and unpleasantness⁹ of Marion's being forcibly thrown into a snake pit.¹⁰

Conversely, a more pressing question becomes, by what decree can the event be said to end once Indiana has caught Marion? Principles of causality do not determine this construction, as these principles conceivably link transformations bridging the span of the film text, i.e. insofar as one constructs eventhood within a global context.¹¹ Instead, the more pertinent consideration remains degrees of clustered and conjunctive token predication. When Marion is being pushed and then falls, the recurring token predications involve danger and fear. That the music begins playing as she is being dragged helps convey the start of an affect-laden transformation. By contrast, as Marion's fall culminates in Indiana's arms, this latter transformation in part signals that there has been at least some temporary respite to her plight. One knows that she will not die or be injured from the fall. That the music temporarily subsides also helps convey that, for now, she is safe.

The above analysis now raises the question as to by what operations are long events linked together – by the viewer. Once viewers have finished constructing “Marion is thrown into the snake pit,” can they then pass to the next long event? As previously noted, viewers experience the successive transformations – whether short or long – as composing a global event, decreed to be most significant to the film text. In the case of *Raiders*, “Marion falls” can be taken as globally part of the event “Indiana pursue the ark” in the same respect as “Marion and Indiana escape the snake pit.” This process of clustered and conjunctive construction can span most of the film text – with notable exceptions. Select transformations will not necessarily be incorporated into the globally composed event: e.g. Indiana's pursuit of the statue, at the film's

⁹ More than once, Greg M. Smith's “mood cues” attend to the relation between viewer's emotions and extra-diegetic music in film (Smith 2003). The emotional “content” of music, and the place of music in expression theories of art, have long been studied and may never yield definitive answers: at least one scholar (Freeman 2012) has sought to pinpoint an exact relation between musical forms and an ideal listener's corresponding affects.

¹⁰ The habitual association of select affects to situations – e.g. falling into a snake pit ought to prove terrifying – informs arguably the most novel inquiries in de Sousa 1987, i.e. that “paradigm scenarios” command corresponding affects as premised on “axiological rationality” (1987: 171-203; see more briefly Carroll 1996: 268).

¹¹ Causality, as broadly conceived, is posited as a linchpin to classical narration in Bordwell 1985 and Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson 1985: 3-84. Rival narrative theory in film disputes the invariable centrality of causality (see Noël Carroll on macro/micro questions and “erotetic narration,” in Carroll 1988b, Carroll 1996: 94-117). Bordwell's approach need not obviate Carroll's insights – nor *vice versa* – as Bordwell seems to be stipulating “causality” as a capacious and ideal term. The privileging of causality, over time and space, in Bordwell's model would allow for and enfold the question-and-answer model, as devised by Carroll.

start. In this context, an event that is locally long (e.g. “Indiana pursues statue”) can be globally short (i.e. “Indiana pursues statue” is not experienced as part of “Indiana pursues ark”).

The distinction between local and global contexts must now be sharpened. An event is locally predicated short if it is interpreted as interrupting prior or ongoing transformations. Above cited examples include “shark (first) pulls on Chrissie” or “Patricia bumps into Émile.” However, the same event is globally long if it is part of the film’s globally composed eventhood. For example, *The Flicker* may contain any number of locally short events. Early in the film, the grey screen is interrupted by a flash of black. Yet viewers might then decree “black flashes” as composing the film’s global event: “black flashes (at various speeds).”

No less significantly, decrees will vary among viewing experiences as to the identification and composition of the film’s global event. Watching *Raiders*, a viewer might decree that the globally composed event is not, “Indiana raids the ark,” but instead, “Indiana travels the world in search of artefacts.” Here, the prologue would necessarily be incorporated into the globally composed event, but not any of the events set on Indiana’s university campus, including when he receives the mission to pursue the ark. Instead, viewers experience the events composing “Indiana works on campus” as superfluous or secondary to the film text’s global eventhood.

Similarly, not all viewing experiences incorporate the same local transformations into a globally composed event – i.e. decrees the same events as globally long. In *Raiders*, viewers might construct “Indiana pursues the ark” as the globally composed event. They can still decree that “Indiana pursues statue” is part of this globally composed event. For example, “Indiana pursues statue” may be constructed as conveying Indiana’s intrepidity, taste for adventure and experience in the field (token predications of the object-Indiana). These decrees serve as causal antecedents for the pursuit of the ark: i.e. Indiana is dispatched to pursue the ark because of the very qualities and actions that are represented by his pursuit of the statue.

Consider also two alternate interpretations of “lighthouse recedes,” from *Floating Weeds*. By one interpretation, “lighthouse recedes,” while locally long, is globally short. *Floating Weeds* is about the travails of a traveling acting troop passing through a coastal town. The global event becomes “acting troop passes through town.” Consequently, viewers do not incorporate the shifts in spatial occupancy of the lighthouse with respect to the transformations implicating the acting troop. They construct the lighthouse’s transformations locally, which may be supplemented with

decrees as to whether “lighthouse recedes” will fit the globally composed event (e.g. character-*x* works at the lighthouse). They must then start constructing local and global eventhood afresh, when the lighthouse is no longer represented and other objects-events are identifiable.

Alternately, there are interpretations whereby “lighthouse recedes” is decreed part of a globally composed event, whereby the receding lighthouse is constructed metaphorically. To briefly pursue, lighthouses provide safe harbour to incoming ships. By contrast, the acting troop, which arrives by sea, incites emotional unrest among members of the town. The gradually diminishing lighthouse can be taken as foreshadowing the upset arising from the arrival of the troop. In other words, just as the prospect of safe harbour gradually diminishes (i.e. “lighthouse recedes”), the prospect of emotional stability depletes with the arrival of the troop (i.e. “troop passes through town”). These and further conjectures may yet be possible – even if they are not shared by every viewer (including Ozu scholars and/or adherents to formalist analysis!). The point remains that “lighthouse recedes” can be ultimately constructed as both locally and globally long.

Moreover, as later analysis reveals, decrees can hinge on affect-laden predications – does a local event, as token-predicated, cluster with the token predication of the globally composed event? In *Raiders*, the intimations of hurt and pain arising from Indiana’s and Marion’s prior love affair may differently impact, or not, the viewer’s construction of “Indiana pursues ark.” Equally, in *The Flicker*, the playing of the Charleston might either be composed or not within the film’s text global event. Some viewers will predicate “Charleston plays” and “black flashes” in disjunctive affect-laden terms. Here, viewers token predicate “black flashes” as “alarming” and “distressing” while “Charleston plays” is “amusing,” “ironic” or even “quaint.” Alternately, other viewers will cluster all token predicates globally: “black flashes,” the globally composed event, is *both* “alarming” and “ironic.” “Charleston plays” is therefore clustered within the globally composed event, in affect-laden terms.

The above analysis has established distinctions between short and long eventhood, in both local and global contexts. In the respective sub-sections that follow, I address either predication-type in greater detail. Short eventhood will be shown to arise from an event’s relation to other events – i.e. above and beyond temporal delimitations, an event activates the predication-type short if it is experienced as interrupting prior (long) events. Moreover, such decrees mobilize attendant and corrected expectations, including affect-laden token predications.

No less significantly, different relations arise between short and long eventhood. A short event interrupting a long event may then have different implications for the subsequently constructed transformations. After decreeing an interruption, the viewer may resume constructing the hitherto, interrupted long event. Alternately, the short event may be interpreted as initiating a separately identifiable long event. Further still, the interrupting short event may lead viewers to retrospectively identify differently the antecedent long event. Such interpretive variations are considered in the analysis that follows. See diagram xxxi:

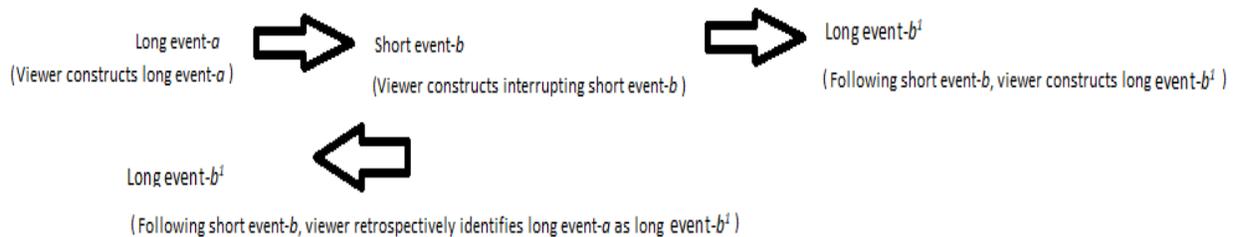


Diagram xxxi: Long eventhood and correction

Moreover, throughout both short and long eventhood, constructions of eventhood can be artefactual. The transformation is constructed as not relative to any diegetic context or (implied or explicit) real-world corollary.¹² Instead, viewers experience a transformation as relative to the film’s construction as an artefact: a text composed *as per* the technical arrangement of images and sounds. The example from *Floating Weeds* – i.e. “lighthouse recedes” – would count as an artefactual event.¹³ Further arguments will explain the interpretive procedures whereby artefactual events (e.g. in the above instance, “x recedes”) initiate the viewer’s construction of objects (e.g. “lighthouse”) throughout film texts.

Finally, affect-laden predications of globally composed eventhood bear on the (token) predication of the film text as an artefactual entity: e.g. *The Flicker* can be decreed to be an alarming film, or as eccentric and ironic. As shall be considered, similar decrees – affect-laden

¹² I occasionally use “diegetic” as a shorthand for “world,” in the broadest sense (Goodman 1978) – e.g. *The Flicker* evokes a world composed of flashing grey/black, even if this “content” does not count as a diegesis in the strictly narratological sense.

¹³ Of course, the event incorporates diegetic components and real-world corollaries: a storyworld is being constructed and lighthouses exist in the real world (!). Yet, the argument stands that the transformations relative to the object lighthouse are artificially imposed upon it, as it were, *as per* the arrangement of images, and not because of any diegetically enacted actions (i.e. we do not believe that the lighthouse has grown feet and moved). The same distinction – the event follows from artefactual considerations, independently of the diegesis – does not hold with “shark kills Chrissie” in *Jaws* (i.e. within the narrative, we’re really meant to believe that Chrissie is being killed).

predications of the artefact that follow from token predications of globally composed eventhood – arise across film texts, such as *Jaws* or *Le gai savoir*.

Short Eventhood

As previously noted, an event is predicated short when it is experienced as interrupting an antecedent sequence of events or transformations. Any such (token) event can be decreed short. However, as with identifications of eventhood, as well as constructions of objecthood, such capaciousness need not mandate that every event will be predicated short. Viewers make (physiologically and preconsciously processed) decrees as to short eventhood which mobilize operations of discontinuity and correction. More to the point, it is the physiologically activated predication-type schema that enables the viewing experience to construct temporally finite or immediate transformations (i.e. short eventhood) upon cinematic objecthood.

No less than with new objecthood, an event predicated short can be defined in terms of a disconfirmed expectation. In predications of short eventhood, viewers were expecting an event-*x* to lead to an event-*y*, and instead one has event-*y*¹. In *Jaws*, Hooper is examining Chrissie’s corpse, following the shark attack. During the inspection, however, he lifts a severed arm, from Chrissie’s remains. He then continues his inspection. Not all viewers expect “Hooper lifts severed arm” to form part of the event “Hooper inspects corpse” – particularly as he has hitherto only looked at the corpse without touching it. As this event is identified (i.e. “Hooper lifts severed arm”), it is predicated short. See figures 39a-c:





Figures 39a-c: Jaws

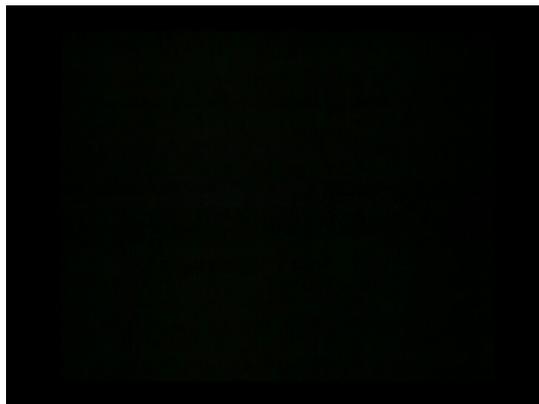
Conversely, an event- y^l , again predicated short, can favour that one differently identifies an event- x , e.g. as event- x^l . The event “Hooper lifts arm” can be predicated short. Still, the event is plausibly part of a larger event, i.e. “Hooper inspects corpse.” Even as one constructs “Hooper lifts arm” as a separately constructed short event, it can subsequently be incorporated into a long event. This long event is then identified as “Hooper inspects corpse (which includes touching its severed ligaments).” Throughout the viewing experience, constructions of eventhood alternate between respectively short and long predications. The theorist must therefore consider both short and long eventhood, as well as delineate the different relations between either type of event.

The analysis in this sub-section focuses on constructions of short eventhood. This analysis requires elucidating interpretive contexts whereby events are constructed as disjunctive with regards to prior and potentially later occurrences. As has been indicated, affect-laden token predications serve to demarcate between short events and prior constructions of eventhood in local and global contexts. An event activating the predication-type short is experienced as correcting affect-laden token predicates. This same event will also be constructed as disjunctive in affect-laden token predicates in relation to later occurrences. A short event is defined as interrupting a prior or ongoing event. Such a definition holds for local contexts, though a comparable definition, i.e. of short eventhood, equally obtains for global contexts.

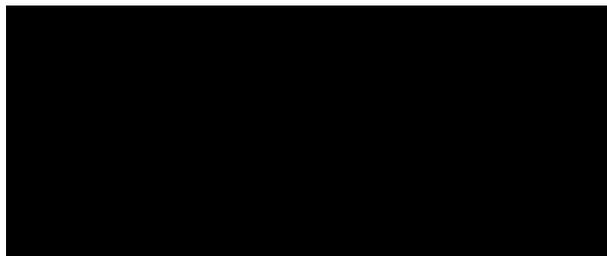
One can start with local contexts. Take either opening image, following the credits, in *L’arrivee d’un train en gare à la Ciotat*¹⁴ or *Jaws*. In both cases there is a cut from black to an initial setting, respectively the eponymous train station and the ocean floor. Viewers must switch from constructing a prior event, i.e. “credits play/roll,” to a separately identifiable event, with the

¹⁴ As noted in the previous chapter, not all films contain title credits, including not all circulating prints of *L’arrivee*. But this places the inquiry at the level of performance: how select texts, or varied occasions of a text (i.e. different versions or screenings of a film), favour or not token constructions of eventhood. How *L’arrivee* might have been screened throughout history presupposes the very problems explained here: what do viewers do when they experience a film text.

appearance of the setting. This latter event can translate as “x appears.”¹⁵ In *L’arrivée* and *Jaws*, the events are identifiable as respectively “train station appears” and “ocean floor appears.” Insofar as these events are constructed disjunctively with respect to prior and later transformations, they activate the predication-type short. See figures 40a-b, 41a-b:



Figures 40a-b: L’arrivée d’un train en gare de La Ciotat (1896), dirs. Auguste & Louis Lumière



Figures 41a-b; Jaws

To briefly pursue, viewers must negotiate the transition from more artefactual objects and occurrences – the credits roll – to the introduction of a diegetic object – a purported setting. The introduction of such an object likewise is experienced as a transformation visited upon said object – before, the setting wasn’t there; now, it is. No less significantly, this transformation is experienced as an interruption. Viewers, who were previously interpreting credits, must now

¹⁵ Within the current thesis, appearances as events will simply pertain to when an object is experienced as being introduced within the film text. Understanding “x appears” as an event distantly correlates to James Gibson’s singling out “going out of existence” and “coming into existence” as fundamental transformations or events one can (visually) perceive (Gibson 2015: 11). Above and beyond this thesis, psychologically delineating such events from their physical corollaries – a block of ice ceases to exist for a sentient observer when it melts, even if its chemical composition is the same in liquid form (2015: 9) – is crucial to theories of perception, especially the ecological approach favoured throughout Gibson 1966 and 2015.

attend to another range of content. Finally, once the setting has initially been constructed, viewers are liable to pass to other constructions of eventhood and objecthood. One does not attend to the “appearance” of the train station or the ocean floor reiteratively.¹⁶ Following the construction of “*x* appears,” viewers soon switch to interpreting the arrival of the train (i.e. “*x* arrives”) and related activities at the station, or the swimming of the shark (i.e. “*x* swims”).

One can turn to similar constructions of eventhood occasioned at later junctures in the film text. In *Le gai savoir*, one set of images and sounds involves a young boy being interviewed. The boy is asked to perform a series of seemingly random word associations, separately by Patricia and Émile. The exchange with the boy partly derives its distinction from what would seem to be its intrusion in the audio-visual continuum. As with so much content in *La gai savoir*, the boy is introduced discontinuously from prior occurrences.

At this point in the film, Émile is engaged in an off-screen politically-themed monologue. He speaks first over a moving image of Patricia and then over a still image of racially stereotypical comic strip, after which there is a cut to the boy.¹⁷ Émile then finishes his sentence, which is followed by a brief silent interim before Patricia puts her first query to the boy. Within such an interpretive context, whereby one transitions from one set of images and sounds to the next, the most forthcoming event involving the boy is simply “boy appears” – he has been introduced into the film text, no less than with the opening representations of the settings in *Jaws* and *L'arrivée*. See figures 42a-c:

¹⁶ A legitimate concern is: how to determine the tipping point when a short event becomes a long event? As with predication-types for cinematic object, there is no “one size fits all” moment whereby an individual viewer of *Jaws* or *L'arrivée* will pass from long to short eventhood, and *vice versa*. The fundamental issue is that select films serve as examples of the viewer’s competence for constructing transformations conjunctively or disjunctively. The aim is to delineate the interpretive operations which are invariable among viewers, even as individual interpretations will vary.

¹⁷ The function of citations and intertext in Godard’s cinema has elicited copious study. At least one line of enquiry has advanced that Godard, in the decade marking his abandoning of commercial cinema in favour of more radical experiments, sought to juxtapose heterogenous discourses and materials, without any prior endorsement or *parti pris*, akin to Bakhtinian theories of dialogism (see Daney 1983: 77-84, more briefly Rosenbaum 1997: 19, also Bordwell 1985: 322). Later, I invoke for argument’s sake an extreme variant of such an interpretation for *Le gai savoir*: the film text is experienced as a compendium of object-events, absent any ulterior thematic (or pedagogical) import.



Figures 42a-c: *Le gai savoir*

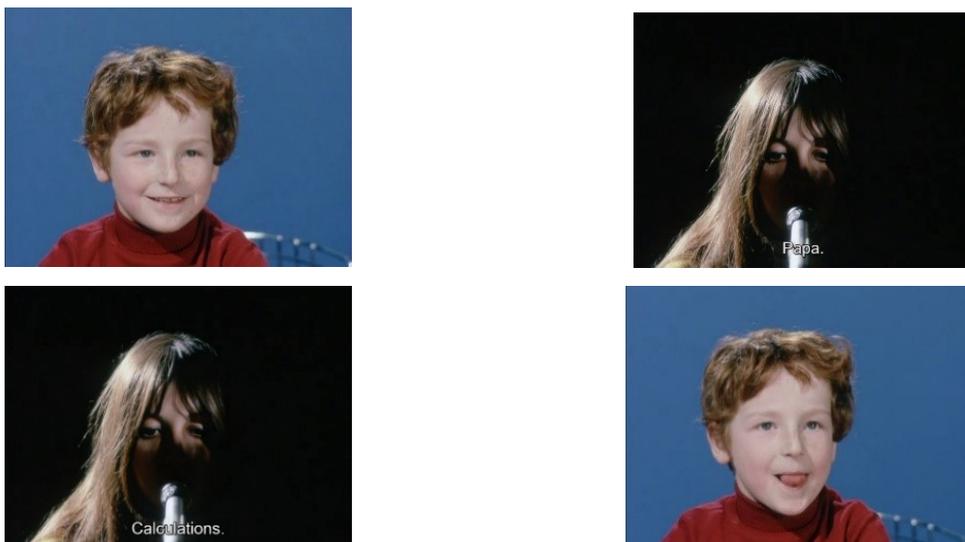
Furthermore, this event can be favourably decreed from the initial cut to the boy to Patricia's first question – at which juncture the event is less likely identified as an appearance and becomes instead a conversation or interview. According to such a delimitation, “boy appears” is predicated short, as we shall now see.

In this current example, “boy appears” is decreed discontinuously from prior and later occurrences. Prior to the boy's appearance, viewers construct a separate range of content: i.e. the comic strip. By contrast, with the arrival of the boy, viewers must note the introduction of a new character or object within the film text. The transformation visited upon the object “boy” can be rendered as “x appears” or “x is introduced,” insofar as this is their first construction in *Le gai savoir*. Once the boy is introduced (i.e. the latter constructed as an event), the viewer is not likely to dwell on this artefactual occurrence. Instead, one attends to separately identifiable transformations: e.g. his changing physiognomy or interactions. The decreed event becomes “x smiles,” “x speaks,” or “x is spoken to.”

The above analysis has considered (local) constructions of short eventhood accompanying (globally) new objects. We have examined cinematic objects such that their transformations are that they are now introduced to the film text (i.e. “x appears”). By contrast, an event predicated short can accompany previously identified objects. In such instances, viewers will be in the process of constructing transformations as visited upon an object. Thereafter, a subsequent transformation, visited upon the same object, will be experienced in disjunctive or corrective terms. This event or transformation activates the predication-type short, such that one must explain in theoretical terms the interpretive context whereby said event is experienced as an interruption. No less significantly, such transformations can also be narratively significant, or more apparently non-descript.

In terms of incidental transformations, one can cite several transitions throughout *Le gai savoir*. Consider again the interview with the boy. Viewers will tend to macro place the boy's speaking, as well as the inciting questions. At the same time, the boy commits several superfluous actions throughout, usually involving his face and upper-body. Viewers can make decrees with regards to such transformations. Such decrees might even entail that the interview is at least intermittently micro placed, if not ignored.

The boy shifts around in his seat. His eyes also dart around, from looking towards the camera to diagonally looking right or left. Finally, as can be considered in detail, he plays with his tongue, pressing it out against his palate and upper teeth and equally sticking it out distractedly. In the latter instance, the image cuts from Patricia asking a question to the boy, with his tongue pushing out from his narrowly parted lips.¹⁸ See figures 43a-d:



Figures 43a-d: *Le gai savoir*

¹⁸ It can be argued that I have not accorded enough attention to film technique: Godard elected to cut from Patricia to the boy sticking out his tongue in mid-action, as otherwise he might have just as arbitrarily represented “boy sticks out tongue” in a long take. Technique plays a role in the viewing experience of films, but not exclusively in terms of predication-types: an edit can inform the construction of an event in terms of token identification or micro placed parts, without determining the predication-type (i.e. event-x can be short or long regardless of whether it is conveyed via editing or an uninterrupted take). In *Le gai savoir*, “boy sticks out tongue” can be constructed as an interruption independently of whether this event is conveyed elliptically (i.e. following an edit) or in a single take. Yet, as edited in the film, it serves to interrupt the viewer’s macro placing of Patricia. Had “boy sticks out tongue” been represented in a long take, it might have instead interrupted other events and objects (e.g. the boy’s listening or concentrated physiognomy). It would still be a short event, albeit as relative to different antecedent events and objects. Devising so many alternative poetics and viewing experiences arises from a concern for descriptive adequacy – comprehensively itemizing the diversity of films and interpretations. It violates the more fundamental requirement of explanatory adequacy: the *types* of identifications and predications upon which *all* viewing experiences are premised.

In the latter case, the event of the boy sticking out his tongue can be constructed in terms of corrected expectations. This interruption is experienced as relative to the preceding and ongoing event of the interview. As noted, the boy commits several incidental gestures throughout. Nonetheless, these actions can be clustered as part of the boy's responses to being interviewed. The boy smiles, insofar as the interview can be understood as a ludic activity. Likewise, he intermittently opens his mouth, a transformation that can be read as his hesitating to speak. Either of these actions can be constructed conjunctively or as clustered with the ongoing event of partaking in an interview.

By contrast, "boy sticks out tongue" registers more plausibly as an interruption (i.e. short eventhood). As a matter of preconscious expectations, the act of sticking out one's tongue cannot favourably be associated with engaging in an interview. More precisely, the questions or verbal cues represented in *Le gai savoir* do not seem designed to call forth the reaction of sticking out one's tongue. Instead, this event signals a disjunction with regards to the precedent continuum of utterances and related actions. The viewer must stop their construction of an ongoing event – the boy is spoken to and responds, verbally and with some facial expressions – only to start afresh: the boy is now sticking out his tongue.

Once the event "boy sticks out tongue" is decreed, viewers can favourably incorporate this occurrence into "boy is interviewed." Viewers correct their construction of the interview such that "boy is interviewed" will allow for variously distracted gestures. Among such gestures, the boy runs his tongue on the top of his mouth, as well as, again with his tongue, furtively taps his lip. Any further action whereby he sticks out his tongue, even in identically reprising the past gesture, are likely now to be experienced as part of a long event (i.e. "boy is interviewed").

Similar interpretive procedures occur in *Jaws*, when Alex Kintner's mother (Lee Fierro) slaps Brody – as she blames him for the death of her son. Once again, the event can be constructed as an interruption in terms of attendant expectations. Just prior to the slap, Mrs. Kintner has walked up to Brody. She addresses him, confirming his name, such that the ongoing event is identifiable as "Kintner addresses/speaks to Brody." Unless viewers have already anticipated that Brody will get slapped, or that there will be some comparable shift in the encounter, the latter event (i.e. "Kintner slaps Brody") counts as a break from the prior exchange. Viewers have been constructing the Kintner-Brody encounter as a relatively subdued occurrence.

When Kintner raises her hand at Brody, this construction must be corrected. The ensuing event is more adequately rendered as “Kintner confronts Brody.” Conversely, viewers can retroactively identify the prior occurrences or actions in similar terms.

Both the above short events can be constructed as interrupting a preceding long event. However, the analysis has equally indicated that they can be differently incorporated into an ongoing long event. After Kintner slaps Brody, the preceding actions can be identified as “Kintner confronts Brody.” Even in the absence of such retroactive correction, the events following the slap favour a comparable interpretation. As a short event, “Kintner slaps Brody” functions to initiate a separately identifiable range of occurrences, whereby Brody is subject to Kintner’s reprobation. No less significantly, from the slap onwards, the event is favourably predicated in poignant or upsetting affect-laden terms. Throughout, a plausible response is that one is first wary, or at the very least adopting a “wait and see” mode, as Kintner approaches and addresses Brody. After the slap, the mood becomes stricken and anguished.

Returning to *Le gai savoir*, “boy sticks out tongue” is likewise constructed as revising or correcting the antecedent event. For instance, before this interruption, viewers construct the boy’s gestures and utterances as part of the ongoing event, “boy is interviewed.” Conversely, “boy sticks out tongue” is experienced as correcting the ensuing events. Viewers now construct the boy’s participation in the interview with the expectation that he will commit other distracted gestures, such as when he plays with his tongue. See figure 44:



Figure 44: Le gai savoir

These digressive actions are now experienced as part of the interview, as “boy sticks out tongue” functions as an antecedent.

More importantly, following “boy sticks out tongue,” the interview can now be differently predicated in affect-laden terms. Prior to this interruption, the interview is likely experienced as amusing, albeit adhering to an admittedly orthodox template: the question-and-response format. By contrast, once the boy plays with his tongue, the event “boy is interviewed” can be constructed as aleatory and even erratic. Viewers decree that the boy is not only responding to the verbal prompts, but also partaking in various digressions. As with “Kintner slaps Brody,” an interrupting short event ultimately serves to revise the construction of a long event.

At the same time, other viewing experiences of the same screen phenomena might yield different interpretations. For instance, viewers might decree that “boy sticks out his tongue” in *Le gai savoir* is discrete from both prior and later occurrences. In this regard, they note that the boy is committing a distracted gesture, only to resume constructing the interview irrespective of what amounts to an isolated interruption. In such an example, a short event interrupts an ongoing long event, albeit without occasioning further corrections of the interrupted long event.

Comparable examples can be found in *Jaws*. Recall that Hooper pays a visit to the Brody household the evening after Brody has been slapped by Kintner. Brody, still perturbed, opens a bottle of wine and pours himself the full amount of a tall glass. He then turns to Ellen, sitting next to him, who smiles awkwardly as he pours her a modest amount. She then quietly enunciates his name, in a wincing tone, as he pours Hooper a cup. Significantly, these occurrences – Ellen’s wincing as well as the wine pouring – can be constructed as intervening in an ongoing event. Before these actions, Hooper, Brody and Ellen had been discussing, among other topics, the recurring problem of the shark. See figures 45a-c:





Figures 45a-c: Jaws

Both occurrences intercede within a prior and subsequent event: “Hooper-Ellen-Brody converse.” During this exchange, Ellen and Hooper primarily discuss the latter’s life-long professional study of ocean life, as well as more precisely the recurring problem of the shark. Brody at first occasionally, and then increasingly, interjects comments, specifically related to the marine predator. The attendant affects are at once jovial (Hooper has moments of alacrity when discussing his interests), awkward (Ellen’s first effort at small talk is initially strained) and predominantly serious (the shark problem is ultimately the main concern on everybody’s minds). Viewers can balance these occasionally contrasting token predications, albeit within the pervading “wait and see” disposition that encompasses the conversation. The attendant expectation is: Brody (along with Hooper) will soon resume action in pursuit of the shark. As if on cue, this expectation is confirmed by the conversation’s end.

By contrast, when Brody pours the wine, and Ellen mouths her husband’s name, the conversation is brought to a halt. Some utterances are made – in addition to Ellen, Hooper whispers a “yeah” when Brody offers to pour him a glass. Nonetheless, the prevailing decree is that the conversation has been stopped: viewers must interrupt their construction of an ongoing occurrence, a conversation, to make way for a distinct action. This separately identifiable transformation privileges human silence – rendered more conspicuous by the now more audible tick-tock of a clock in the background. Overall, if there is an attendant expectation, it is now that the conversation ought to resume, during which this silence registers as a non-sequitur.

More importantly, either event – “Brody pours wine,” “Ellen winces” – can be disjunctively token predicated in affect-laden terms. The former, as noted, is experienced as halting the conversation. During the prior (and subsequent) event “Hooper-Ellen-Brody converse,” viewers can token predicate the various actions and transformations in conjunctive

terms: the attendant affects are predominantly serious, with occasionally convivial moments.¹⁹ By contrast, “Brody pours wine” registers as indelicate, albeit with mitigating circumstances. Viewers may no doubt grasp that Brody is still upset by prior events: his contrition over the most recent shark attack. However, within the context of “Hooper-Ellen-Brody converse,” Brody’s gesture registers as graceless. The interrupted long event favours token predications that can cohere with the presumed decorum of the conversation: alternately serious and convivial exchanges. Conversely, “Brody pours wine” activates the predication-type short, insofar as it unexpectedly breaks this decorum.

Similar interpretive principles of disjunctive predication then apply to “Ellen winces.” As much as “Brody pours wine” is conspicuous and verges on rude, Ellen’s response remains tactful and discreet. For instance, she does not raise her voice, nor does she maintain an air of shock. Instead, she conveys whatever awkwardness she may feel in a largely hushed and even affectionate manner. Viewers, in constructing “Brody pours wine,” must therefore stop and start again with a separately identifiable occurrence: “Ellen winces.” Unless one can cluster “graceless” and “conspicuous” with “discreet” and “affectionate,” then Elle’s reaction more favourably activates the predication-type short.

The above analysis has indicated that the predication-types short/long, for eventhood, remain contingent upon varied interpretive contexts. Viewers may temporarily experience an event as extending temporally – e.g. a character takes several seconds to smile and speak her husband’s name. However, if such an event proves discontinuous from prior and later occurrences (e.g. discussions about a shark), it will register *as per* the predication type short. Consequently, experiences of whether an event is ultimately lengthy, or short, will follow from whether it can be decreed to be clustered with or discrete from an ongoing event.

At the same time, the analysis has remained confided to local contexts – short events that are experienced as such as relative to immediately prior and potentially subsequent long events. One must now turn to global constructions of eventhood. Global eventhood pertains to a

¹⁹ It may be advanced that already seriousness and conviviality are disjunctive, and thus there are further short events to be parsed. Such interpretations are not off the table but remain less favourably decreed: unless one has constructed an event other than “x-y-z converse,” then “seriousness” and “conviviality” ought to count among the attendant expectations and availably clustered token predications. More to the point, above and beyond these clustered predications, the conversation is never far from sharks and the ocean: the predator’s onslaught on the community; Hooper’s interest in sharks; Brody’s fear of the water. A more likely disjunction would be if the conversation were to shift topics: Hooper comments on the vintage of the wine, or Ellen shares her recipe for the meal.

predominant transformation, intuitively decreed by viewers as most significant to the film text. The multiple local constructions of eventhood throughout the film text can be experienced as composing the globally constructed event, or inversely as not being a part of this event. If a locally constructed event is experienced as part of a globally composed event, it activates the predication-type long. If a locally constructed event is decreed such that it does not compose a globally composed event, it activates the predication-type short.

Select examples so far of locally short eventhood might likewise be globally constructed as short. Artefactually identifiable events, such as “x appears,” will prove globally short if the globally composed event is identifiable in more diegetic terms: e.g. “community fends itself against shark,” “train arrives.” The examples to now be considered are instances of locally short eventhood – in respectively *Le gai savoir* and *Jaws* – that will either activate the predication types long or short in global contexts. In *Le gai savoir*, we will see a locally constructed short event that is long in global contexts. Thereafter, with *Jaws*, we will consider a local short event that activates alternately the predication-types long or short in global contexts, *as per* the viewer’s shifting decrees. Finally, most notably in the latter cases, we consider the role affect-laden token predications play in globally constructed eventhood.

Take first *Le gai savoir*. Near the very end, Patricia and Émile are discussing the fruits of their labour. Their purported effort, extending over most of the film, has been to get to the heart of how, ideologically and phenomenologically, film is experienced within varying social and historical contexts. As they both concur that their findings are esoteric and vague, Émile summarily decries, “*c’est un échec, ce film.*” Just as he finishes speaking his line, there is a cut and in the following image, Émile is represented in mid-movement, standing up. The classical music that has been playing during Émile’s and Patricia’s meandering talk stops with the cut to Émile standing up. See figures 46a-d:



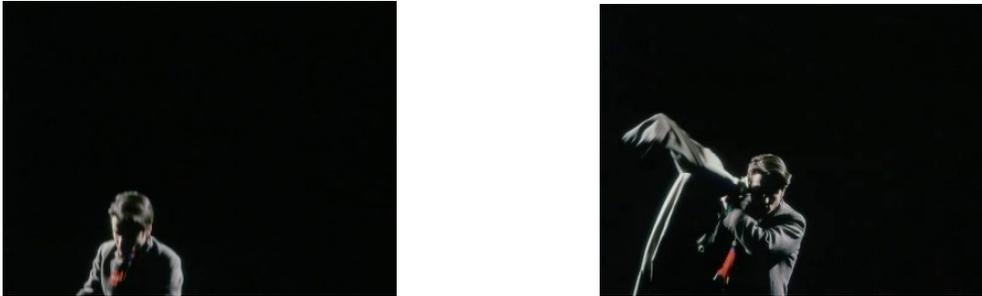


Figure 46a-d: *Le gai savoir*

Minimally, at least three separately identifiable occurrences can be constructed from the above example: “Émile speaks (a sentence)”; “Émile stands up”; “music stops.” One forthcoming interpretation is that these actions compose the event, “the project is dismissed.” One scarcely requires much inference to interpret Émile’s choice of words, “*c’est un échec*,” as signalling as much.²⁰ Likewise, the abortive interruption of the music correlates to an action or enterprise that ends inconclusively. Equally, Émile’s act of standing up is plausibly indicative of his departure.

In this respect, one can construct “project is dismissed” as interrupting a prior continuum of events. For instance, the music is cut off, such that one can register the transformation from sound to silence. As well, while Patricia is seeking to determine what has been accomplished with their project, Émile interjects his comment. In terms of attendant expectations, one can construct Patricia’s speculations as summing up the project in a more accepting or demure tone. By contrast, Émile’s dismissal occasions corrected expectations. Instead of responding in kind – as he has done earlier in their exchange – Émile speaks in a curt and strident tone. His and Patricia’s shared reflections give way to a differently identifiable event, such that one shifts from “Patricia-Émile reflect on project” to “project is dismissed.”

Conversely, the same event – i.e. “project is dismissed” – is also constructed within a global context. *Le gai savoir*, among other interpretations, represents the repeated meetings of Patricia and Émile. Allowing for this reading, one globally identifiable transformation is “Patricia-Émile pursue a project.” The action of dismissing the project is then constructed as one part of “x-y pursue a project” – more to the point, it signals the final part of said project. As such,

²⁰ Further interpretations possible, as Émile subsequently seems to revise his dismissal and the two continue talking. Yet this ambiguity only arrives after the initial finality of Émile’s verdict – and moreover, Patricia and Émile then convey through their words and their departure that the project, whether futile or not, is indeed done.

even as “project is dismissed” is locally short, within a global context, this event activates the predication-type long.

No less significantly, “x is dismissed” may be read in artefactual terms. Up till then, viewers have likely constructed Patricia-Émile’s ongoing project in earnest. The presiding assumption is that the project will reach an intellectually legitimate conclusion. Such expectations likewise translate into one’s experience of *Le gai savoir* as a film text: the presumed legitimacy of Patricia-Émile’s project is interpreted as reflecting on the supposed seriousness of the film. By contrast, “x is dismissed” retroactively signals that the film’s purported content, specifically “Patricia-Émile pursue a project,” has been in jest.²¹ In a global context, “project is dismissed” not only marks the concluding part of “Patricia-Émile pursue a project.” More importantly, the dismissal of the project serves to mock or deride this project, thereby occasioning a revised assessment of *Le gai savoir* as a textual artefact.

One can now turn to *Jaws*, whereby an event predicated short in a local context can either activate the predication-types short or long globally, depending on the viewer’s decrees. Let us start with local contexts. Recall that following Chrissie’s death, Brody attempts to close the beaches. One identifiable event or series of actions that can be associated with these efforts involves his purchasing paint and related materials – to design and post signs – from the supply store. After Brody enters the shop, he heads to the paint section. He reaches out to take some paint brushes from a jar, only to send the latter container and its contents to the floor. No less significantly, he evinces a discernibly embarrassed and pained facial expression – which increasingly favours affect-laden decrees. See figures 47a-c:

²¹ Émile stipulates the term “*misotodiment*” as the key to deciphering all audio-visual texts. “*Misotodiment*” is taken by Patricia to synthesize “*méthode*” and “*sentiment*” – that one must study the methods by which film and related texts incite viewers to experience emotions. As the upshot of ninety-plus minutes of experimental cinema (i.e. *Le gai savoir*), it is a fair interpretation that Émile’s discovery is to be understood derisively (by viewers, not by Émile) – or that *Le gai savoir* is deliberately vague as to whether “*misotodiment*” (as a technical stipulation) needs to be taken in jest or in earnest. Regardless, with exceptions, English-language exegeses of *Le gai savoir* tend to the serious (Monaco 1976: 203-212; Silverman and Farocki 1998: 112-140; Morrey 2005: 84-90), especially when deciphering this cryptic utterance (Monaco 1976: 210-212; Morrey 2005: 89).



Figures 47a-c: Jaws

To a plausible degree, the event identifiable as “Brody spills paint brush jar” can be predicated short. Admittedly, this action does occur as Brody is partaking in a more extended continuum of (narratively significant) transformations: he is closing the beaches, after a shark attack. Nonetheless, “Brody spills paint brush jar” is likely experienced as an interruption. Viewers do not typically expect Brody to spill the paint brush jar during his errand. Also: “Brody spills jar” can be token predicated in disjunctive terms. As Brody heads across the store, the forthcoming token predications is that these actions are hurried and engaging. By contrast, as the paint brushes fall, the more favoured token predication is that this event is funny and embarrassing. Equally, after the mishap, the next images and sounds bring us outside the shop, as Brody pursues his errands. In terms of before and after occurrences, “*x* spills jar” remains a locally discrete (i.e. short) event.

One can turn to global contexts, whereby this same event can be constructed as long or short, depending on select interpretive contingencies. The most significant event in *Jaws* can translate as “community fends itself against shark.” With respect to “Brody spills jar,” the question becomes: by what mental operations is this locally short event, i.e. “Brody spills jar,” constructed in a global context? More precisely, can “Brody spills jar” be interpreted as composing part of “community fends itself against shark”? If so, then “Brody spills jar” necessarily activates the predication-type long, within a global context.

One can again consider the problem from the standpoint of affect-laden token predications. Viewers, at any juncture in their experience of *Jaws*, may token predicate the globally composed event in select clustered or conjunctive terms. These terms may include or be limited to “danger,” “fear,” “menace” and like predicates. Such affect-laden token predications can be occasioned by the event “community fends itself against shark.” Insofar as such an interpretation remains plausible, then “Brody spills jar,” which is token predicated “humorous” or “embarrassing,” obliges correction, even in a global context. As such, the event is globally short – regardless of its local construction.

Inversely, at any juncture in their experience of *Jaws*, viewers may token predicate the globally composed event in alternate terms. In such instances, following “Brody spills jar,” viewers begin to decree “community fends itself against shark” as not simply fear-inducing, but also laugh-inducing and enjoyable. As a globally composed event, “community fends itself against shark” is experienced as occasioning clustered feelings of danger and fear, as well as incorporating more ludic experiences. Most pertinently, these token predications have artefactual implications: viewers decree that *Jaws*, as a film text, does not only represent horrific or suspenseful events. The film also incorporates comedic incidents and actions (i.e. comedic relief), which inform one’s assessment of the whole text.²²

So far, we have considered constructions of short eventhood in local and global contexts. Short events are experienced as interrupting ongoing long events – with respect to the viewer’s corrected expectations and usually in terms of affect-laden token predications. Once a short event has interrupted a long event, viewers face different interpretive options. As has been privileged in this sub-section, they may resume constructing the prior long event – experiencing the interrupting short event as an isolated incident. Alternately, as has already been considered and shall be pursued in the next sub-section, the short event can initiate a differently constructed long event – one which also recasts or differently identifies the hitherto constructed long event.

Furthermore, the interplay of short-long eventhood suggests that long eventhood is the viewer’s default mode in constructing transformations throughout a film text. In developing the analysis, one must explain that viewers construct eventhood in conjunctive terms. Such continuity extends across local and global contexts. These constructions of eventhood also

²² A further implication is that, following “Brody spills jar” and other comedic occurrences, viewers experience like feelings of enjoyment during the nominally violent actions – not out of sadism, but because they have decreed the encompassing film text as similarly fun and ludic.

mobilize clustered affect-laden, token predications. Finally, no less than with short events, long eventhood is constructed both diegetically, or as correlating to a storyworld or real-world counterparts, and artefactually, in relation to a decreed (film) text.

Long Eventhood

The viewer typically experiences long eventhood as their default mode for constructions of cinematic transformations as occasioned by screen phenomena. Long eventhood – as with old objecthood – activates mental operations of continuity and clustered (affect-laden) token predications. Equally, as with macro composed objecthood, viewers experience successive transformations in long eventhood as parts of a mereologically composed whole – in both local and global contexts.

A preliminary example of a long event is the titular action announced in *L'arrivée d'un train*. Viewers can construct the expectation – from the title card, onward – that a train will arrive at the station. The varied screen phenomena favour such expectations. The travellers standing on the platform are waiting for the arrival of the train. This event-part, “x waits,” is therefore constructed in clustered and conjunctive terms with the film’s globally composed event, “train arrives.” Even if one confines the analysis to local contexts, “train arrives” is constructed as mobilizing attendant and confirmed expectations. From the sight of the railroad, one anticipates that the train will be arriving along the track. Conversely, when the train arrives and stops, viewers can decree that the event “x arrives” is over – as is the film.

Long eventhood equally interacts with short eventhood, such that the latter intermittently interrupts the construction of clustered and continuous transformations. An example can be found in *Le gai savoir*, when Patricia swerves around Émile on a bicycle. She rides around him multiple times, in increasingly tightening circles. As she passes him once, he shifts his body, as if to dodge her. On her next passage, she rides straight into him, breaking right before they collide. See figures 48a-d:



Figure 48a-d: *Le gai savoir*

For viewers who construct the event, “Patricia circles Émile,” the attendant expectation is that she will keep riding – for an indeterminate period. Conversely, upon noting that Patricia is approaching Émile, viewers can decree that there will be an accidental collision. “Émile dodges Patricia” is now incorporated into a differently identified long event: “Patricia rides closer to Émile.”

However, neither of these long events – “Patricia circles x ”; “ y rides closer to Émile” – favour that the viewer will decree: “Patricia (deliberately) rides into Émile.” In either instance, a long event, which involves the bike riding, is interrupted by a short event, i.e. the deliberate crash. Viewers must then invariably make decrees as to globally composed eventhood – do these different parts compose “Patricia-Émile pursue a project”? – in their viewing experience of the film.

As the above example indicates, short and long eventhood will frequently interact. In the prior subsection – on short eventhood – it has been advanced that short events interrupt long events. For example, in *Jaws*, Ellen winces at her husband’s drinking, while she and the other characters discuss the shark problem. The long event is “ x - y - z discuss shark problem.” This event is interrupted by “Ellen winces.” As a short event, the latter functions intermittently. Once again, one cannot typically cluster “Ellen winces” with “Ellen-Hooper-Brody discuss shark” in affect-

laden terms. Moreover, once Ellen commits this action, viewers typically resume constructing the prior event: i.e. that the characters are discussing a shark problem.

By contrast, consider “Émile dodges Patricia” in *Le gai savoir*. Viewers might not initially anticipate that Émile will partake in such a transformation, such that it cannot favourably be clustered with “Patricia rides around Émile.” Yet, once this transformation is constructed, viewers are liable to decree the ensuing long event differently. “Patricia rides around Émile” now becomes “Patricia rides closer to Émile.” This differently identified long event can now be clustered with additional expectations: e.g. “Patricia will (accidentally) hit Émile.” Regardless, what might initially seem like an interruption (“Émile dodges Patricia”) is incorporated into a long event (“x rides around y”), however much the latter is now decreed in slightly different terms (“x rides closer to y”).

Insofar as long eventhood is the viewer’s default mode, one typically reverts to conjunctive and clustered constructions of transformations after an interruption. Such viewing experiences of long eventhood apply as much to artefactual as well as to diegetic events – and are occasioned from the initial images and sounds of the film.

As instances of long, artefactual eventhood, take the opening credits in both *L’arrivée d’un train en gare à La Ciotat* and *Jaws*. In *L’arrivée*, a title card is displayed prior to any images depicting the titular arrival of the train. Likewise, in *Jaws*, the corporate distribution logo and select production credits are identifiable before the appearance of the oceanic setting and/or navigating shark. In both examples, viewers construct an event approximating “x is displayed/presented,” insofar as the on-screen lettering and other perceptual phenomena can be constructed as marking the start of the respective films. In affect-laden terms (i.e. token predication), viewers adopt a so-called “wait and see” attitude. They construct the credits as an ongoing occurrence, with the attendant expectation that subsequent, diegetic events will occur soon.

These affect-laden predications, including the “wait and see” attitude, resurface during the constructions of diegetic eventhood. Such conjunctive and clustered constructions of eventhood (i.e. long eventhood) equally mobilize attendant expectations. Take the opening images and sounds of *Jaws*. Viewers construct the predatory and terrifying presence of a swimming shark. Additionally, they can maintain their expectation that the shark will ultimately settle on some prey. In this latter respect, viewers (token) predicate a potential and eventual

killing as, for example, violent and frightening. Such expectations pervade most subsequent constructions of objecthood and eventhood, up to and including when the shark finally attacks Chrissie.

In the absence of such decrees, viewers adopt a “wait and see” attitude. They may simply construct events (and participating objects) without further specifying any token predications. For example, viewers may construct that the shark is swimming, while remaining oblivious to any later menace arising from this object (i.e. the shark) and/or its participation in events (i.e. attacking/killing a swimmer). Likewise, after the initial construction of the shark, one can interpret Chrissie as giving chase to a would-be suitor and/or rushing into the ocean. Here, viewers remain nonchalant if not indifferent in the token predication of these events. As with the “wait and see” attitude decreed with respect to the shark and its swimming, viewers note that Chrissie is running and then swimming. However, they might not further experience that she is in danger, or anything beyond that her actions are at least minimally affecting: e.g. “Chrissie runs/swims” is intriguing or boring.

Comparable insights apply to *Le gai savoir*. The film’s beginning includes images and sounds of Émile and Patricia walking – albeit at separate intervals. Their walking occurs just prior to their eventual (and possibly anticipated) meeting. Émile enters the frame on the right. He walks leftwards, only to exit. Shortly after, Patricia enters on the left. She walks to the right of the frame, only to reverse her direction. She then walks leftwards and stumbles into Émile, who has been lying down, just below the frame. The characters’ respective walking, particularly as enacted by Patricia, can in turn be experienced in terms of attendant expectations, or a “wait and see” attitude.

Viewers maintain the expectation that Émile and Patricia will meet. Affect-laden token predications would include curiosity as to how their meeting will transpire. Alternately, viewers may opt for the “wait and see” attitude. Rather than expect an eventual meeting, viewers remain more withdrawn. They note that first Émile, then Patricia, are walking, with little more affect or interpretive activity surfacing in the viewing experience. Regardless, constructions of eventhood, in such hypothetical alternatives, remain invariant from what has been delineated in *Jaws*. Viewers maintain token predications of an event (i.e. shark swims; Patricia walks) in anticipation of a later occurrence (i.e. shark kills Chrissie; Patricia meets Émile). Alternately, viewers remain

relatively nonchalant, constructing the event without further expectations or affect, beyond decreeing that “Chrissie swims” or “Patricia walks” are intriguing, or boring.

At the same time, the analysis has established that short events can interrupt long events. Prior examples have noted that such interruptions occur in *Jaws* and *Le gai savoir*. To recap, in *Jaws*, the shark first tugs on Chrissie’s lower body, only to momentarily stop, rather than enact a continuous assault. In *Le gai savoir*, one intuits that there will be an encounter between Émile and Patricia – albeit not that Patricia will step into Émile. However, in either film, once the short event has occurred, subsequent actions confirm attendant expectations. In *Jaws*, the shark eventually kills Chrissie. Comparatively, in *Le gai savoir*, Patricia sits down, as she and Émile proceed with their encounter.²³

By contrast, consider instances where a short event is incorporated into an ongoing long event. Here, viewers construct an interruption. However, the interruption prompts viewers to then construct the preceding and ensuing long event differently. By different, one means that the ongoing transformations, composed of multiple parts, yield a differently identified, token event. Such transformations also include affect-laden token predications, which construct the now differently identified, ensuing long event. Consider the following examples, again from *Le gai savoir* and *Jaws*.

Recall the interview with the boy in *Le gai savoir*. The boy is asked to perform several word associations. Either Patricia or Émile recite a word, and he must respond spontaneously. Some of boy’s associations are either idiosyncratic, or typical of his age bracket: “404” elicits “race car,” while more obscurely, “work” brings about “tiger.” Other associations are precociously apposite, or perhaps unintentional puns – to “revolution,” he replies “October,” while “cinema” evokes “*lumière*.” Still other associations are phonetically, as opposed to semantically derived. For instance, “*torture*” elicits “*tortue*.” Viewers can favourably experience conjunctive and clustered token predications: the to-and-fro between Patricia-Émile and the boy is varyingly or consistently enjoyable.

Nonetheless, select aspects of the interview, if not the construction of the entire event, also require correction. Past a certain point, the interview grows inappropriately sinister. Patricia

²³ It could be argued that “Patricia steps on Émile” is part of the event “Patricia meets Émile.” Admittedly so, but it remains an unexpected initiation to the latter event: one need not (preconsciously) anticipate that Patricia will meet Émile by stepping on him – or that the event will occasion like feelings of surprise and even startle for the viewer. A more innocuous or conventional encounter might also have been marked by corrected expectations. Again, such endless alternatives remain superfluous to the emphasis on explanatory adequacy.

or Émile pose terms to the boy to which one would not anticipate a child to grasp – much less deem suitable for a youngster. These terms include “fascist,” “sexual” and the afore-mentioned “torture.” These exchanges include a darkened image of Patricia, while her face is partly enshrouded against an opaquely black background. The interview becomes more assaultive, akin to an interrogation, which in turn occasions different interpretive alternatives.²⁴ See figures 49a-c:



Figures 49a-c: *Le gai savoir*

The entire interview can now be identified differently: i.e. as a different token event. From the initial interaction with the boy, the ongoing transformations instead translates as “boy is interrogated,” or “Patricia-Émile grill boy.” The early exchanges with the boy is first constructed as amusing. Following Émile’s and Patricia’s intrusive utterances, these preliminary portions of the interview/interrogation are retroactively experienced as somber or threatening. Viewers recall or revisit the images of the boy smiling candidly with foreknowledge of what happens next: Patricia’s and Émile’s participation in the interview/interrogation will not be reciprocally amusing. See diagram xxxii:

²⁴ Just prior to the cut to Patricia, Émile says “*tendresse*,” to which the boy does not respond. In an alternate interpretation, this utterance might register as disjunctive, initiating the more ominous or uneasy token predications. However, as it surfaces in the film, this construction is less likely: the comment is unusual, to be sure, but so is the entire (including preceding) interview. By contrast, the cut to Patricia, and furthermore, her speaking “sexual,” favour discontinuous constructions. The viewer must negotiate the change in the image-track, after which Patricia’s enshrouded depiction helps cluster subsequent content: terms such as “sexual,” and later “fascist” and “torture.” Of course, had “tenderness” occurred later in the interview, it might just as readily have been token predicated in conjunction with these terms and the cut to Patricia: the same screen phenomena will function differently based on one’s shifting interpretive contexts.

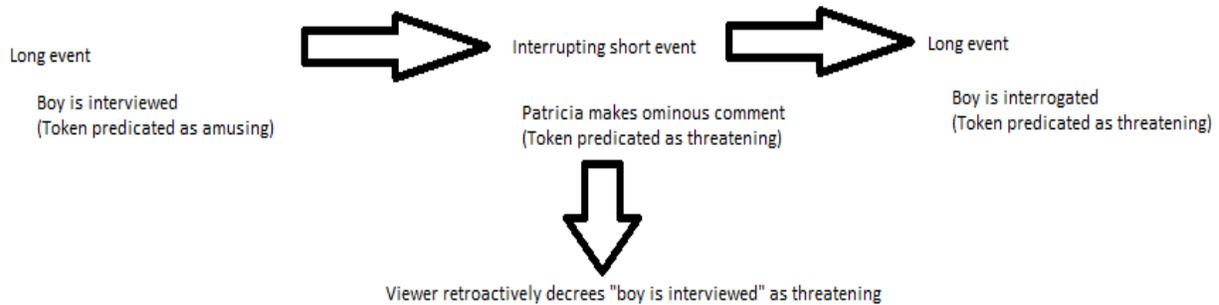


Diagram xxxii: Long/short eventhood: *Le gai savoir-a*

Alternately, viewers might incorporate Patricia’s and Émile’s untoward comments into the already identified, ongoing long event. The event is still identified as “boy is interviewed.” But viewers now tacitly and intuitively allow that this same event is to be token predicated both in terms of its amiable and sinister qualities. Viewers then experience that the boy is not deterred by the unseemly comments. Admittedly, during moments of the encounter, he is unable to negotiate some of the more obtrusive remarks: when Patricia interjects “*fasciste*,” he remains impassive. Yet on other occasions the boy maintains the more playful spirit of the interview: e.g. the above-cited, phonological association between “*torture*” and “*tortue*.” As such, viewers experience the first of either Émile’s or Patricia’s abrasive comments as an interruption (i.e. a short event). Thereafter, viewers resume constructing the event, “boy is interviewed,” with additional and potentially contradictory token predicates: the interview oscillates between being fun and somber. See diagram xxxiii:

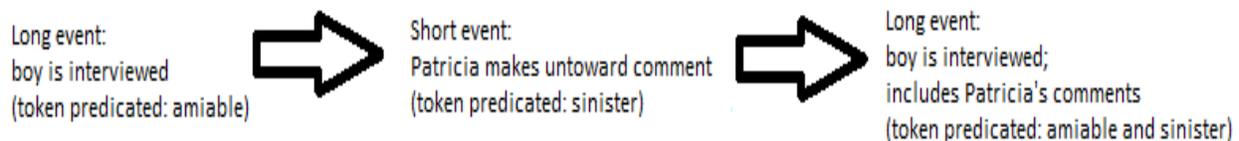


Diagram xxxiii: *Le gai savoir-b*

Comparable dynamics can be witnessed near the end of *Jaws*. When Brody kills the shark, he first shoots at it multiple times. More precisely, he had previously lodged an air tank in the shark’s mouth. He then shoots at the shark repeatedly, in the hope of landing a bullet in the

air tank, which will cause the tank (and the shark) to explode. Just before taking his final shot at the shark, he intones, “smile you son of a –.” After this quip, there is a tracking in shot on the shark’s mouth and the lodged tank. The shark then explodes, which causes Brody to rejoice. See images 50a-e:



Figures 50a-e: Jaws

As with “boy is interviewed,” Brody’s initial efforts to slay the shark can be predicated in conjunctive and continuous terms. Brody repeatedly shoots at the shark and misses, such that these actions are likely frustrating and unnerving – as much for Brody as for viewers. By contrast, the assertive and even insolent bravado with which Brody insults the shark can serve to signal an interruption in eventhood. He pauses in his shooting to speak a line. More importantly, his speaking a line can be predicated in disjunctive or corrected affect-laden terms. The action is not readily associated with frustration or uneasiness. Instead, the relevant affect is confident, perhaps defiant, and even virtuosic. As with the initial construction of Patricia-Émile’s assaultive interjection during “boy is interviewed,” “Brody speaks a line” is likely experienced as

interrupting “Brody shoots at shark.” A short event interrupts an antecedent long event – i.e. including with respect to disjunctive affect-laden token predications.

Once Brody has spoken his line, this interrupting short event can be incorporated into a differently constructed long event: after Brody speaks his line, he kills the shark. Both the explosion and Brody’s rapturous joy are favourably predicated in terms of relief and triumph. These affect-laden terms can be experienced in a clustered and conjunctive capacity with “Brody speaks a line.” Viewers readily pass from the confident and virtuosic feelings of Brody’s utterance to the enjoyment and satisfaction of the shark’s death. The experience is not unlike several of the exchanges with the boy in *Le gai savoir* following Patricia-Émile’s initial interruptions.

No less significantly, the prior occurrences are now experienced differently following the interrupting event. In other words, “Brody shoots at shark” is constructed as part of “Brody kills shark” – an event that equally incorporates “Brody speaks a line,” as well as “shark explodes” and “Brody expresses joy.” Viewers thereby token predicate the long event “Brody kills shark” in potentially oscillating and conflicting terms. One experiences this event as both unnerving and ultimately joyful. More importantly, as with “boy is interviewed” in *Le gai savoir*, viewers may recall or revisit “Brody shoots at shark” while token predicating this part of “Brody kills shark” as both fear-inducing yet potentially heroic.

Nonetheless, the analysis so far has raised a potential ambiguity. Long eventhood, it has been posited, remains the viewer’s default mode in constructions of transformations. Yet in local contexts, no long event extends over the film text. It is not clear that viewers will construct long events in succession of one another. If one sticks only to token predications and attendant expectations, the model seems unduly finite, if not insufficiently generative. Viewers therefore anticipate that, in *Jaws*, Chrissie will die a gruesome and terrifying death. They likewise decree, in *Le gai savoir*, that Patricia and Émile will meet in some fortuitous and possibly amusing manner. Once either transformation occurs, there seems to be no explanation (within local contexts) as to by what interpretive operations any subsequent events are identified or constructed.

This gap in understanding raises a related concern for short eventhood. Again, short events are experienced locally as interruptions, or more simply as disjunctive with regards to preceding long events. Any newly identified event becomes short, simply by not being identified

in roughly the same terms as an antecedent long event. In *Jaws*, any transformation following Chrissie's death would potentially if not necessarily become short, insofar as it cannot be mereologically composed as part of said death. Similar insights would apply to *Le gai savoir*, once Patricia and Émile have met. Instead, once the attack on Chrissie is over, mental operations of discontinuity would seem to be required for the construction of separately identifiable events. Similar implications hold once Émile and Patricia conclude their preliminary introductions and converse on other topics. In both examples, following such disjunctions, it is not clear that long eventhood could ever resume as a default mode.

The answer, as has been indicated, is that, as with objecthood, viewers construct events in both local and global contexts. Locally, viewers may note the end of an event when Chrissie is killed. Similar decrees arise when Patricia and Émile switch conversational topics from their initial introductions to their pedagogical and political goals. Yet viewers also decree globally constructed transformations that pervade the bulk of the film text. Viewers transition from one locally constructed event to the next, to the extent that either local long event also composes a globally composed event. Continuity is thereby maintained in global contexts, even as locally one is engaged in disjunctive and corrective operations.

In *Jaws*, for instance, such a global event is favourably interpreted as "community fends itself against shark." Comparatively, in *Le gai savoir*, one identifiable global event may translate as, "Patricia and Émile pursue a project." In either instance, local long events are readily experienced as composing globally constructed events. Both Patricia's and Émile's meeting and their subsequent conversations are experienced as part of "Patricia-Émile pursue a project." The meeting constitutes a conceivable reason or cause for the ensuing project, while the conversations explicitly hinge on the project's stated aims and aspirations. Similar principles apply to "shark kills Chrissie" and "Brody kills shark," both compose "community fends itself against shark." Viewers experience both killings as locally long while also globally constructing them as part of the conflict with the shark. The latter can be experienced as spanning most of the film text.

At the same time, events can be constructed as globally short, including *as per* affect-laden predications. Recall the example opening the previous chapter, whereby Chrissie executes graceful or even balletic movements when swimming. In a local context, the event "Chrissie swims gracefully" is experienced as long, insofar as it cannot readily be constructed as

interrupting prior occurrences. At this point in the film, viewers will have previously constructed Chrissie as partaking in the act of swimming. However else one can interpret Chrissie's aquatic movements, one typically experiences her actions on a continuum with previous actions: she has run into the water and journeyed outward from the beach.²⁵

The question becomes, by what decrees is the event globally constructed. As with "Brody spills a jar of paintbrushes" – i.e. in the analysis of short eventhood – "Chrissie swims gracefully" can be constructed transitively as part of the film text's global event, i.e. "community fends itself against shark." Both the shark's attack on Chrissie and her antecedent swimming are experienced as composing the above cited global event. Chrissie's swimming in the water stands as a necessary antecedent to the shark's attack on her. This attack, in turn, is constructed as part of the cause or reason why the community must fight back against the shark.

At the same time, the event "Chrissie swims gracefully" can be differently experienced (i.e. globally) in more artefactual or affect-laden terms. In affect-laden terms, viewers decree that Chrissie's balletic movements (and her concomitant skills as a swimmer) are disjunctive as relative to the global event "community fends itself against shark." Here viewers experience the conflict with the shark as inducing fear and anxiety. Intermittent awe or admiration at Chrissie's aquatic movements will not be favourably clustered, or experienced in conjunctive terms, with "anxiety" or "fear." Instead, "Chrissie swims gracefully," and its attendant affects, are experienced as discrete from the ensemble of feelings associated with the attack on Chrissie and its repercussions for the community.

Alternately, as with "Brody spills a jar of paintbrushes," viewers may tacitly and intuitively decree "Chrissie swims gracefully" as part of the global event. This decree can again be understood in affect-laden and artefactual terms. Affectively, one experiences "community fends itself against shark" as both being associated with anxiety and some degree of awe. With respect to anxiety, viewers predicate the shark attacks as upsetting. However, a viewer can equally decree that the community, or at least some of its members (i.e. Chrissie) partake in actions that inspire awe or fascination (i.e. graceful or elegant swimming). Within such an interpretive context, both the feelings of terror and more contemplative enjoyment are deemed in comparable degrees relevant to the film's global event. Following "Chrissie swims gracefully,"

²⁵ There is some interpretive ambiguity here as to one's construction of Chrissie as an object, as distinct from one's construction of the event "x swims (gracefully)." I address this distinction in the next chapter (i.e. chapter seven).

they construct other events (and objects) – including moments of nominal horror or violence – as equally lyrical or even technically virtuosic.

Either of the above interpretations – whereby “Chrissie swims gracefully” is globally constructed as short or long – thereafter have artefactual implications. In the case of globally short eventhood, “Chrissie swims gracefully” and “community fends itself against shark” are experienced disjunctively. Here viewers predicate *Jaws* (i.e. as a film text) as mainly fear-inducing or inciting anxiety. The same experience can translate as “film/implicit author presents fear-inducing objects-events.”²⁶ The screen phenomena in the film occasioning predications of “gracefulness” or “enjoyment” are decreed to be less significant if not unimportant to the viewer as they experience or construct the text – they may note the film’s graceful or enjoyable content but decree such representations as superfluous.

Comparative interpretive principles apply if “Chrissie swims gracefully” and “community fends itself against shark” are experienced in conjunctive or clustered terms. Viewers predicate the globally constructed event as both fear-inducing but also more graceful and/or enjoyable. The event spanning the film text incorporates affect-laden predications of fear as well as feelings of enjoyment (e.g. a character’s gracefully executed movements). Such an ensemble of responses will then lend themselves to artefactual constructions. Viewers predicate *Jaws*, as a film text, as both fear-inducing and at least intermittently lyrical or contemplatively enjoyable. The same experience translates as “film/implicit author presents alternately terrifying and lyrical object-events.”

One can turn to a similar example in *Le gai savoir*. At the end of the film, an unseen Godard, in spoken narration, offers a characteristically pithy and enigmatic account of the film’s purported goal. These sounds occur over a black screen, once Patricia and Émile have left and finished (or abandoned) their project. Viewers construct “Godard speaks” as globally long or short depending on their construction of the film’s globally composed event. In prior examples drawn from *Le gai savoir*, it has been advanced that the event experienced as most significant or pervasive to the film text translates as “Émile-Patricia pursue an audio-visual project.” In this respect, Godard’s concluding thoughts on this project, once its participants (Patricia-Émile) have

²⁶ Arguments for and against the legitimacy of implied authorship to literary and film narrative theory are articulated in Genette 1983 (*against*) and Chatman 1990 (*for*). The current thesis remains agnostic: I invoke implied authorship as part of a hypothetical interpretation only (i.e. Chatman might think, rightly or wrongly, that films have implied authors, such that this belief informs his viewing experience).

finished it, cannot readily be interpreted as part of the project. Instead, as with select (global) constructions of “Chrissie swims,” viewers could take Godard’s final thoughts as a postscript or even superfluous addendum with respect to the principal occurrence or event informing the film text.

Conversely, viewers can construct “Godard speaks” as globally long. In this interpretation, viewers decree a differently identified globally composed event, translating as, “Godard (i.e. implied or explicit auteur) manipulates audio-visual materials.” Émile and Patricia’s project becomes but one part of a range of differently identifiable objects and events. These objects and events include variously played musical and other audio clips, as well as news footage and assorted visual inserts. The film’s apparent content – from the audio-visual clips and excerpts to Émile and Patricia’s purported meetings – is then decreed to be part of the film’s above-cited global event, i.e. “Godard manipulates audio-visual materials.”

In this context, viewers interpret the film’s pedagogical pursuits, while ostensibly undertaken by Patricia and Émile, as Godard’s (as actual or implied author). The filmmaker’s final monologue is taken as the last word on the film’s content, and not the prior insights articulated by Patricia and Émile. Alternately, viewers can instead experience the sound and image manipulations as ends in themselves. Regardless of what the film otherwise seems to be about, the audio-visual montage provides the viewer with various stimuli or feelings. One might still be affected by the purported content (i.e. Patricia’s-Émile’s pedagogical pursuits). Yet this (pedagogical) content is secondary to its presentation and manipulation by an implied or actual author/auteur (i.e. Godard).

Either construction of (global) eventhood can thereafter be phrased in artefactual as well as affect-laden terms. Here, one’s experience of the film translates as “*Le gai savoir* (i.e. as film text) consistently manipulates audio-visual materials.” Viewers tacitly and intuitively grasp that the film is manipulating images and sounds – above and beyond any specified content. Viewers decree that these manipulations are intellectually edifying, as they are in the service of a pedagogical end. Alternately, viewers may decree that the audio-visual manipulations are affecting on their own, whether jarring or enjoyable, and without ulterior significance.²⁷ In either instance, the viewing experience remains fundamentally comparable to what has been outlined in *Jaws*. One predicates a film text (*Jaws*; *Le gai savoir*) insofar as it represents select

²⁷ I opt for this radical approach in a study of Godard’s *Passion* (1982) and parametric cinema. See Lapointe 2014a.

transformations (shark terrorizes community; images-sounds are manipulated). The token identifications and predications will vary. Regardless, the type and range of interpretive activities will remain the same.

Conclusion

Part three has considered constructions of eventhood – insofar as it is premised on activations of identification and predication – as occasioned by film texts. Together with the analysis of cinematic objecthood, it covers the determinant and most significant interpretive actions that inform the viewing experience. Unfortunately, the theory of objecthood and eventhood raises two significant questions, which require a seventh and final chapter (i.e. part four). Firstly, by what interpretive principles do constructions of objects and events cooperate within the viewing experience? Implicitly in part two, and explicitly in part three, examples have hinged on the reciprocal dependence of events and objects on one another. This dependence behooves the theorist to address the joint constructions of objecthood and eventhood.

The latter concern raises a second question: can events be constructed discontinuously, while objects are constructed continuously, and *vice versa*? The examples so far have suggested that corrected interpretations entail new objecthood and short eventhood (or *sudden* objects-events); attendant or confirmed expectations, old objecthood and long eventhood (or *prolonged* objects-events). Such redundancy offends conceptual parsimony – and runs afoul of the analysis that objects and events are separately identifiable. In chapter seven, I attend to the theoretical challenge of explaining the viewer's experience of long eventhood with new objecthood, as well as short eventhood with old objecthood. These generate constructions that will be respectively termed *sustained* objects-events (long event, new object) and *concise* objects-events (short event, old object). They will be examined along more obvious instances of continuously constructed objects-events (long event, old object) as well as discontinuously constructed objects-events (short event, new object) – respectively, *prolonged* and *sudden* constructions of cinematic objecthood-eventhood.

Part Four:

Cinematic Objecthood and Eventhood

Chapter Seven: Predicating Objects and Events

Introduction

In *Jaws*, to briefly recap, the object “shark” can be token predicated “lethal/terrifying.” It can also be experienced *as per* the transformation “searching and swimming for food” – an event that favours like token predications of “terror” or “fear.” Likewise, in *The Flicker*, the object “black screen” can be token predicated “unpleasant” and “fascinating” – or, “boring.” Such predications are favoured as well by the event “x flashes” or even “x alternates.” These and several other examples have been canvassed across the prior chapters. The argument put forth has been that such physiologically activated and preconsciously processed decrees inform and pervade all viewing experiences of film texts. The token objects, events and predications will vary, but the types of identification and predications cannot.

Yet, the preceding analysis has raised a problem. Cinematic objects and events are jointly predicated, albeit each in potentially similar if not identical ways. Both mobilize operations of either continuity or correction in activating the predication-types of respectively old/long or new/short. At the same time, cinematic objects and events are separately identified. Therefore, one must explain the relationship of predicated objects to events, and *vice versa*. If old objects are always predicated with long events, and new objects with short events, then on grounds of parsimony, there will be only two predication-types, as opposed to four. If, on the contrary, one can have new objects with long events, and old objects with short events, then the viewing experiences for the joint predications of objects and events must be explained.

Predicating Cinematic Objects and Events

The different mental operations activated in the construction of joint predication-types can firstly be explained in terms borrowed from Goodmanian mereology, as introduced in part

one: overlap and discreteness. Recall that two entities overlap if they are said to share the same content. Conversely, two entities are discrete if they are instead separate from one another – the two entities will be constructed simultaneously, even as their respective content remains non-identical. Adapting these distinctions to the current context, the implications for the predication-types are as follows. When the token predication for a cinematic object and a cinematic event, constructed simultaneously within the viewing experience, are the same, then the predication-types overlap. One has an old object and a long event that are jointly predicated, or a new object and a short event. When, on the contrary, the predication-types for a cinematic object and a cinematic event are not the same, then the predication-types are discrete. One has a short event predicated with an old object, or a new object predicated with a long event.

Secondly, as noted in part one, the discrete token predications of respectively objects and events mobilize principles of macro/micro placement. In the case of an old object and a short event, viewers macro-place the token predications attending to the event, while micro placing the token predication of the object. Inversely, in the case of a long event and a new object, viewers macro-place the object's token predications, while micro placing the event's decreed qualities. In either instance, despite the apparent cumbersome activity of constructions two sets of token predications, the operation remains simple: one token predication enjoys one's mental focus at the expense of the other.

With respect to the above distinctions, consider now the joint predication-types, addressed in respective sub-sections.

Prolonged Objects-Events

The joint predication “prolonged” arises from old objecthood and long eventhood, as seen from prior examples. In *The Flicker*, the continuous black and grey alternations mobilizes constructions of both objects and events in conjunctive and clustered terms. The objects can be identified as “black” and “grey.” The event can translate as “alternates” or “flashes.” Once the objects and event have initially been constructed, viewers then experience them *as per* the default mode. They consistently experience the black/grey as unpleasant and/or fascinating, as well as in clustered terms. They can equally decree the “x flashes” as an ongoing event. These constructions – “grey,” “black” and “flashes” – coalesce to inform one's experience of the film,

not allowing for corrective decrees (i.e. constructions of short eventhood, new objecthood, or both).¹

One can equally turn to *Jaws*, when the shark swims towards Alex. As noted, the shark is constructed as a (locally) old object: it is predicated lethal and terrifying, *as per* prior occasions in the film text. In terms of eventhood, “x swims towards Alex” can be constructed *as per* the predication-type long. Viewers experience the swimming towards Alex as an uninterrupted series of occurrences, on a continuum with prior and later actions. The shark swims past several other bathers, before spotting Alex. It then expectedly devours its intended prey. All these parts are constructed in conjunctive terms, confirming attendant expectations: one intuitively expects the shark to select one swimmer among several options; one then expects the shark to kill its prey.

Sudden Objects-Events

In terms of cinematic objects-events predicated sudden (i.e. new object-short event), one can cite examples reviewed in the previous chapters. In *Jaws*, consider when the shark pops up its head, while Brody is feeding bait into ocean. Take as well when Chrissie is first pulled downwards. In both instances a new object is conjoined with a short event, and *vice versa*. One can recapitulate either example with respect to the prior analyses – while adding supplementary comments. In the object-event “shark pops up head,” the shark is correctively (i.e. newly) experienced as unexpectedly impromptu and even rash. It has previously been constructed as a methodical predator, such that viewer’s interpretations are corrected.

No less significantly, the event “x pops up head” activates the predication-type short. Brody is nonchalantly throwing bait to the sea while arguing with Hooper and the ship’s captain. These actions invite little anticipation that the dispensing of bloodied remains will be effective. Instead, one can more plausibly expect the laying of bait to prove futile – or for the shark to be represented making its way to the boat from afar. By contrast, when the shark makes an unexpected visitation, viewers must interrupt their construction of an event: Brody is shoveling bait. They must then start constructing a separately identifiable event: the shark is popping up its head.

¹ Later in the film, the black/grey alternations accelerate such that they seem to merge into one object: the screen is at once grey with shades of black at the same time. These and other interpretations remain forthcoming and would no doubt be accountable within the terms set forth by the current theory.

Similar interpretive principles apply to “Chrissie is pulled downward.” Recall here that “*x* is pulled downward” can be constructed as a short event, as it corrects antecedent expectations as to how the shark’s encounter with Chrissie will unfurl. The same short event equally incorporates at least one new object. One can macro place Chrissie, as object, and decree that there has been a significant change in her expression. Before, she can be constructed as restful and content; after, she appears pained and surprised. Viewers have been decreeing select qualities with respect to Chrissie (“restful,” “content”). These new qualities (“pained,” “surprised”) are then experienced disjunctively.

Comparable instances can be found in *Le gai savoir* and *The Flicker*. In the latter film, the first visible alternation to black can be experienced as combining a new object and a short event. The viewer’s attendant expectations are that the grey screen will continue uninterrupted – not that its presence will be intermittently cut short by a switch to a black. “Black screen” is taken as a (globally) new object, while the transition from grey to black signals at once a transformation and an interruption – the hitherto ongoing presence of the grey is stopped short by a transition to black.

As for *Le gai savoir*, take “Patricia bumps into Émile.” One can expect that Patricia and Émile will meet, but not that she will step on him: as an event, “*x* bumps into *y*” therefore activates the predication-type short. This short event is constructed with locally new objects. Prior to their meeting, Patricia and Émile can be interpreted as relatively indecisive. Émile takes small, deliberate steps and appears timorous, with his face pointed to the ground. Patricia moves in a semi-circle while looking around and making a sweeping motion with her arm. That her actions are slow and random can serve to equally predicate her as alternately nonchalant or aimless.

Regardless, neither predication can be clustered with the initial surprise and conveyed discomfort of when Patricia steps into Émile. He lets out a verbal cry, which contrasts with his prior representation as more timorous and self-conscious. She stops walking, with her body now arched forward, which conflicts with her hitherto casual and aleatory air. In both cases, viewers must correct antecedent predications of Patricia and Émile, such that they are now newly, locally predicated.

Concise Objects-Events

Turning to the predication-type concise, a straightforward instance can be found in *Jaws*, during the object-event “Ellen winces.” Recall that “*x* winces” can be experienced as a short event, as relative to both the trio’s discussion of the shark and Brody’s immoderate consumption of wine. A relevant question becomes, by what predication-type is Ellen constructed? Part of the interest of this representation (i.e. “Ellen winces”) is not just that the wincing can be experienced in discontinuous terms: among other corrected decrees, the subtlety of Ellen’s response contrasts with Brody’s more ostentatious actions.

However, the object “Ellen” (i.e. in “Ellen winces”) can also be predicated in terms of her relation to her husband. While she appears embarrassed and disapproving, she equally expresses affection and consideration, by smiling and keeping her reaction discreet. Her at once amicable and amorous attitude to her husband can be clustered with her prior representations in the film: for example, when they banter earlier on about getting inebriated and making out.² So, while the event “*x* winces” occasions correction in the ongoing construction of events, the participating object, “Ellen,” is predicated in terms that prove continuous and clustered with her previous constructions. A locally old object is represented with a short event, yielding the predication-type concise.

A more complicated instance of concise objecthood-eventhood occurs in *News from Home*. Recall that the film sequences images and sounds of city life around New York. Approximately midway through, there is a cut after about eight minutes set in cavernous subway stations to an image of broad daylight. See figures 51a-d:



² Serge Daney, in his analysis of the film (1983: 105-107), seizes on this latter scene as epitomizing the film’s sexual politics, although his point is frequently confused: he oscillates between advancing that the shark represents a reprisal against sexual agency (Chrissie is swimming nude as she is killed) and, by approximately Todorovian principles of narrative transformation and closure, the shark must be killed before *coitus*, throughout the community, is to resume. Regardless, the example in the above text is not critically definitive.



Figures 51a-d: News from Home

Among interpretive alternatives, viewers can construct the sunlit image set outside as “exterior,” or more precisely, “daylit exterior.” This object can further be token predicated “spacious” and even “picturesque” – as contrasted to the preceding object, the enclosed and artificially lit subway. An event is also forthcoming, in the transition from the interior to the exterior, identifiable as “daylight exterior follows subway interior.”

In terms of predication-type, the event can be constructed as short. Not only is the transition from interior to exterior conveyed by a cut; more importantly, the move outside to daylight can be experienced as interrupting the prior occurrences set on the subway. In contrast to other transitions represented in the film – e.g. the gradual movement from early morning to night throughout the opening half-hour – this transformation is disjunctive. During the images involving the subway, viewers can maintain attendant expectations that current and subsequent occurrences will pertain to this setting (e.g. passengers embark, ride; train arrives, departs, etc.). Instead, the cut to outside favours correction: viewers must stop the construction of events relevant to the subway and start afresh.

At the same time, neither of the implicated objects need be predicated locally new. The object “subway interior” can be predicated in clustered and conjunctive terms throughout the approximate eight minutes of its duration: as noted, the stations have an insulated and relatively unpleasant appearance. More importantly, the object “daylit exterior” can be clustered with prior token predications of outside, sunlit settings in *News from Home*: e.g. other images set on sparsely populated streets, with intermittent passers by and traffic. See figures 52a-c:



Figures 52a-c: News from Home

The spacious and picturesque qualities experienced as relative to “daylight exterior” are nothing new, even if its juxtaposition following the subway is otherwise experienced disjunctively. As such, the representation of an old objecthood as relative to a short event, and *vice versa*, results in the joint predication concise.

Sustained Objects-Events

The fourth and final joint predication-type is sustained. Take again the conjunction of objects and events during “Chrissie swims,” in *Jaws*. The question becomes, by what interpretive operations do these constructions register in the viewing experience? From the standpoint of objecthood, viewers can identify and potentially reidentify Chrissie, from one image to another – i.e. as she runs into the water, and then subsequently³ executes her balletic movements. Regarding eventhood, viewers successively identify the relevant transformation as “swimming” – i.e. again, as she ventures into the water and after executes her graceful movements. Yet, throughout these representations, a correction in predication-type is favoured for objecthood – but not for eventhood.

In terms of transformations (i.e. events), viewers can identify that Chrissie is swimming in clustered and conjunctive terms – i.e. without interruptions. Very briefly, when Chrissie runs into the water to swim, this action is not readily constructed as abrogating a prior action. The continuity in the viewing experience from “Chrissie runs on beach” to “x runs into water” and “x swims” is facilitated by these transformations composing a global event – ultimately identifiable

³ In between these two images, there is the intermediary occurrence of her would-be suitor falling to the beach as he attempts to drunkenly undress. “Chrissie swims” and “suitor falls” form part of a larger sequence of transformations, arguably extending all the way to the film’s globally composed event. Regardless, the focus of the current analysis is uniquely “Chrissie swims gracefully” as a sustained, object-event.

as, “community terrorized by shark.” Viewers therefore can construct “Chrissie swims” *as per* the predication-type long. This continuous transformation holds across her successive, aquatic movements. From these images and sounds onwards – i.e. “Chrissie runs from the beach to the water and swims” – the predication-type short is not favourably occasioned until, in a local context, the shark first tugs on her lower body.

By contrast, as Chrissie starts her balletic movements, while she is already swimming, a corrected predication is favoured. Viewers may have hitherto expected, if only intuitively, that Chrissie will swim in the water – and therefore has some skills. Still, the extent of her abilities – a level of dexterity approaching synchronized swimming – revises attendant expectations. As she outstretches her leg and sinks under the surface, one discontinues prior decrees of Chrissie as “capable” or “ordinary” to predicate her instead as “exceptional” or even “virtuosic”: with respect to her athletic prowess, she is newly predicated in a local context.

At the same time, these actions are still clustered as part of “swimming.” The predication-type “new,” for objecthood, is thus activated (and macro placed) during the construction of what is otherwise a long event. Other interpretations of these screen phenomena may yet be possible. What matters in the present context is that viewers construct a new object (Chrissie: graceful) with a long event (*x* swims), yielding the joint predication-type “sustained.”

An additional example can be found in *Le gai savoir*. In an earlier portion of the film, Émile recommends that he and Patricia study the first known photographic image. There is a cut from Émile to Nicéphore Niépce’s *Point de vue du Gras*. The image holds for approximately nine seconds, before returning to Patricia and Émile, who seem to have been looking at it.⁴ See figures 53a-c:



Figures 53a-c: Le gai savoir

⁴ In fact, Patricia and Émile are facing opposite directions, although the lighting (no doubt) deliberately makes this detail easy to miss. Moreover, the dialogue between them strongly suggests that they have both looked at, or at least cast their interpretive attention towards, said image.

Among interpretive alternatives, viewers can construct the display of *Point de vue du Gras* (i.e. in *Le gai savoir*) as representing “Émile and Patricia look at Niépce’s *du Gras*.” The question then becomes, by what means are the event “look” and the object “Patricia-Émile” jointly constructed?

In psychophysical terms, viewers are liable to experience “*x-y* look at *du Gras*” as a long event, insofar as the image holds for almost ten seconds. Closer to a constructivist perspective, this event activates the predication-type long if it is experienced continuously. Viewers grasp from Émile’s declaration that he and Patricia will be studying Niépce’s *du Gras*. The subsequent display of the photo, even if initially jarring (i.e. activates the predication-type short), is then incorporated into the previously anticipated event that Patricia and Émile will be inspecting this picture. Such clustered and conjunctive relations – from Émile’s utterance to the display of *du Gras* – carry over subsequent images and sounds. Émile and Patricia comment on *du Gras* as it is displayed; afterwards, an image has Émile looking towards the camera, with Patricia kneeling next to him.

At the same time, the object “Émile-Patricia” can be locally constructed as new. One can take the insistence with which *du Gras* is displayed – its near ten second duration and occupation of the image frame – to convey Patricia’s and Émile’s respective interest in the picture. Their studious investment contrasts with the abbreviated as well as ironic content that otherwise pervades *Le gai savoir*. Prior to “Patricia-Émile look at *du Gras*,” they have remained nonchalant, if not derisive, in their exchanges: they make puns and even contradict one another. As well, the archival material they sample is represented heterogeneously and elliptically: random clippings and footage from books, magazines and television follow one another, accompanied by soundbites of classical music and various utterances.

By contrast, the display of *du Gras* feels comparatively sparse and drawn out. As noted, the image holds for nearly ten seconds and, apart from one comment by Émile, there are no noises on the soundtrack. Insofar as affect-laden predication can be decreed with respect to the attendant objects, they will favour a correction in predication-type. Up till then, Émile and Patricia, and their audio-visual samples, can be associated with qualities akin to “ironic,” “furtive,” and “elliptical.” As the two characters both look at *du Gras*, they can be decreed instead as “fascinated” and even “concentrated.”

Concomitantly, Niépce's picture, as conveyed in *Le gai savoir*, can be associated with impressions of sobriety and simplicity – in contradistinction to the cacophonous and cryptic materials on the image and soundtracks. For either object – “Patricia-Émile” or “*du Gras*” – new token predications are decreed during what is otherwise an uninterrupted event, i.e. “Patricia-Émile look at *du Gras*.” As with “Chrissie swims gracefully,” the conjunction of new objecthood and long eventhood yields the joint predication sustained.

Joint Predications and the Viewing Experience

The above analysis establishes preliminary definitions in idealized circumstances. The joint predications are cited in isolation of each other, irrespective of their successive constructions within the viewing experience. Yet, viewers switch between predications throughout a film text: e.g. from “prolonged” to “sudden,” to “concise,” etc. Also, the same screen phenomena can yield different viewing experiences – not only different token objects and events, but also different predication-types as well as joint predications. While itemizing experiences of entire film texts would prove onerous, examples below ought to explain that a range of viewing experiences are ultimately reducible to delimited interpretive operations and alternatives.

Consider that viewers typically transition, at select moments in the film, between artefactual and more diegetic engagements with the film text. One can turn to the opening images and sounds of *Jaws*, following the initial credits. The first constructed event is artefactual: “*x* appears.” The transformation “appears” signals an identifiable cinematic object is introduced to viewers in the film text. The object here can be constructed as alternately “shark,” “ocean floor” or even “setting.” The objects are globally new – token identified and (token) predicated for the first time within the viewing experience of the film text.

Thereafter, viewers switch to constructing objects-events diegetically: e.g. “shark swims.” If the shark is token predicated for the first time as “lethal/terrifying,” then it is locally new. The event “*x* swims” most likely activates the predication-type long. However else viewers negotiate the transition from “*x* appears” to “*x* swims,” the latter can ultimately be interpreted as an ongoing event. Once the shark has been constructed as having been introduced into the film text (i.e. “*x* appears”), viewers do not readily interpret “*x* swims” as interrupting any prior

(diegetic) events. Instead, the decree is that the shark has been navigating the ocean floor for quite some time and will continue to do so – until it locates food.

Similar interpretive principles hold for *Le gai savoir*. The initial representation of the boy can be rendered as “boy appears.” As with the first post-credit image in *Jaws*, the object “boy” is globally new: constructed for the first time as occasioned by the film text. The event “*x* appears,” whereby the boy is introduced into the film text, can likewise be experienced as interrupting prior occurrences. In the images leading up to the introduction of the boy, the objects consist of primarily archival material (i.e. a comic strip extract) and previously depicted characters (i.e. Patricia). The soundtrack, too, consists of the film’s characters (i.e. Émile’s voice) and includes archival excerpts (i.e. classical music) as well as otherwise generic noises (i.e. a tape being rewound). None of these objects or events prepare for the introduction of what is ostensibly an additional character in the film – the boy.

Once viewers have registered the boy’s introduction, the screen phenomena occasion other events than “boy appears.” Viewers might note that he smiles (i.e. object-event: “boy smiles”), and then the interview commences (i.e. object-event: “boy is interviewed”). As with “shark swims,” in *Jaws*, “boy is interviewed” is ultimately experienced as a long event. After Patricia starts speaking to the boy, and he responds, viewers can decree that an ongoing event is under way: Patricia-Émile will make several utterances, to which the boy will react. The construction “boy is interviewed” activates operations of continuity, regardless of whether the transition from “boy appears” to Patricia’s first utterance might have initially been experienced disjunctively (i.e. as a short event).

More to the point, one can delineate a range of viewing experiences, *as per* alternatives at the level of token objects and events, as well as predication-types and joint predications. Consider the images and sounds at the close of *News from Home*, taken from a ferry leaving the southern tip of Manhattan. As seen in part two, the object can be constructed as “New York.” The object can be (token) predicated in affect-laden terms as “abandoned,” “desolate” and “haunting.” Insofar as such token predications prove corrective within the viewing experience – in *News from Home*, the object “New York” has not been predicated in like terms before – then the object “New York” is locally constructed *as per* the predication-type *new*.

In terms of eventhood, there can be multiple interpretations. For preliminary purposes, one can cite “*x* recedes into distance,” whereby the city “New York,” as represented via the

departing ferry, gradually diminishes in size. The event “New York recedes into distance” can moreover be constructed *as per* the predication-type long. However else it is decreed in relation to prior events in *News*, it is not favourably experienced as an interruption. The ferry has already begun its departure before the city comes into view. The event “New York recedes into distance” can therefore be decreed in a continuum with the prior event whereby the ferry is leaving from the port.

Insofar as “New York recedes into distance” combines a locally new object (i.e. New York as “abandoned,” “desolate,” etc.) with a long event, the joint predication is sustained. Viewers can maintain the affect-laden, token predications that the city is “abandoned” and “haunting” throughout the ferry’s departure. Other interpretive options may present themselves. As the city recedes into the distance, birds periodically fly to-and-fro. For viewers who construct “birds” as an object separate from “New York,” then they can macro place the birds and then return to macro placing the city after. Upon reidentifying the city, and predicating it again as “abandoned,” “haunting,” it now activates the predication-type old. The joint predication of “New York recedes into distance” becomes prolonged: an old object and a long event.

Conversely, viewers can construct the object “birds” as part of the object “New York.” The birds serve to further represent the city as “abandoned” and “desolate”: i.e. it has been vacated of all human activity and the birds are the only remaining occupants. In this viewing experience, the construction of “New York” as “desolate” and “haunting” is maintained, such that the object remains locally new. The construction “New York recedes into distance” is jointly predicated sustained (i.e. a prediction-type), above and beyond the presence of the birds. Such a viewing experience continues until either the object “New York” or the event “recedes into distance” is experienced discontinuously.

Comparable variations and corrections in the viewing experience occur in *Raiders*. Recall the representation “vertical line moves rightwards,” while Marion is being thrown into the snake pit. For viewers who construct the object “vertical line” for the first time as occasioned by the film text, it becomes globally new. Insofar as the event “x moves rightwards” interrupts the prior event “x is thrown into snake pit,” it activates the predication-type short. The joint predication is sudden. This representation remains sudden within the following interpretive context. Viewers experience “x moves rightwards” as short if they decree it throughout as interrupting “x is thrown into snake pit.” The object “vertical line” remains new if viewers successively macro place it

throughout the images and sounds: i.e. the screen phenomena associated with the stone tooth cracking and the snake slithering through the shoe.

Alternately, viewers can differently experience the above screen phenomena. Consider the image of the snake slithering through the shoe. Metonymically, it can foreshadow that Marion will be in proximate contact with the snakes. Metaphorically, it can evoke that a snake will bite Marion: just as a serpent is penetrating an open toe cap, a venomous tooth will puncture her skin. In either case, “Marion is touched/bitten by snake” is not experienced as interrupting prior occurrences (e.g. “Marion is thrown by the Nazis,” “Marion dangles from statue”). Instead, it becomes a long event insofar as it can be predicated such that it is part of a continuum of transformations. The image of the snake slithering across the shoe can yield a short or long event, depending on whether it is experienced as “*x* moves rightwards” or “*x* is touched/bitten by snake.”

Moreover, the object “Marion,” in “*x* is touched/bitten by snake,” activates the predication-type old. Marion can be token predicated “endangered,” which clusters with prior constructions of Marion in the film: e.g. any one of her encounters with the Nazis. Again, the image of the snake slithering across the shoe can yield a new or old object, depending on whether it is experienced as “vertical line” or “Marion.” Similar implications hold for the joint predication of objects and events. As stated, “vertical line moves rightwards” is sudden (i.e. new object, short event), while “Marion is touched/bitten by snake” is prolonged (i.e. old object, long event). Other interpretive options are possible, in terms of how screen phenomena are constructed, or how objects-events are predicated. The contention remains that they would fall within the range and distinctions posited above and throughout this study.

Conclusion

This final chapter is briefer than the preceding ones throughout this study, as it serves primarily to synthesize prior inquiries – i.e. the viewing experience as fundamentally comprised of constructions of cinematic objects and events. At the same time, it has indicated how further inquiry along these lines might be pursued: in reconstructing interpretations of otherwise diverse

films, one highlights the extent to which said viewing experiences adhere to a delimited range of operations and alternatives.⁵

The risk remains that one's inquiry is little more than begging the question: one is only able to find joint predications of objects-events, because this is the aim that has been set in advance. A concomitant concern hinges on problems of induction: can a theorist be so reliably committed to the view that a set of interpretive operations are cognitively invariant and universally applicable? The suspicion ought to be that, given that films are cultural artefacts, our experience of them are no less historic, temporal and contingent. Constructions of long eventhood in *L'arrivée* are the product of a finite moment – in 2018 – but say little to nothing of viewing experiences circa 1895.⁶

⁵ An alternate approach is to inquire into the experiences of actual audiences, with questionnaires (Tan 2014; see also Bryant and Zillmann 1991) or even with brain scans (see Raz et al. 2012, hereafter Raz 2012, as cited in Grodal and Kramer 2010: 27-28). Ed Tan's work serves to support his model of action-readiness, whose pertinence has been previously addressed (see part one, chapter two). The case of Raz 2012, as discussed in Grodal and Kramer 2010, is more complicated: the former posits neurologically interesting findings that seem to me consonant with the conceptual analysis put forth in this thesis; the latter overlooks some of the more pertinent aspects of these findings. Very briefly, in Raz 2012, neurological scans were conducted to study the relation between brain activity and experienced emotional intensity. During a clip of *Sophie's Choice* (1982), for instance, the emotional intensity as felt by audiences was measured as high and consistent. However, there were quantifiable irregularities in optimal functioning both within and between the different brain networks activated for affective experience: the limbic, the cognitive-motor and the prefrontal networks. This decoupling between emotional intensity and the brain's cohesive functioning did not arise during a clip of *Stepmom* (1998), during which audiences equally felt sad. The authors of the study surmise: "In the case of *Stepmom*, sadness was reported by the participants to commingle with the related feelings of sympathy and affection." (2012: 1458). Put differently, different affect-laden predications clustered to activate continuous brain activity. By contrast, the irregularities in brain activity monitored during *Sophie* may be due to disjunctive affective predications, insofar as "emotions of horror, fear, and anger, which are associated with an immediate urge to act, were reported to accompany feelings of sadness[.]" (*ibid.*). The speculations are not definitive, and neither can the details of the experiments and findings be exhaustively detailed here. All the same, the study strongly suggests what should already be clear from schema theory: that alternately continuities and discontinuities in affective experience (i.e. alternately comingling and antithetical emotions) are activated at the deepest physiological level. The purported physiological basis for clustering and disjunctive affects, which cuts to the heart of the experiment's aims, is a far more germane insight than what can be gleaned from Grodal and Kramer's summary. The latter ultimately dwell on a secondary point: there can be degrees of interaction, or "regulation," between different parts of the brain, such that "viewers [...] process filmic events by empathic resonance and [...] active cognitive regulation may break it down and induce an unregulated empathic resonance." (2010: 28).

⁶ An inverse but complementary view is that transformations in industry and technology cause fundamental changes in perception, psychology and phenomenology. See for instance Aumont 2007: 51-87, who draws on Schivelbusch 2014. While historical research into experiences of early train travel (i.e. nineteenth century) need not be proscribed, its relevance to cognitive competences remains vague: what exactly is supposed to have changed in the mind/brain with the emergence of train travel? If feelings of anxiety and even trauma, induced by train travel, follow from *a priori* functions within the mind/brain, then these experiences fall within the domain of *performance*, not *competence*. Put differently, nothing precludes that people experienced anxiety/trauma prior to the invention of train travel, and/or on other occasions outside of train travel. Consequently, if early train travel was not cognitively and perceptually unique or unprecedented, then little is gained by further likening it to filmgoing.

Unfortunately, the only force to the above accusation is that one's fundamental cognitive, perceptual and affective experience of film texts may not involve constructions of short/long eventhood, or new/old objecthood, but instead are premised on other configurations.⁷ The threat that one sets out with the wrong, or less promissory and productive, set of theoretical terms is quite genuine, and serves the basis of my critique of the AT. It is the current thesis's view that one's only recourse is to devise the simplest and most abstract language available, on the principle that even the most recondite of film texts, or sophisticated viewing experiences, are occasioned on a perceptual, cognitive and affective continuum with far more modest and straightforward experiences. Individual interpretations (and films) may come and go, but there ought to be little merit to the claim that biological capacity and hardwiring have categorically changed.⁸ It is rather a strong historicist (and relativist) view – that changes in the calendar year, if not in social formations and technology, mandate fundamental disruptions and even mutations in biology – that ought to invite skepticism, if not incredulity and shocked disbelief.

Still, a point of contention may emerge, as to just how determining a role evidence plays in naturalist inquiry. Common sense posits that one corroborates hypotheses within empirical settings. A more nuanced alternative is that conceptual analysis needs first be premised on existing knowledge, itself derived from variously designated data.⁹ The misnomer in either

⁷ An alternate pursuit would be to dig more deeply into neuroscientific research. For example, different parts of the brain serve to store correspondingly different types memories: e.g. the hippocampus stores semantically relevant episodes from one's life, akin to "frames"; the neocortex infers routines or scripts, from said frames; meanwhile, the basal ganglia also construct routines and habits, albeit as they pertain to motor skills. The challenge, within a theory of the viewing experience, would be to inquire as to whether distinct parts of the brain can be compared or contrasted in terms of conceptually equivalent or differentiated functions: macro placing, continuity, discontinuity, etc. Especially with respect to descriptively detailed data, the priority for the cognitive film theorist is towards parsimonious explanations and models. On the relationship of data to conceptual analysis, see also Smith 2017.

⁸ A concomitant view, espoused by Jonathan Crary, is that the relation of stimuli to sense percept is "arbitrary" (1990: 90), such that the "body [has] an innate capacity, one might even say a transcendental faculty, to *misperceive*" (*ibid.*), and further still: "The theory of specific nerve energies [on which Crary's work is presumably premised] presents the outlines of a visual modernity in which the 'referential illusion' is unsparingly laid bare. The very absence of referentiality is the ground on which new instrumental techniques will construct for an observer a new 'real' world." (1990: 91). The upshot would be that, since physiological processes are arbitrary, there can be no purpose to any cognitive theory: functions of the mind/brain are indeterminate and unconstrained, such that the scholar need only turn to external causes and factors. Crary's analysis is awash in confusions and non-sequiturs. To cite only one counter-argument: if sensations are arbitrary, then how could any technique, instrumental or otherwise, hope to ground and construct a meaningful percept, much less a world? For now, I can only direct the reader to Richard Allen's and Murray Smith's brief but effective refutation, which notes Crary's drastic misinterpretation of the findings of Johannes Müller he so confidently cites (Allen and Smith 1997: 8). Note too that constructivist cognitivism evinces skepticism towards concerns of referentiality and strong empiricism (i.e. external stimuli as a conduit to knowledge), without condoning Crary's arguments and conclusions.

⁹ Both nineteenth century positivism and the roughly contemporaneous work of Claude Bernard (Bernard 1984) are reputed for the strong empirical view that scientific truth claims are ascertained via verification, or the presumed

approach is that mind independent phenomena fix belief and knowledge: you know what you know, because of your contact with the world. In cognitivism and film studies, this residue of positivist folk wisdom accrues in calls for “data-driven”¹⁰ knowledge building, as well as more richly argued proposals that theory and field work cannot be mutually exclusive.¹¹

By contrast, a view put forth in philosophy of science¹² – at least partly shared by this thesis – is that data and empirical testing, in themselves, are insignificant, absent the context of explanations and theory. The same phenomena can be differently designated, based on one’s epistemic commitments.¹³ Consequently, the task of naturalist inquiry is to determine the scope, reach and significance of so-called “data,” such that the most innocuous distinctions can prove to have the greatest consequence. Interpreting data, and following through on one’s interpretation, almost always exceeds the intrinsic content or semantic value of said data, or mind independent phenomena. This interpretation, while not a free-for-all, itself requires methodological *parti pris* and epistemic gambles of various kinds.

One such *parti pris*, as has been advocated throughout this thesis, is the claim for conceptual parsimony, and concomitantly the universality of the viewing experience, in terms of a baseline of cognitivist, perceptual and affective competences. The thesis has started with two

correspondence between theory and observable data. This view of course endures in variant forms throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth century (Frege 1997, Carnap 1967), while also encountering steadfast opposition (e.g. the so-called Duhem-Quine thesis). Later calls for scientific realism (Putnam 1975) or “empirical adequacy” (van Fraassen 1980) can stand as efforts to reconcile the rejection of positivism, and like approaches, to the so-called miracle success of science: that when its epistemic claims endure, they most often disclose at least a kernel of truth...

¹⁰ See Bordwell and Carroll 1996.

¹¹ See Smith 2017.

¹² See, as previously noted, Quine 1963, but also Koyré 1966, Hanson 1958 and Kuhn 1970, among others. Criticisms of this current can be found in Livingston 1988 as well as Sokal 2008 – although the latter muddies the waters by conflating admittedly controversial albeit accredited scientists (Feyerabend, Kuhn) with all other species of so-called post-modern sophistry (Latour, Baudrillard, etc.). Some of Koyré’s stronger arguments – that nomological claims made by Galileo were not empirically tested by him – have also been met with various, albeit by no means definitive, challenges. In short, Galileo plausibly tested some of his claims, but not necessarily others (i.e. most reputedly, dropping differently weighed materials from the leaning tower of Pisa), and still other claims (i.e. the movement of objects on frictionless surfaces) were not readily testable. Still, a nuanced assessment on the roles of empirical vs. thought experiments in modern science cannot be undertaken here.

¹³ Consider the following: scientists wish to assess the movement of light between an alternately mobile magnet and conductor. Prior to 1905, two separate phenomena are recorded as two distinct equations, depending on whether it is the magnet or the conductor that is in motion (i.e. phenomenon 1: light moves between a moving conductor and a stationary magnet; phenomenon 2: light moves between a moving magnet and a stationary conductor). From 1905 onwards, both variations – regardless of which body moves or is stationary (i.e. the magnet or the conductor) – must be reduced to a single equation or recorded phenomenon, designed to render the velocity of light *as per* relative motion (or relative stasis/rest). These are of course the contrasting examples opening Einstein’s inaugural intervention in quantum mechanics and they partly serve to animate his rejection of Newtonian mechanics and his embracement of (specialized) relativity theory (1989: 140-171).

ultimately conjoined postulates, that ought to seem logically necessary and self-evidently true. Firstly, that prospectively any viewer can experience a repertoire of cognitions, percepts and affects occasioned by a film text, *as per* modalities distinct from non-humans. Secondly, such modalities must be fundamentally simple, since they are attained multiply and repeatedly, with at best only intermittent conscious effort, and more significantly require a majority of non-conscious (mental) activity. To reiterate: across periods, genres, and other socio-historic contexts, when we watch a film, we're always doing fundamentally the same thing.

The latter claim, of course, ought to fly in the face of common sense – can *Jaws*, *Le gai savoir*, *The Flicker* and *L'arrivée d'un train* really boil down to the same aesthetic experience? As far as the fundamentals of percepts, cognitions and affects go, the answer has been “yes.” Further concerns and caveats arise from such an affirmation, to which we now turn in the conclusion.

Conclusion

There are several key claims made throughout this thesis that warrant reassessment. Such scrutiny need not question the legitimacy of the thesis, in part or in toto, much less its epistemic and disciplinary commitments to an analytic, cognitivist theory of the viewing experience. Quite the contrary, the questions and propositions put forth ought to appear sufficiently germane as to invite further inquiry and scrutiny. Just as it has been advanced that prior cognitivist work, especially undertaken by the AT requires emendation, the current thesis can hope to spur further debate and (hopefully productive) disagreement. In the interest of economy, I can list only a few issues and potential sticking points, while sketching my own commitments.

Some such queries might investigate the issue of the viewer's competence in the opposite direction. Thus, one would consider not what viewers are (cognitively) capable of constructing, but instead in what capacities are they (cognitively) constrained. In short, viewers construct objects and events, as occasioned by film texts. But for such a model to gain in applicability and salience, it ought equally to consider what falls beyond our cognitive, perceptual and affective reach. Put differently, competence is the theory of what viewers can do. As a corollary, competence is also, at least implicitly, aligned with the contention that there remain interpretive activities that viewers can't do – more to the point, that there are some things no viewer will ever be able to do.

One such question, addressed but by no means exhausted in the thesis, hinges on the amount of constructions, specifically as pertains to token predications, viewer can macro place simultaneously. The argument here has been that, in token identifying and predicating screen phenomena, viewers macro place either one object, one event, or one object-event at a time. In the case of a macro placed object or event, one cannot simultaneously macro place other objects or events. Rather, the decreed object-event is sustained (i.e. macro placed new object, micro placed long event) or concise (i.e. macro placed short event, micro placed old object), with no other decrees occupying the same interpretive priority (i.e. no other macro placed object-events). In the case of a macro placed object-event, the same token predication overlaps the object and the event. Here, one cannot token predicate-*x* for an object-*a* and token predicate-*y* for an event-*b*, and macro place both at once. Needless-to-say, this is a proposition I would stand by, but

further investigation, within philosophical and/or neurological capacities, might yet yield alternate or improved models.

A variant of the above postulate is whether there can be more than one global event (at a time) decreed by the viewer. Recall that the current thesis rules against such a prospect, while allowing that viewers can yet revise and correct their decrees: e.g. the global event of *Le gai savoir* can be either “Godard manipulates audio-visual materials” or “Patricia-Émile pursue a project,” but not both at once. To briefly clarify, even acknowledging that the latter is enfolded in the former, the argument remains that viewers cannot construct more than one major or complex (and mereologically constituted) transformation as achieving salience throughout the text. By “mereologically constituted,” one of course means that such an event will contain smaller actions and parts, including decreed causes and consequences.

As should be clear from the above phrasing, the claims as to global eventhood again hinge on what viewers can do – not what film texts have historically tended to favour. Thus, across a heterogeneity of forms and practices – experimental films, documentaries, serials and franchises, individual TV programs and cumulative seasons – one’s cognitive competence is constrained to one global event per text. While watching nominally the same film, a viewer might decree different texts and concomitantly distinct globally composed events for each one. For instance, as occasioned by *Le gai savoir*, the film proper might be one text, and “Godard’s filmography, circa 1968-1979” might be a separate text, each with their own, respective, mereologically composed events. What remains less certain, however, is that we can contain in our minds, simultaneously, a global event-*a* and a global event-*b*, for the same text: e.g. *Le gai savoir* is about equally both Godard indulging in audio-visual manipulations and Patricia-Émile pursuing a polemical-pedagogical project.

Both the conclusion so far, as well as the entire thesis, have been concerned with identified object-events. No less significantly, a major priority has been predication – posited as occurring in affect-laden terms. Affect has been stipulated as broadly approaching sentience, or at least minimally registered feelings, without necessarily being reducible to a viewer’s consciously verbalized iterations. More to the point, an even bolder contention has been advanced, which is that discontinuities in affect are what underwrite all other discontinuities in the viewing experience. Corrections in interpretation are never merely a matter of corrected information, in the sense of neutrally processed content. Rather, a revised interpretation is a

revised affect, and *vice versa*. Said affects, of course, mandate the cooperation of cognitions and percepts. All the same, affect ought to figure significantly in a theory of the viewing experience, as further cognitivists and analytically minded theorists consider, appraise and sharpen the hypothesis that affect-laden predications are central to all mental operations as occasioned by film.

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