Cinema Studies has made extraordinary strides in the past two decades. Our capacity for understanding both how and what the cinema signifies has been developed through new methodologies, and hugely enriched in interaction with a wide variety of other disciplines, including literary studies, anthropology, linguistics, history, economics and psychology. As fertile and important as these new theoretical foundations are, their very complexity has made it increasingly difficult to track the main lines of conceptualization. Furthermore, they have made Cinema Studies an ever more daunting prospect for those coming new to the field.

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vii
In recent years the study of narrative has acquired a new and prominent role in theorizing about film. Since at least 1907 narrative has been the dominant mode of filmmaking as well as the principal source of examples for writers exploring the ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, and ideology of film. Even so, it has only been within the last decade that writers have fully recognized the formative power of narrative and begun the task of integrating sophisticated theories of narrative with theories of the general nature of film and film style. Indeed it was discovered that classical film theories were often premised on a tacit and fragmentary view of the nature of narrative.

The current situation is the result of two trends. In the mid-1960s film theory began to stress epistemological and psychological questions, developing, first, an object-centered epistemology (where the goal was to present numerous methods by which to segment and analyze the parts of a film) followed by a shift toward a subject-centered epistemology (where the goal was to investigate the actual methods employed by a human perceiver to watch, understand, and remember a film). Feminist theory, for example, shifted from identifying cultural stereotypes in film to concentrating on the role of sexuality and gender in a perceiver’s ongoing encounter with film. At about the same time, a second trend appeared in which narrative began to be explored as a discourse in its own right, apart from its manifestation in any particular medium. This study came to be called “narratology.” Its goal was also epistemological: at first descriptive and objective, but more recently focused on a perceiver’s “competence” – on the conditions that govern and make possible both the comprehension and creation of narrative texts. Today narrative is increasingly viewed as a distinctive strategy for organizing data about the world, for making sense and significance. As the features of narrative came to be specified more precisely, it was detected in a bewildering number of places: not just in artworks, but in our ordinary life and in the work of historians, psychologists, educators, journalists, attorneys, and others. It became clear that narrative was
nothing less than one of the fundamental ways used by human beings to think about the world, and could not be confined to the merely "fictional."

The aim of this book is to examine various approaches to narrative in order to isolate a set of basic issues and problems which must be addressed by any new theory of narrative. These approaches to narrative will cast light on the general epistemological issues addressed by specific theories of film and, to some extent, theories of literature, since both film theory and narratology often rely on literary studies. My method will draw upon an interdisciplinary field known as "cognitive science" that emerged in the mid-1970s and whose effect is beginning to be felt in film study. Cognitive science poses questions about how the human mind functions and how we are able to think. Its answers are framed through the concepts of linguistics, cognitive psychology, artificial intelligence, ethnography, literary theory, and philosophy of language. I believe that film theory, even in its classical formulations, has something to contribute to cognitive science, and equally that cognitive science has something important to contribute to film theory.

My examples of narrative principles will be taken mainly from films, but always with the idea that the principles illustrated extend to the narrative organization of literary and other kinds of material. I will not present a historical account of the development of narrative analysis in film, but rather present an interpretation of theoretical claims arranged as a logical account of how different theories construct answers to certain, but not all, issues of narrativity. I will be concerned primarily with classical narrative, with Hollywood films and their near relatives. These narratives are prototypical cases against which some other kinds of narrative organization may be measured. It will be seen that classical narrative is a remarkably complex phenomenon.

The emphasis in the book will fall upon narrative fiction, though I will touch upon some types of narrative in nonfiction. I will illustrate concepts with close analysis and small-scale examples, rather than analyses of entire films. I have not assumed that the reader of this book is familiar with any of the films that are discussed nor have I assumed that the reader has any prior familiarity with the methods of cognitive science. Although some knowledge of film structure is presumed, this should not cause any difficulty for a student who has had an introductory course in film, or for a professional trained in another field with an interest in narrative.

My argument in the book develops along the following lines. I first examine a number of theories about the nature of the patterns, or structures, that are created in consciousness when we read a text as a narrative. Here I draw heavily on recent experimental studies of narrative comprehension.
will discover that perceiving the world narratively is intimately tied to 
our ways of arranging knowledge (schemas), to our skills of causal 
reasoning, and hence to our judgments about temporal sequence. Thus 
- to take one example - the spectator's recognition of a "scene" in a 
narrative film will be analyzed as a complex temporal event (expressed 
through the historical present tense) that is being generated by a level 
of narration which is presenting one (past, now made present) time but 
from the perspective of another (later, and still future) time. Not only is the 
"end" of the story already known at its beginning, but in its telling 
there is the implicit assertion that the story will be important and 
worth the time. The spectator's recognition of such a complex time (and 
causality) in a film narrative can be explained by top-down mental 
processes and schemas that are not dependent upon the actual time 
during which data appears on a motion picture screen. Although somewhat 
surprising, we will discover that the purest instance of a narrative 
scene may be found in the classical documentary film which seeks to 
make the past immediate for the spectator by compressing and reducing 
the levels of narration. It is my belief that many other analytical 
terms besides narrative "scene" will yield new meanings when considered 
through the methods of cognitive psychology, narratology, and linguistics. 

Books are not written in a vacuum. I would like to acknowledge the 
many persons who have provided an atmosphere within which to work, 
have circulated ideas to me, and read drafts. 

The National Endowment for the Humanities provided a 1987 
Summer Stipend and the American Council of Learned Societies 
awarded me a 1987-8 Fellowship. These monies, along with the tangible 
and intangible support of my parents, Evelyn and Henry Odell, made 
the writing of this book possible. 

None of the material written for this book has been previously pub-
lished. I am grateful to Marvel Entertainment Group for permission to 
reprint a sequence of panels from the comic book Nick Fury, Agent of 
SHIELD and equally grateful to the story's writer and illustrator, Jim 
Steranko, for his assistance. 

I would like to thank David A. Sprecher, Provost, College of Letters 
and Science, for his support as well as past and present colleagues at 
Santa Barbara who have contributed on a regular basis: Anna Brusutti,
Kathryn Carnahan, Mary Desjardins, Manthia Diawara, Dana Driskel,
Willis Flachsenh, Victor Fuentes, Naomi Greene, Paul Hernadi, Lea 
Jacobs, Harry Lawton, Paul N. Lazarus, Suzanilestevine, Marti 
Mangan, Constance Penley, Michael Renow, Laurence A. Rickels, Jon-
athan Rosenbaum, Alexander Sesonske, Janet Walker, and Mark Wil- 
liams. 

Special help and encouragement at particular moments during the 
project were offered by the following: Rick Altman, Dudley Andrew, 
David Alan Black, Dave Cash, Donna S. Cunningham, Thomas 
Elsaesser, Ronald Gottesman, Christopher Husted, Henry Jenkins III, 
Vance Kepley, Jr., Russell Merritt, Mark Smith, Vivian C. Sobchack, 
Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. 

I have been fortunate to have had thoughtful commentaries on my 
arguments by Edward Buscombe, Nataša Durovičová, and Marsha 
Kinder. Particularly close and detailed readings were offered by Sabine 
Gross, Garrett Stewart, and Charles Wolfe. I have appreciated the com-
radeship since, as the philosopher Heraclitus noted, the trail up the 
mountain is the same as the one down. 

David Bordwell is the most indefatigable friend and generous scholar 
one could ask for. I have benefited enormously from his teaching, his 
work, and his reactions to my work. The keenness and wit of his 
writing has been my model. 

I have been excellently well-served by the editorial and production 
staff at Routledge: Jane Armstrong, Rebecca Barden, Philippa Brewster, 
Stephanie Horner, Sarah Pearsall, Maria Stasiak, and Penny Wheeler. 
Philip Rosen has provided me expert advice. He is a superlative editor 
as sensitive to syntax and organization as he is to argumentative detail. 
Fortunately for me he is also possessed of patience and humor. I have 
used many of his ideas. 

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the continuing energy and companion-
ship of my nine-year-old son Alex and, since I last penned a preface, 
second and third sons, Evan and Liam, loved just as dearly. I'm in-
debted also to Roberta Kimmel who has taken part in all my projects. 
The book is dedicated to my sister and brother, Carol and Will, and 
to the memory of my sister Lorel. Their enthusiasm and earnestness 
are a permanent inspiration.
NARRATIVE SCHEMA

PSYCHOLOGICAL USE VALUE

Narrative has existed in every known human society. Like metaphor, it seems to be everywhere: sometimes active and obvious, at other times fragmentary, dormant, and tacit. We encounter it not just in novels and conversation but also as we look around a room, wonder about an event, or think about what to do next week. One of the important ways we perceive our environment is by anticipating and telling ourselves mini-stories about that environment based on stories already told. Making narratives is a strategy for making our world of experiences and desires intelligible. It is a fundamental way of organizing data.1

Recently narrative principles have been found in the work of a wide range of professionals, including attorneys,2 historians,3 biographers, educators, psychiatrists, and journalists.4 This demonstrates that narrative should not be seen as exclusively fictional but instead should merely be contrasted to other (nonnarrative) ways of assembling and understanding data. The following kinds of document exemplify some nonnarrative ways of organizing data: lyric poetry, essay, chronology, inventory, classification, syllogism, declaration, sermon, prayer, letter, dialectic, summary, index, dictionary, diagram, map, recipe, advertisement, charity solicitation, instruction manual, laundry list, telephone directory, birth announcement, instruction manual, laundry list, telephone directory. The relevance and connection of narrative, or nonnarrative, to our world — how it may be used in that world to accomplish a goal — is a separate issue concerning its “mode of reference” as either fiction or nonfiction.

As a starting point and for simplicity, then, I will divide texts into four basic types: narrative fiction (e.g., a novel); narrative nonfiction (e.g., history); nonnarrative fiction (e.g., many kinds of poetry); and nonnarrative nonfiction (e.g., essay). The boundaries among these types are not absolute but relative to the questions one wishes to ask
about the data that has been organized. The fact that certain poetry, for example, is nonnarrative does not mean that, considered at a fine grain, it may not also exhibit some aspects of narrative organization (e.g., defining a scene of action and temporal progression, dramatizing an observer of events). One should not allow the usefulness of broad categorizations (poetry, novel) to obscure the ways in which a narrative strategy may be applied successfully by a reader in comprehending certain aspects of some texts; or, for that matter, to obscure the ways in which nonnarrative reading strategies may penetrate narrative texts at certain levels.

It is also important to distinguish between two broad fields in which a given narrative may function. In one context, it can be said that a narrative must be consumed as a material and social object, and must respond to an agenda of community issues. In this context, a narrative acquires labels of immense variety in order to arouse the interests of community members. These labels are the pathways on which it moves through society by being bought and sold, or exchanged. In a second context, however, a narrative can be said to exist for only one person at a time. Engaging intimately with a perceiver, narrative enters thought itself, competing and jostling with other ways of reacting to the world. Thus narrative, at least initially, may be analyzed in two different ways. From one angle it appears as a social and political object with an exchange value arising from its manufacture as an object for a community; from another angle it appears as a psychological object with a use value arising from perceptual labor—from the exercise of the particular skills possessed by a member of that community. Ultimately, of course, these two values are not independent. One may study the psychological dimension of exchange (e.g., commodity fetishism) and the social dimension of use (e.g., propaganda). The particular social ground which defines an individual's language and horizon of action cannot be completely divorced from that individual's language competence and abilities. Narrative depends on an unspoken, permanent agenda of topics in a community which, in turn, justifies the community activities for which abilities must be found and developed in individuals. In studying how a narrative is assigned labels in order to be exchanged and used, one is studying basic human proficiencies: skills employed in manufacturing and selling a material object as well as perceptual skills employed in realizing a use for the object.

In spite of the copresence of exchange value and use value, I will tentatively separate the two contexts in order to better highlight the nature of a relative autonomy where each value provides a ground for the other. This will also enable me to limit the terms of discussion so as to begin to talk about how narrative functions in our world. It is the aim of this book to examine the use value of narrative, specifically the psychological dimension of use. I wish to examine how we come to know that something is a narrative and how a narrative is able to make intelligible our experiences and feelings. I will argue that it is more than a way of classifying texts: narrative is a perceptual activity that organizes data into a special pattern which represents and explains experience. More specifically, narrative is a way of organizing spatial and temporal data into a cause-effect chain of events with a beginning, middle, and end that embodies a judgment about the nature of the events as well as demonstrates how it is possible to know, and hence to narrate, the events.

Although it often be convenient to use the word "narrative" to refer to an end result, or goal, one should not forget that this final product ("here is a narrative") arises from a particular and ongoing (narrative) method of organizing data. Thus the word "narrative" may refer to either the product of storytelling/comprehending or to its process of construction. The first four chapters will begin to specify narrative in both these senses while chapter 7 will consider how a narrative relates to the real world in a "fictional" or "nonfictional" manner.

If narrative is to be considered as a way of perceiving, one still needs to specify the way. Further, one needs to specify what is meant by "perceiving." In general, my approach will be to allow the notion of "perceiving" to remain quite broad and elastic, capable of referring to any one of a range of distinct mental activities. When sharp lines must be drawn, I will use special concepts. Thus the word "perception" will be used in this book to point toward any of the following: a "percept" derived from reality; a preconceived assumption being made about reality; or an acknowledged fact of physical reality. The word "perception" may also be used to refer to an intuition (e.g., perceiving that color seems to be intrinsic and permanent to an object while sound appears to come from an object, to be created and contingent); or, it may refer to a propositional conclusion that a perceiver has reached about sensory perception through a process of reasoning; or, it may simply refer to an attitude we adopt when confronted by something that is a representation of something else. Some theories would classify the latter as cognition rather than perception. As we shall see, particular theories of narrative will divide up the operations of human consciousness in various ways to emphasize different abilities. Thus the word "perception" in this book will earn its exactness only through the finer discriminations made by particular theories. In the next chapter, for example, I will begin to refine the notion of "perception" by introducing a fundamental distinction between "top-down" and "bottom-up" modes of perceiving.
NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION AND FILM
LOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN NARRATIVE

What way of arranging data is characteristic of narrative perception? We readily distinguish narrative from other experiences even if we cannot say how the judgment is being made, just as we may not be able to say why something counts as a "game" or a "grammatical" sentence. Intuitively we believe that a narrative is more than a mere description of place or time, and more even than events in a logical or causal sequence. For example, an account of the placement of objects in a room is not a narrative. Similarly, though a recipe involves temporal duration and progression ("bake until golden brown . . . "), it is not normally thought of as a narrative (the story of a pie). Nor does a sequence of actions become a narrative by being causal, completed, or well-delineated; for example, a planet orbiting the sun, the construction of a syllogism, the recitation of an alphabet, or the actions of departing, traveling, and arriving do not by themselves form a narrative. Instead, narrative can be seen as an organization of experience which draws together many aspects of our spatial, temporal, and causal perception.

In a narrative, some person, object, or situation undergoes a particular type of change and this change is measured by a sequence of attributions which apply to the thing at different times. Narrative is a way of experiencing a group of sentences or pictures (or gestures or dance movements, etc.) which together attribute a beginning, middle, and end to something. The beginning, middle, and end are not contained in the discrete elements, say, the individual sentences of a novel but signify in the overall relationships established among the totality of the elements, or sentences. For example, the first sentence of a novel is not itself "the beginning." It acquires that status in relationship to certain other sentences. Although being "physically" first in some particular way may be necessary for a "beginning," it is not sufficient since a beginning must also be judged to be a proper part of an ordered sequence or pattern of other elements; the elements themselves are not the pattern. Narrative is thus a global interpretation of changing data measured through sets of relationships. We must now consider the nature of this overall pattern of relationships.

Tzvetan Todorov argues that narrative in its most basic form is a causal "transformation" of a situation through five stages:

1 a state of equilibrium at the outset;
2 a disruption of the equilibrium by some action;
3 a recognition that there has been a disruption;
4 an attempt to repair the disruption;
5 a reinstatement of the initial equilibrium.7

These changes of state are not random but are produced according to principles of cause and effect (e.g., principles which describe possibility, probability, impossibility, and necessity among the actions that occur). This suggests that there are two fundamental kinds of predication in narrative: existents, which assert the existence of something (in the mode of the verb "to be"), and processes, which stipulate a change or process under a causal formula (in the mode of such verbs as "to go, to do, to happen"). Typical existents are characters and settings while typical processes are actions of persons and forces of nature. But there is more: the changes of state create an overall pattern or "transformation" whereby Todorov’s third stage is seen as the "inverse" of the first and fifth stages, and the fourth stage the "inverse" of the second (since it attempts to reverse the effects of the disruption).8 The five stages may be symbolized as follows: A, B, -A, -B, A. This amounts to a large-scale pattern (repetition, antithesis, symmetry, gradation) among the causal relationships and is temporal in a new way; in fact, some theorists refer to such patterns as a "spatial" form of narrative.8 This emergent form, or transformation, is a necessary feature of narrative because, as Christian Metz observes, “A narrative is not a sequence of closed events but a closed sequence of events.”9

Consider as an example the following limerick:

There was a young lady of Niger
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger.
And the smile on the face of the tiger,
With the lady inside
And the smile on the face of the tiger.10

Analyzing the limerick as a narrative using Todorov’s transformations, results in the following global structure:

There was [once upon a time]:

A smile
B ride
-A [swallowed: a horrible pleasure?]
-B return
A smile

[which goes to show that . . .]

The limerick illustrates several important points about Todorov’s transformations. First, the structure does not represent directly the actual processing of the narrative by a perceiver but only its conceptual or logical form after it has been interpreted. The reader discovers that the narrative did not begin with "lady," or "youth," or the place of "Niger," as its initial term ("A") because none of those beginnings will yield a macro-description of the required kind. Taking "smile" as an initial term, however, produces a sequence of transformations that will
embrace the limerick as a whole (A, B, −A, −B, A). Nevertheless, this does not yet explain why a reader may smile at the limerick. The humor of the limerick resides in the sudden realization of what must have happened, of what was omitted from its proper sequence in the telling. The absence of the woman at the end answers to a gap in the chronological structure of the telling of the event. Todorov’s middle stage – a “recognition” of the disruption – already hints that the actual process of moving from ignorance to knowledge will be of central importance to our experience of narrative. Not only characters and narrators, but readers are caught up in ways of perceiving and knowing. These crucial issues will need to be addressed in more detail and will be the topic of chapters 3 and 4.

Second, Todorov’s structure does not represent the entirety of our comprehension of the narrative aspects of the limerick. The reader must supply an epilogue or moral to the story which justifies its being told (which goes to show that . . .). This involves a rereading and a reassignment of some of the meanings – a process facilitated in the first line by assuming that reference will be partially indeterminate in the manner of a fiction (once there was a time . . .). Eventually the reader must rationalize how he or she might know such an exotic world within his or her preconceptions of an ordinary world.

Finally, although this narrative is arranged to focus attention on what Todorov calls the inversion of the initial equilibrium (the middle cause which is the opposite of smiling, i.e., being swallowed, −A), the logical structure cannot account for all of the inferences that the reader must draw from it. By discovering the nature of the “inversion” which turns out to have an unexpected literal dimension (ingestion) as well as a number of metaphorical dimensions. What qualifies the inversion as an inversion? The reader must make inferences in spite of (and also because of) being misled by the verse. Consider, for instance, the deception of the phrase “they returned” in line 3; and the fact that the lady’s ride is enlarged by the word “returned” to mean that she had departed on a trip, even if only a short trip; and the semantic play with the preposition “on” and with the definite article of “the smile”: at the end only her smile “rides on” the tiger and the smile is not hers but a smile of the tiger. (We will examine more fully the significance of deception in relation to perceiving and knowing a narrative in chapters 3 and 4.) The implications of the use of causation and metaphor in the narrative extend at least to the reader’s knowledge and beliefs about female sexuality, pleasure, oral gratification, desire, risk and trust: and perhaps also to the consequences of being “away from the home.” It is far from clear how the logical form of the limerick is able to summon these forms of knowledge. Would a reader, for example, be able to list all possible “inversions” of a given initial state? Or is there instead a

NARRATIVE SCHEMA

sense in which an inversion must be discovered to be appropriate through the operation of processes which are not all “logical” in the same ways?

Before expanding our idea of narrative form, it may be useful to contrast the above limerick with a poem which is nonnarrative:

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Sugar is sweet
And so are you.

For reasons to be made clear shortly, I will refer to the structure of this poem as a catalogue, not a narrative. For now it is enough to notice that the verb “to be” has been used four times in an attributive and atemporal sense (as in the extreme case of identity, “a rose is a rose”). The reader does not interpret the poem as implying one or more temporal adverbial complements, such as, “Roses are red at noon, violets are blue at two.” No temporal logic connects the redness of roses with the blueness of violets and the sweetness of sugar and “you.” Instead the reader constructs a pair of categories which have no “tense”: one which contains two flowers, and another which contains both sugar and the reader himself or herself (“you”). The “causation” at work in the poem – producing the conclusion signaled by “and so” – is asserted to be as logical, natural, and timeless as grouping roses and violets together as flowers (or, perhaps, as objects having color). The rhyme (blue–you) brings together the two categories and implies that the logic of forming the flower category is as certain as the logic of grouping sugar and “you.” Thus although both the poem and the limerick compare a person’s desirable qualities to something which may be tasted or eaten, the poem is not a narrative because its conceptual structure does not depend on a definite temporal progression which ultimately reveals a global pattern (e.g., A, B, −A, −B, A). Instead the poem is based on forming simple pairs of things with the final intimation – an epilogue of sorts – that “you,” the reader, and an implicit “I,” the author, should also form a pair.

I would now like to imagine for a moment something incredible. Suppose that the limerick that tells the story of the woman riding on the tiger contains an interlude where the tiger sings for the woman the poem, “Roses are red.” In one sense, the narrative has been interrupted by a nonnarrative, catalogue, sequence. In another sense, however, there has been no real interruption, for both the narrative limerick and the nonnarrative poem develop a connection between taste and beauty in which the sexual drive is represented as an appetite that devours. Is the limerick-poem then a hybrid? Does the narrative dominate the catalogue, or is the narrative merely an excuse for a clever song? I
NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION AND FILM

believe that there is no definitive answer to what it really is. Rather, the answer will depend upon the purpose in asking the question: within what context must an answer be framed, how narrowly must the text be construed, which meanings are most important, and so forth. Recognizing the complexity and dynamism of a text is usually more important than assigning a final, decisive label to it.

Rick Altman has drawn attention to the importance of certain catalogue systems within narrative texts. He speaks of narrative as possessing a "dual focus" where one focus is composed of a chronological and causal progression (the "syntagmatic") while the other is composed of a multitude of binary oppositions among elements that are "static" and that exist outside the time of the causal progression (the "paradigmatic"). A textual element (shot, scene, aspect of style, character attribute, theme, etc.) that is functioning paradigmatically makes a pair not by calling forth its "effect" in a linear fashion, but by suggesting a parallel with something else, a similarity or contrast. Paradigmatic pairing (or, what have described as a "catalogue") creates collections of objects organized according to "conceptual" principles. Altman finds that in the genre of the American musical film, a special kind of paradigmatic focus, designed to show that opposed sets of categories are not mutually exclusive, overwhelms the causal, framing system.

For present purposes, I am less interested in reaching a definitive judgment about the precise nature of a text than in describing the different types of organization that underlie a reader's experience moment by moment. Accordingly, I will construe Altman's notions of "duality" and "focus" more narrowly and shift them to a new realm. I will also introduce new terms that divide up the field of study in a somewhat different way, allowing for finer distinctions. As we shall see, the reason for such a shift in terminology is correlated with a change in the object of study: an attempt to specify the formal logic of narrative gives way to an examination of the interaction of narrative with a perceiver - a pragmatics of comprehension.

PRAGMATIC FORMS IN NARRATIVE

The notion of narrative as a sequence of logical "transformations" brings together two concerns: an awareness of pattern as well as purpose. These concerns may be seen in the double meaning of the English word "design," which may signify either a formal composition, an "arrangement" of elements (e.g., "The design utilized bright colors"), or an "intention" (e.g., "Her letter ended in mid-sentence by design," "He has designs on her property"). The importance of the transformations for Todorov would seem to be the suggestion that some (designing) forces have intervened in the five stages of narrative to shape the final pattern (design) which turns out to be a reshaping of the initial state. Thus something more than describing categories, and more even than labeling cause and effect, is needed to create a narrative; however, attenuated, an element of choice, probability, or purpose must be seen by the reader to promise through its transformations an answer as to "why" or "when" something is or could be other, and "how" it returns to being the "same." One might say that the reader's discovery of this overall process at work in narrative is a mode of causal reasoning about human affairs which is distinct from merely labeling a cause, or assessing the probabilities of a local action. In this way, one may think of narrative as a mechanism that systematically tests certain combinations and transformations of a set of basic elements and propositions about events ("A" and "B" in my examples). The aim is not simply to enumerate causes, but to discover the causal efficacy of an element - its possibility for being, and for being other, as the reader may desire.

Many writers have argued that the logic underlying narrative is more complex than Todorov's pattern (A, B, -A, -B, A). A central concept like "transformation" may be understood in different ways, or new concepts may be developed in an attempt to interrelate narrative pattern and purpose. Claude Lévi-Strauss, Claude Bremond, and A.J. Greimas claim to be extending and refining the insights of Vladimir Propp, who defined the logic of the Russian wondrous tale in terms of seven basic "spheres of action" (character roles), thirty-one "functions" (types of action), certain "moves" (fixed strings of functions), and "auxiliaries" (transitions). Lévi-Strauss defines pairs of opposed "mythemes" while Greimas tightens narrative logic even further by defining its elements in terms of the "square of opposition" used in traditional logic to classify categorical propositions. For Greimas, narrative becomes a special working through of contraries, subcontraries, converses, and contradictories. Like Todorov's five-part scheme, the goal of these methods is to describe the large-scale symmetries that draw together and unify the parts of narrative.

All of these approaches have been influential and have produced important results with certain texts. Nevertheless, the linguistic theories from which they have drawn many concepts have in the intervening years been modified or superseded. Also, formal logic has been shown to have limitations as a descriptive model for human thought. More recent models of human language emphasize the dynamics of a perceiver's interaction with a text - i.e., pragmatic situations - by studying a perceiver's use of "fuzzy" concepts, metaphorical reasoning, and "frame-arrays" of knowledge. Correspondingly, there has been a general tendency to move away from the linguistics of Ferdinand de Sausure as well as away from an exclusive reliance upon formal and logical schemes, such as Noam Chomsky's deductive rules which in many
cases do not seem flexible enough to capture the wide-ranging, often speculative aspect of interpretation.9 The stakes remain high, however, as Wallace Martin reminds us: "Identification of universal narrative patterns would seem to tell us not just about literature but about the nature of the mind and/or universal features of culture."28 The goal of a pragmatics of narrative is to achieve a psychological description that can explain how a perceiver is able to interpret a text as a narrative moment by moment.28

One might begin to relax a strictly logical definition of narrative so as to include pragmatic aspects by pursuing the definition offered by Stephen Heath in his analysis of Orson Welles’s film, Touch of Evil (1958):

A narrative action is a series of elements held in a relation of transformation such that their consecution determines a state S’ different to an initial state S; thus: S→S→S→S→S→S’. A beginning, therefore, is always a violation, the violation or interruption of the homogeneity of S. The narrative transformation is the resolution of the violence, its containment – its replacing – in a new homogeneity. ‘Replacement’ there has a double edge: on the one hand, the narrative produces something new, replaces S with S’; on the other, this production is the return of the same, S re-places S, is the re-investment of its elements. Hence the constraint of the need for exhaustion: every element must be used up in the resolution; the dispersion the violence provoked must be turned into a re-convergence – which is the action of the transformation, its activity. Ideally, a narrative is the perfect symmetry of this movement.52

In Touch of Evil the initial violence is literal as a car explodes in flames interrupting a kiss between lovers. Heath notes that when those lovers kiss at the end of the film, it is “the same kiss, but delayed, narrativised.”31 For Heath, narrative is a precise series of displacements, often driven by the logic of the disclosure of an enigma that acts to replace an initial situation by returning to it. For Raymond Bellour the search for such a “perfect symmetry” in the form of repetitions and near repetitions (“rhymes”) in the text becomes almost obsessive, extending from global patterns (where one is reminded of Todorov’s precise transformations) down to the smallest micro-sequence of action.28

But symmetries are not Heath’s primary concern in defining narrative. He is anxious to show how some elements inevitably escape the tight narrative structure and become a residuum, an ‘excess,’ revealing hidden psychic and ideological processes at work in the text. Narrative exists because of these hidden processes and is an explicit attempt to master them. For Heath, the causality of narrative events in a plot is merely a pretext for larger transformations which point to our everyday beliefs about ourselves and our world, and the ways in which we formulate (or repress) those beliefs. Heath is less interested in discovering a stable logical structure than in uncovering symptoms of belief, modes of persuasion, and values which are not at all logical in the way conceived by Todorov and Greimas. Narrative thus acquires the form of an argument, leading to such definitions of it as the following:

a connected sequence of ... statements, where “statement” is quite independent of the particular expressive medium.35

(Seymour Chatman)

A closed discourse [i.e., a sequence of predicative statements] that proceeds by unrealizing a temporal sequence of events.36

(Christian Metz)

a ... recounting [of] a chrono-logical sequence, where sequence is taken to be a group of non-simultaneous topic-comment structures the last one of which constitutes a modification of the first.37

(Gerald Prince)

Still more generally, Sergei Eisenstein envisioned an “intellectual cinema” in which filmic “reasoning” would enrich narrative and produce a synthesis of art and science.38

Prince’s notion above of “modification” is quite broad and seems to include spatial, temporal, causal, and “zero” modifications as well as operations of inversion, negation, repetition, manner, and/or modality. The notion of narrative as a series of argumentative “statements” (i.e., propositions analyzable as a comment on a topic) that are suitably modified and independent of their manifestation in words, pictures, gestures, or other materials does capture something important about the phenomenon. Still, the notion of a narrative “statement” may have relinquished important detail for a generality bordering on vagueness. What, for example, are the limits of a “modification” to a “proposition”? A similar problem of vagueness attends the almost obligatory discussion of the so-called “minimal narrative” which takes as its starting point E.M. Forster’s distinction between chronology and causality. The following sentences illustrate the grounds of the debate, though theorists give different reasons for their conclusions:39

These do not qualify as narratives:

(1a) The king died and then the queen died [chronology].
(2a) Mary ate an apple.

These are narratives:

(1b) The king died, and then the queen died of grief [causality].
(2b) Shirley was good then she drifted into a life of crime.
In this debate there is an implicit belief that narrative is built up from a small set of basic units, or particles (e.g., topics, comments, and modifications), by addition and subtraction. The approach is reminiscent of the attempt by "analytic structuralism" to account for human perception by positing certain basic "sensations" together with simple laws of combination. The idea of narrative has become so impoverished by the search for minimal, logical conditions in a single sentence that it is unclear what qualities might attach to the more typical narratives which are exchanged and used in social arenas. Some writers, perhaps impressed by the pervasiveness of narrative thinking in everyday life and despairing of the attempt to find a bright line between narrative and nonnarrative, conclude that virtually everything is narrative. For instance, the following is deemed by one writer to be a narrative:

(3) Once upon a time there was a person. The End. 11

Another writer concludes that "even mathematical proofs, with one step following another toward an inevitable conclusion, exhibit something of the dynamics of plot and closure." 12

I believe that what is needed is a description of narrative which avoids a strictly "logical" definition of minimal conditions even if supplemented by more expansive mechanisms like Todorov's transformations. Such a new description must also be more precise than discovering a set of "statements" which reveal pragmatic beliefs, or make statements. One way to accomplish this goal is to concentrate on the cognitive processes active in a perceiver during his or her comprehension of narrative in an actual situation. The issue then focuses on how an overall narrative pattern may be discovered, or imposed, in the very act of perceiving. How do we manage to learn from narratives, moment by moment, and how do we learn to make our own narratives?

For Dan Lloyd the study of narrative comprehension is the study of a primary mode of thought quite distinct from other modes, such as "rational logic." He argues that the use of a "narrative logic" in solving problems explains why persons routinely fail certain tests of deductive and inductive reasoning. Thinking narratively has important advantages in the world and Lloyd calls for a new science -- "psycornarratology" -- to examine the psychological foundations of narrative reasoning. The new science would be built upon concepts derived from the general study of narrative -- "narratology" -- and would include the work of such writers as Todorov, Bremond, Greimas, and Prince. 13

COGNITIVE SCHEMAS AND OTHER WAYS OF ASSOCIATING DATA

In order to focus on mental processes working in real time, one must begin with the fact that there are rather severe capacity limitations both on an individual's transient memory, which registers sensory information, and on his or her short-term memory, which is able to sort and classify only recent information. Short-term memory can manipulate only about five to nine "chunks" of data. (The word "red" will count as one chunk of data whereas the letters "red" will count as three.) Thus it is primarily intermediate-term memory (sometimes called "working" memory) and long-term memory that must be carefully studied, for these are the sites of special mental operations that play decisive roles in redescribing data and recognizing global relationships, whether narrative or otherwise. Moreover, these special operations of working and long-term memory are not directly experienced by a perceiver, since "consciousness" has many of the limitations of short-term memory.

The use of working and long-term memory by a perceiver are notable examples of the fact that sensory perception (transient memory) cannot be considered apart from other types of mental processing. Experiments have demonstrated that what perceivers remember from a narrative, as well as what they forget, is not random but dictated by the specifics of the method used in searching for global properties. This method of search guides the acts of encoding, comprehending, storing, retrieving, and "remembering" the features of narrative. These experiments support a basic premise of cognitive psychology, namely, that the classifications which a person imposes on material at the time of its processing will limit the ways in which the material can be subsequently accessed and used in problem-solving. 14 (Much of a person's childhood experience is lost because it is classified in ways that are incompatible with the classifications used by an adult to sort and retrieve experience.) I will refer to the specific method which searches for a narrative pattern as a narrative schema.

The notion of a schema is basic to much of cognitive psychology. A schema is an arrangement of knowledge already possessed by a perceiver that is used to predict and classify new sensory data. The assumption underlying this concept is simply that people's knowledge is organized. The fact that one often knows immediately what one does not know testifies to the structured nature of our knowledge. As Jean Mandler states, "when we know something about a given domain our knowledge does not consist of a list of unconnected facts, but coheres in specifiable ways." 15 A schema assigns probabilities to events and to parts of events. It may be thought of as a graded set of expectations about experience in a given domain. What we implicitly know about a
"room," for example, is much more than either the "connotations" of that word or the properties of an actual room that we may remember. We know still more about a "living room." The vague sort of mental pictures that we may summon of a "room" or a "living room" are not unlike the operation of a schema in representing an ordered set of associations and expectations that are used to judge certain experiences. A schema, of course, is more complex than a given word because it interacts with the environment. A schema tests and refines sensory data at the same time that the data is testing the adequacy of the (implicit) criteria embodied in the schema. The interaction of schema and data creates a perceiver's recognition of global patterns characteristic of that data. "Meaning" is said to exist when pattern is achieved.

A schema does not determine its object through necessary and sufficient conditions. It is a hierarchical arrangement which ranges from tentative and contingent conclusions about data (including "default" specifications) at one extreme to increasingly general and invariant specifications governing a class of data at the other extreme. Thus when "meaning" has been attributed to something through the use of a schema, the meaning has a probabilistic quality which incorporates assumptions and expectations rather than an absolute quality defined by necessary and sufficient conditions.

A schema is only one type of mental structure and a narrative schema is only one of many types of schema used to solve a wide range of everyday problems. Non-narrative types of schema (some of which will be discussed shortly) may be applied to a narrative text; conversely, a narrative schema may be applied quite generally to process data and (as we shall see) may even be used to generate sense from "nonsense" data.

What sort of schema is responsible for the recognition of narrative patterns? Nearly all researchers agree that a narrative schema has the following format:

1. introduction of setting and characters;
2. explanation of a state of affairs;
3. initiating event;
4. emotional response or statement of a goal by the protagonist;
5. complicating actions;
6. outcome;
7. reactions to the outcome.

Such a schema helps to explain some remarkable facts about narrative comprehension.

One of the most important yet least appreciated facts about narrative is that perceivers tend to remember the way the story is actually presented or its surface features. It requires great effort to recall the exact words used in a novel or the exact sequence of shots, angles, lighting, etc. used in a film. The reason is that features of the "surface structure" of texts are typically stored only by recency in so-called "push-down" stacks where new elements are continually being added at the boundary, pushing the older elements farther away. When we say we remember a film, we do not normally mean that we remember the angle from which it was viewed in the movie theater, or the exact angles assumed by the camera in a scene. Rather, when we speak of comprehending something, we mean that our knowledge of it may be stated in several equivalent ways; that is, our knowledge has achieved a certain independence from initial stimuli. In comprehending a visual object in film, for example, our knowledge of the object is such that we might imagine moving about within the space and assuming various angles of view, without thereby altering the object known. We know the object when we know how it may be seen regardless of the position from which it was actually seen. The object thus acquires an "ideal" or "abstract" quality. It should be mentioned that knowing how the object may be seen is very nearly imagining an object that is not in view at all. This suggests that a theory of narrative comprehension will be incomplete without parallel theories of metaphor (because something new may be standing in for an original experience), and of fiction (because what is new may refer initially to the nonexistent).

There are many other remarkable facts about narrative comprehension. Information from a text is sorted and measured by a schema against other kinds of knowledge base. The result is that certain information in a narrative is elaborately processed and assigned to a hierarchy in working memory according to relative importance while much else is discarded. The "value" of information increases according to its improbability so that typical and probable elements - so-called "unmarked" elements of a paradigm - carry the least amount of information. The more typical the information is for a perceiver, the less well it is recalled for it is already implicit in a guiding schema. Events in a text are therefore marked as salient and acquire special significance because of expectations defined by the internal order of a schema.

Furthermore, complex propositions tend to be formed in memory (and reading time slows) when "boundaries" in the text are perceived to correspond to the segmentation provided by a schema. The reason is that story comprehension involves the continuous generation of better-specified and more complicated expectations about what might be coming next and its place in a pattern. Thus a perceiver will strive to create "logical" connections among data in order to match the general categories of the schema. This will involve a mental rearrangement of
temporal sequences in a text. These new macro-propositions concerning global relationships among data are stored in memory and represent the "gist" of the narrative. In this manner a perceiver uses a schema to automatically fill in any data that is deemed to be "missing" in the text.44

There are many ways that a text may disrupt a perceiver's expectations. Unclear character "goals" and "inverted" order in a text require increased processing time because of a necessity to experiment with various classifications of the data within a schematic framework. Also, unexpected information can cause a reorientation of the schema in order to reclaim the important from the superficial. Comprehension slows when explicit propositions constructed earlier must be reactivated (cf. the notion of "retrospective" temporal order in chapter 2); or when previous inferences are indirectly disconfirmed (e.g., by a pattern of events rather than by explicit statement); or when a perceiver must make novel inferences. Finally, the limitations of working memory may be exploited in order to accentuate the so-called "fluctuating existence" of diegetic off-screen space in film.45

In short, it has been amply demonstrated through many psychological experiments that an individual's attention does not spread equally through a narrative text but works forward and backward in an uneven manner in constructing large-scale, hierarchical patterns which represent a particular story as an abstract grouping of knowledge based on an underlying schema. Furthermore, a narrative schema may be applied in many situations. It has been shown that even with meaningless nonsense figures moving in abstract paths, viewers were able to describe and remember a much longer series of events, by generating a simple story, and attributing anthropomorphic qualities to the figures and the motions they perform, than they could handle in purely physical terms.46

Especially important is the way a perceiver infers the purposes, intentions, and goals of the constructed anthropomorphic entities. Thus it would seem that a narrative schema is always an option in processing data even when there are no human characters or the events are essentially "nonsense" data.47

Although narrative is a powerful and general way of organizing information, it is essential to realize that the concept of a schema addresses only some of the issues concerning narrative.48 A narrative schema does not directly address such problems as a perceiver's fascination, emotional reaction, or participation in a story; the effect on a perceiver of manipulations of point of view; nor the effect of actually experiencing a story in a community setting. Also, presumably, the nature of the medium and the "style" of the story will exert pressure on comprehension. There is even a question about the nature of the "macro-propositions" generated through a schema: are they verbal, pictorial, or something else?49 This range of issues is a reminder of the complexity of the narrative phenomenon. Still, it does not rule out addressing problems one at a time and then attempting to integrate various theories about human capability and performance.

I believe that by studying comprehension as a constructive activity (encompassing much more than the mere retrieval of images or words stored in the order received), one bypasses the now vexed film-theoretical question of whether film is like a "language."50 Indeed, one almost bypasses the question of whether film is like a "communication." There is, in fact, good reason to believe that both film and natural language are special subsets of more general cognitive enterprises. One of these general enterprises is our ability to construct a narrative out of experience; that is to say, our ability to use a narrative schema to model a version of the world. In this view, both film narrative and written narrative express temporal relationships because both are mental constructions, not because film reduces to language.

A PROPOSAL FOR A NARRATIVE SCHEMA

It may be helpful to construct a narrative schema in somewhat more detail and to illustrate its application to a particular film. The elements of the schema I will present are derived primarily from Mary Louise Pratt's interpretation of the work of the sociolinguist, William Labov, who studied narrative patterns in the everyday conversation of inner
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city minority groups. I will represent the relationships among the elements as a hexagon (see fig. 1) because, in general, simple hierarchical tree diagrams, and other standard patterns, are not powerful enough to capture the complex semantic relationships generated by narrative. Using a hexagon, then, is a way of leaving open the inter-relationships among the elements of a narrative. It is important to note that one can apply the schema at many different levels— to a camera movement, composition, shot, sequence of shots, scene, sequence of scenes, etc. depending on the size of the units that have been chosen for analysis. Narrative is a recursive organization of data; that is, its components may be embedded successively at various micro- and macro-levels of action.

The schema contains the following eight components, or functions, which may be repeated in various patterns to model our understanding of a given story; that is, one can move through the hexagon in a myriad of ways and any number of times.

1 An abstract is a title or compact summary of the situation which is to follow. If an abstract is expanded, it becomes a prologue.

2 An orientation is a description of the present state of affairs (place, time, character) while an exposition gives information about past events which bear on the present.

3 An initiating event alters the present state of affairs. A narrative which delays orientation and exposition begins with an initiating event, or a complicating action (see below), is said to begin in medias res.

4 A goal is a statement of intention or an emotional response to an initiating event by a protagonist.

5 A complicating action (linked to an antagonist) arises as a consequence of the initiating event and presents an obstacle to the attainment of the goal.

6 The climax and resolution end the conflict between goals and obstacles and establish a new equilibrium or state of affairs.

7 The epilogue is the moral lesson implicit in the history of these events and may include explicit character reactions to the resolution.

8 The narration is constantly at work seeking to justify implicitly or explicitly (1) why the narrator is competent and credible in arranging and reporting these events and (2) why the events are unusual, strange, or worthy of attention. In other words, how is it possible to possess the knowledge and why should it be possessed?

The study of how children acquire a narrative schema has been a fertile area of investigation and has greatly contributed to an understanding of mental schemas in general. 

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causation, point of view, multiple plots, and temporal complexity are not acquired until much later. Prior to the age of 7, there are partial realizations of the schema along with certain nonnarrative organizations of experience. In order to put the schema into context, I will briefly describe one researcher's attempt to sketch the stages of cognitive development leading up to the acquisition of narrative skills. The following stages of development may also be thought of as strategies by which to collect and associate data generally, ranging from creating a virtually random list through a chronology and finally to the causality and closure of a basic narrative. Although the essence of narrative is a presentation of systematic change through a cause and effect teleology, there is no reason that an actual narrative may not also contain some of these other ways of organizing data.

1 A heap is a virtually random collection of data or objects assembled largely by chance. Objects are linked to one another only through an immediacy of perception, a free-association of the moment.

2 A catalogue is created by collecting objects each of which is similarly related to a "center" or core. For example, a list of objects that belong in a particular room; or are used by a particular person; or are recorded in a particular time span (which yields a chronology). A list of personality traits in a novel helps define a "character." And, as shown in an earlier example, roses and violets may be collected together as flowers as well as placed in the category of what is only natural like sugar, sweetness, and "you."

One could perhaps think of the 180 degree rule in film as a catalogue of three-dimensional spatial fragments with a fixed relationship to a given hypothetical plane such that left—right orientation is preserved in all of the spatial fragments. The center also may be phonically or may be a particular action, such as, A does X to N; B does X to O; C does X to P (which yields the catalogue: A, B, C, N, O, P, with X as the "center" which justifies the list).

3 An episode is created by collecting together the consequences of a central situation: for example, collecting everything that happens to a particular character in a particular setting as well as everything that the character does in that setting. Unlike a heap or a catalogue, an episode does not simply grow longer, it shows change; it develops and progresses. Because the parts of an episode are defined through cause and effect, it is easier to remember an episode than to remember the miscellaneous parts of a heap or a catalogue.

4 An unfocused chain is a series of cause and effects but with no continuing center. For example, character A is followed for a time, then character B, then character C. (Consider, for example, Max Ophuls's La Ronde, 1950; Luis Buñuel's The Phantom of Liberty, 1974; and Jim
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Jarmusch's Mystery Train. 1989. On a smaller scale, consider certain elaborate camera movements by, for example, Ophuls, Renoir, Welles, Mizoguchi, Godard, and Jancsó.

5 A focused chain is a series of cause and effects with a continuing center. For example, the continuing adventures of a character, the events surrounding an object or place, or the elaboration of a theme.

6 A simple narrative is a series of episodes collected as a focused chain. Not only are the parts themselves in each episode linked by cause and effect, but the continuing center is allowed to develop, progress and interact from episode to episode. A narrative ends when its cause and effect chains are judged to be totally delineated. There is a reversibility in that the ending situation can be traced back to the beginning; or, to state it another way, the ending is seemingly entailed by the beginning. This is the feature of narrative often referred to as closure.57

Without attempting to overly simplify these six ways of associating data, one can discern at least four different notions of time at work. The "heap" and "catalogue" primarily exploit two types of time: an atemporal, descriptive time where elements are deemed to be simultaneous, and/or a chronological time of duration where elements are deemed to be merely consecutive. From "episode" to "simple narrative," however, time becomes increasingly consequential (implications, probabilities) and thus directional ("effects" never precede "causes").58 And finally, time comes to exhibit a large-scale configuration (symmetry, reversal, parallelism, cycle, closure, unity) comparable, say, to the action of Todorov's transformations in creating principles of order out of local causation. The spectator's experience of duration and causality is forward in time while the spectator's experience of order may reverse the arrow of time, seemingly operating on the present from a point in the future; that is, earlier parts of a pattern have been arranged to fit with later parts.60

I believe that simultaneity, duration, causality, and order are not simply four items in a taxonomy of time, but are the results of four specific ways of processing data. Since the actual processing of data is not available to awareness, our experience of these aspects of time is better described as a diffuse effect responsive to the complexity of juxtaposition allowable under a particular method of associating data.61

THE GIRL AND HER TRUST

As an extended illustration of some of the above ideas concerning a narrative schema and its creation of different types of temporal experience through different ways of associating data, I wish to consider a

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15-minute film that spectators easily recognize as a narrative – D.W. Griffith's The Girl and Her Trust (1912). I will concentrate on how a narrative schema works with local data on the screen to produce coherence on a large-scale.

The title of Griffith's film – functioning as an "abstract" – alludes to the fact that the film will actually be two, intertwined focused chains, or "stories": a romance involving an unmarried girl coupled with an adventure which tests her trustworthiness. The first shot of the film is an intertitle which begins the process of orientation: "Grace, the telegraph operator, is admired by all." The next shot shows a young woman – whom we now assume is Grace – busily reading near her telegraph key. Not only do we see that she is charming and graceful but we have been told that she is an inner beauty: an integrity worthy of complete trust. A would-be admirer enters the room but his clumsiness soon prompts Grace to send him scurrying. Next, the handsome station manager enters, but his aggressiveness in stealing a kiss causes Grace to order him to leave the room. After he has left, however, we see Grace's reaction change from being deeply offended to being secretly thrilled. She smiles and presses two fingers to her lips as if to reexperience that sudden kiss. Within the romance story, there has clearly been an initiating event which has aroused the heroine to form a goal which may become a match for the explicit goal of the handsome protagonist.

Grace's reverie is interrupted by a telegraph message. It reads, "National Bank sending $2000 on No. 7 for Simpson Construction Co." This is the initiating event for a new line of action – a crime story. Grace will be entrusted with money arriving on the next train. The telegraph message, however, causes the romance story to take a new turn. Grace allows the hero to return to her office to help plan for the arrival of the money. The advent of the crime story has allowed him to again approach within range of stealing a kiss. He takes out a revolver and bullets. Grace is nervous and afraid of the gun and shrinks back as he enthusiastically loads the gun very near her body (see fig. 2). With this gesture he has regained the authority and initiative he lost when Grace first banished him from the room. Correspondingly, she has now lost some of her brashness and control over the situation. They are coming closer to being a match for each other; that is, to have matching goals.

When the train arrives, we see something that no one else sees. Two tramps sneak off the train and hide. They plan to steal the money. This complicating action represents a goal hostile to Grace's obligation to protect the money. Grace, however, is unaware of the complicating action. The hero offers the revolver to her but she declines, "Danger? Nothing ever happens here." These words illustrate the ever-present activity of narration for the words are placed in a context which allows the spectator to appreciate the heroine's mistake. We immediately
reinterpret the words as saying to us, "Something dangerous (and interesting) will happen here!" The narration has demonstrated a power to know events by creating suspense (when will Grace realize the danger?), and has promised to repay our attention by exciting action.

By operating from outside the diegetic world, the narration regulates our access to that world and thus produces effects based on knowledge not available to the characters.

The hero leaves the station on an errand and the train also leaves. Grace is alone. We have already seen the tramps watching the money and spying through a window at the hero. An intertitle announces "The tramps' opportunity." Why should the intertitle tell us something that is already obvious? The intertitle functions as an abstract for a new phase of the action and serves to explicitly mark the boundary between episodes. It aids the spectator in segmenting each of the two stories into abstract, orientation, initiating event, etc. The romance story is giving way again to the crime story and the spectator is being provided ample time to redirect his or her expectations.

Notice that this is not a plausible account of a robbery since there is no reason that the tramps shouldn't quickly sneak into the station or that they should risk looking through the window more than once. Instead of plausibility the narration has lingered on the "goal" stage of a narrative schema, creating a subjective reality by drawing out both the emotional impact on the heroine and the suspense felt by the spectator. Here Griffith's film goes beyond a simple narrative by dramatizing the heroine's interior reality. Griffith treats psychology itself as an embedded form of story and, moreover, a form of story that seems to dictate what is plausible.

A series of complicating actions occurs. The tramps rush to get into the station but Grace runs from her office to barricade the door. They break down the door but Grace runs back into her office and barricades that door. She sends a telegraph message for help. The tramps react by cutting the telegraph lines and return to batter her door. She repulses them with a bullet placed in the keyhole and detonated with the point of a pair of scissors. We are surprised by Grace's unusual solution to
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the tramps; or rather, enough has happened to them to resolve the crime story and now the romance must be resolved.

The final shot of the film begins as a medium two-shot of Grace and the hero in earnest and happy conversation. He pulls a sandwich from his pocket and offers it to her. She happily takes a bite as the train is backing away from the camera into an extreme long shot. In the opening scene of the film, Grace had offered the hero a drink of soda pop which he had pretended to accept in order to bend near her and steal a kiss. Now, over the sandwich, she steals a kiss from 'him.' A symmetry is completed in which the ending situation balances the opening.43 They can dine together and indulge their appetites for he has proven his intentions were good and she has proven her worthiness as a recipient of those intentions. The locomotive suddenly sends out jets of white steam that swirl in front of the couple as the image fades to black. The archetypal extreme long shot which closes most classical films announces that we cannot see more details because the causal chain has played itself out.

In one sense the above action of the final two shots of the film, following the rescue and the beating of the tramps, seems trivial and redundant. In a deeper sense it allows the spectator time to formulate a response to the entire sequence of events and to appreciate that the sequence is in fact a powerfully focused chain of episodes which, like every narrative, reenacts "cultural beliefs about success."4 The crime and romance stories have been merged in the epilogue in such a way that the heroine's place in an economic order (as trustee of capital) converges on her place in a social order (as an unmarried woman who must learn to trust a man). The tramps exist as a catalyst to bring the man and woman together, to transform the woman as guardian of capital into property to be guarded, Grace herself has actually done nothing to delay the tramps in their flight or aid in their capture on the handcar. Her gesture has been one of pure devotion and sacrifice. Like many other Griffith heroines, she earns a man through noble self-sacrifice, strength of will, and patience, not through challenging the preconceptions of her society. As for the tramps, they are condemned for threatening the values and property of the middle and upper classes. To survive they will need property and wives. As Sergei Eisenstein recognized, Griffith perceived society "only as a contrast between the haves and the have-nots" and this contrast went "no deeper than the image of an intricate race between two parallel lines" of rich and poor.44 Griffith's message and the schematic form of his narrative are essentially conservative and familiar even if some of his methods were innovative.

Grace rushes after the tramps who are attempting to escape on a railroad handcar. They beat her senseless but she clings to the handcar as it speeds down the tracks. An intertitle has already evaluated her conduct: "She risks her life for her trust." Meanwhile her telegraph message has resulted in a train being sent to provide aid, and the hero returns to the station just in time to leap aboard the train and direct it in pursuit of Grace and the tramps. The train eventually catches the handcar. Grace embraces the hero while the train engineer beats one of the tramps senseless. This task fails to the engineer because the hero belongs to the romance story and his aggressiveness (e.g., in stealing kisses) must now be moderated; a minor character can dispense the prosaic details of justice. The film ends as the engineer returns to the train while Grace and the hero jump onto the front of the locomotive above the cowcatcher (where their emotional reactions can be clearly seen by the spectator). There is no indication what has happened to

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her problem which creates an effect on us something like the opposite of suspense; a character has been shown to have knowledge superior to the spectator. (Consider the change in effect if the narration had earlier presented the hero explaining to Grace that in an emergency she could use the keyhole as a gun barrel. These effects of narration will be considered in more detail in chapter 3.) Grace's ingenuity partially makes up for her failure to keep the revolver when it was offered to her by the hero. She is therefore not humiliated and will remain a match for the hero when that phase of the story resumes.

The tramps fail to capture Grace, and decide simply to take the locked strongbox and open it elsewhere without the key she possesses. This does not end Grace's ordeal, however, for it causes her to be tormented by a sense of duty. She decides that she must stop them. However, there is an obstacle: she discovers that she is now imprisoned in the office and so must break out to pursue the tramps. This effetively reverses the initial situation with the tramps breaking in. If the story were to end here, it would be construed as one about Grace's failure to respond (paralyzed and trapped in her office) or the failure to achieve a goal (she runs after the tramps but fails to catch them). She would still be a heroine for her valiant struggle and still be admired by all (and perhaps one person in particular). The difficulty would be that the chain of events of the crime story, focused through her psychological drama, would be incomplete with respect to expectations raised in the spectator that Grace's self-imposed devotion must be tested and renewed by events (does she actually deserve the admiration she receives?). Accordingly, the story does not end but begins a new phase as the narration searches for a resolution to close off all major questions and possible lines of action.

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CAUSALITY AND SCHEMA

I would like to examine the notion of narrative causality in somewhat more detail and link it to the notion of a mental schema. Although *The Girl and Her Trust* presents events in chronological order and inventories certain actions (e.g., eating, spying, trusting, beating, and kissing), we do not perceive the film as a catalogue. The reason, of course, is that the film's events are principally defined through cause and effect (event X because of event Y, scene X because of scene Y). The film's events are linked together by probability whereas elements of a heap or a catalogue are all equally likely with no single element necessary. Since episodes and narratives require a perceiver continually to assess and evaluate probabilities moment by moment, one might define narrative broadly as "an accepted technique for discussing the chances of life."44

Probability, however, comes in many degrees and types, and hence many sorts of causality may be appropriate in comprehending a narrative. Noël Carroll observes:

Since most film narratives involve a series of actions, it may seem natural to think that causation is the major connective between scenes in movies. However, it is implausible to suggest that scenes follow each other in most film narratives via a chain of causal entailments. I would guess that most succeeding narrative scenes are causally underdetermined by what precedes them. Rather the connection is weaker than a causal one.45

Several questions arise: can events or scenes, which are themselves only moderately likely, be strung together to create another event or scene - say, a climax and resolution - which is obligatory? What kinds of judgments can be made about the relative likelihood of particular events appearing together?

Informally, one can imagine a spectator's causal evaluations as falling along a spectrum:46

1. Elements are merely consecutive ("and"); their order is arbitrary or optional.
2. Elements are chronological ("then"); order is governed only by duration.
3. Elements appear together conventionally; order is set by familiar social or generic practices.
4. An element (the "remote" cause) appears together with another element but only through the mediation of many other elements ("intervening" causes), the last of which is the immediate or "proximate" cause.
5. An element is necessary for the appearance of another (an "enabling" cause).

L.B. Cebik imagines a complex but not atypical example of causality in narrative:

If we let capital letters stand for events, objects, actions, and conditions, as appropriate, we might string together a perfectly understandable narrative in which A may cause B, B anticipate C, C accompany D, which may give E reason to go through F, G, and H as steps toward the achievement of I, where I forms the motive for J to do K, with the unintended consequence L, which marks the ending of an M, an M that ends when N marks the shift to O, which along with P and Q comprises evidence for the occurrence of R, which causes S...47

Our experience of causality, then, depends upon our assessment of various probabilities. On a small scale, the connections among events may be quite weak and indirect even though on a large scale, an overall pattern may be evident. Recall that for Todorov "causality," or the logic of mere succession, was not enough to define a narrative: change must also emerge on a large scale in the form of a "transformation" among events. This global aspect of change in narrative is obscured when we describe causality as a chain of causes and effects. Although convenient, the chain metaphor focuses too much attention on local determinants, tends to make connections too strong, and remains uncomfortably close to the methodology of Behaviorism which posits a simple linear sequence of stimuli and responses. More promising, I believe, would be a psychological approach to narrative that would give equal weight to "top-down" frames of reference for grouping elements, that is, to principles and criteria that are not determined solely by local conditions but instead are responsive to larger contexts.

It is evident that in many cases our assessment of the "probabilities" draws upon broad *cultural* knowledge in judging which actions and transactions are acceptable as belonging together (and hence likely to occur together). Thus our comprehension of narrative causality - of what may follow what - may depend upon our general knowledge of social interactions; that is, the connections we are predisposed to call "causal." Roland Barthes argues that

the logic to which the narrative refers is nothing other than a logic of the *already-read*: the stereotype (proceeding from a culture many centuries old) is the veritable ground of the narrative world, built
altogether on the traces which experience (much more bookish than practical) has left in the reader’s memory and which constitutes it. Hence we can say that the perfect sequence [of actions], the one which affords the reader the strongest logical certainty, is the most “cultural” sequence, in which are immediately recognized a whole *summa* of readings and conversations. ... Narrative logic, it must be admitted, is nothing other than the development of the Aristotelian *probable* (common opinion and not scientific truth); hence it is normal that, when an attempt is made to legalize this logic (in the form of esthetic constraints and values), it should still be an Aristotelian notion which the first classical theoreticians of narrative have advanced: that of *verisimilitud*.

I wish to indicate briefly the great complexity of the “causes” at work even in a narrative as simple as *The Girl and Her Trust* and to illustrate that the “logic” involved is often based on what seems familiar and natural within a culture, within a way of life. Consider the variety of connections that we must imagine in justifying each of the following pairs of actions: the hero returns to the station from his errand just as an unscheduled train arrives; Grace is reading a book, then a suitor walks into the room; the suitor offers Grace a bottle of soda pop (intending to initiate a socially defined courtship ritual), and then offers a straw (a second act to solicit a response); stealing a kiss causes a man to be ordered out of the room; continued spying in a window causes two tramps to be seen; Simpson Construction Company’s need for $2000 causes Grace to be beaten senseless and to kiss a man; white steam rises around Grace while she rides on the front of a locomotive. How does a spectator establish the proper context within which to judge the relative pertinence of such pairs of actions occurring together? Steam necessarily rises because it is a hot gas (and perhaps also because of the exuberance of the train engineer) and yet there are still other, more important reasons why it curls around the triumphant, virtuous, and passionate couple as the image fades to black. Establishing relevant contexts within which to evaluate causation is partly a matter of *segmentation*; how is something to be divided into parts that can be seen to interact? To anticipate my answer, I will state that an individual segments an event according to an explicit, or implicit, theory (or theories) of experience. A theory in this sense need not be as rigorous as a physics or a philosophy; all that is required is that a “fact” be given under a description and that we know how to produce descriptions. One of the important ways we produce descriptions is by utilizing schematic forms of knowledge.

In making a judgment about what properly goes with what, and in what context something can be seen in terms of something else, a perceiver is also implicitly making a choice about how elements should be selected and how they should be grouped on levels from the smallest to the largest scale of action. In understanding the world of the story, a perceiver may link two elements together to make a pair even if the two elements do not appear together on the screen, or in the plot. (Similarly, elements appearing together on the screen may not belong together. Thus a device like editing has a psychological dimension and cannot be defined in strictly material or formal terms.) Here is where a narrative schema becomes important. It helps direct our search for pertinent causes by proposing a segmentation applicable on many scales of action and then by “filling in” any connectives that are missing from the surface structure. We discover and justify connections among narrative elements with respect to such schematic functions as goal, reaction, resolution, epilogue, and narration. Of course, a narrative schema does not provide all the answers: one still needs to weigh the evidence from the text as well as be acquainted with nonnarrative schemas and specific cultural knowledge (e.g., the routines of courtship, and texts about courtship like the limerick of a woman riding on a tiger or the poem, “Roses are red”). One cannot use a schema as a search procedure without searching for and through some domain of knowledge.

In thinking about the types of causation which make up a narrative, one is led toward a deeper interpretation of a narrative “schema.” Just as it is people who refer, not sentences, so it is people who judge plausibility, realism, and causal connection. What is familiar and real to an individual depends upon the regularities in that individual’s environment which are judged to be important. Causes and effects fit together when they are part of an individual’s plans and goals. Actions that occur become trapped within a cultural lexicon of human thoughts and deeds: accident, opportunity, hindrance, aspiration, decision, attempt, defeat, success, and so forth. A narrative schema, together with a host of related schemas, encapsulates the interest we take in the world as humans. These schemas are a way of working through cultural assumptions and values. Thus “causes and effects” emerge, as it were, after the fact as explanatory labels for a sequence of actions viewed under a particular schematic description. (To have fallen in love, it was sufficient to... In order to protect one’s trust, it was necessary to... ) Our concept of narrative causation must be powerful enough to include these social and ethical factors so that when a statue accidentally falls and kills a man, we can also see that in another sense it was not an “accident” at all when the statue is later revealed to be that of a woman who was murdered by the man. In this sense the epilogue of a narrative merely makes explicit the social judgment already contained within the causal chain; or, perhaps it would be better to say, the
spectator makes a judgment about probabilities based upon life as experienced through the probabilities of his or her society.75

In The Girl and Her Trust two major causal chains involving crime and romance have been tightly wound together. Such a double causal structure is typical of the classical narrative film.74 What is the relationship between such a pair of causal structures? Why not create interest only through a single focused chain of episodes?

One advantage of a double causal structure is that a narrative schema may actually operate more efficiently with two causal chains. Intertwining two stories provides the spectator with more ways to imagine causal connections and more opportunities for the overall story to advance. To clarify this idea consider an analogy with a character who has two motives to do something. Raymond Durgnat has argued that certain genres use “double motivation” (and even greater multiples of motivation) to portray the relationship between character goals and events. Double motives present the spectator from making a precise psychological analysis because one motive may be operating without the other, or if both must operate, the spectator does not know their relative contributions. This allows one motive to appeal to individuals who wouldn’t respond to the other.75 Perhaps more importantly, whatever a spectator first believes may be enough to drive the story forward. Just as essential plot details are usually repeated several times to promote clarity,76 so a variety of motivations circulating in the text may be useful options in filling out, and making definite, causal sequences. If the text can suggest enough “intervening” and “enabling” causes (see above), a narrative schema will tend to generate a resolution which can be imagined as the closure of a “unique” cause implicit in the opening of the story. This allows the story to be made “unique” in many different ways to many spectators.

Grace’s reaction as the hero brings a gun near her illustrates double causation at work. The composition which shows her reaction is carefully arranged and held as a tableau in the film (see fig. 2). Because of the preceding events, it is not really possible to say in what proportion her fear is caused by the gun and/or by the man’s approach near her. Earlier when he approached and abruptly kissed her, she reacted with great anger; after he had left, however, she expressed an emotion of secret thrill. This ambivalence leaks into the film on many levels, providing several pathways along which the narrative can be seen to reach a definite resolution and epilogue. More importantly, if the spectator applies this notion of psychological ambivalence to the double causal structure of the story itself, the resolution of the film can be seen as a subtle transformation of Grace’s initial situation. A second advantage of a double causal structure, then, is that it facilitates a more complex ending and epilogue than, say, the mere defeat of a threat. In the context of crime and romance, Grace may be seen as defending herself from thieves who seek to steal from her both money (the tramps) and kisses (the hero). Since the tramps provide a condition for the success of the hero (who also triumphs over another suitor), they can be seen as being totally unsuitable suitors who represent the ultimate reversal and perversity of courtship. (The threat of rape, though never made explicit in the film, is ever-present.) Thus the two causal lines allow complex metaphorical comparisons to form between, say, the goals of protecting hard-earned property, earning a mate, and being/becoming protected. Thus Grace’s ambivalence (expressed well in fig. 2) functions as a “psychological” cause which finally unifies interior and exterior realities as she comes over her initial fear(s) through both decisive action and submission. She is doubly rewarded at the end for her travail by a happy excitement caused by a job well done and a man well earned.

In summary, the double causal structure has two functions. It is efficient in producing an effect on a large number of spectators because the vagueness of multiple motivations grants individual spectators a limited freedom in singling out the local causes that bind a beginning, middle, and end. It is also efficacious in producing a desired effect because the expansive metaphors that are encouraged are aimed at matching a spectator’s own goals and desires in watching and comprehending.

It is not enough, however, merely to juxtapose two motives and two causal chains, and hope for the best. The narration of the story must also block other possible combinations among goals and actions. When the tramps besiege Grace in her inner office, an intertitle explains, “The tramps want the key to the express box.” The narration here seeks to limit the scope of metaphors based on property: we are assured that the tramps do not want to rape the woman nor attack her because of her economic class. Nonetheless, there is a sense in which such expansive metaphors cannot be entirely contained; they remain as symptoms of the underlying fears raised by the events of the narrative even if denied by an intertitle. Thus it would be better to think of narration not as a single process, but as several processes moving on different levels, proposing and abolishing contradictions with varying degrees of explicitness and success. These contradictions, anxieties, and vague metaphors are often important clues to our comprehension of a narrative and to our complicity in it. As we shall see in the next chapter, narration is able to create complex, even apparently “impossible,” causal schemes which nevertheless exemplify the mapping of a powerful will and desire onto a world of objects. Narration, therefore, is not really on a par with the other elements of a narrative schema, but rather stands in for the operation of a still deeper schema that drives the story. Although the deeper schema may speak about a character and his or
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her goals, it must always be speaking to and for the multiple desires and fears of an author who must tell and a spectator who already knows.

STORY WORLD AND SCREEN

A PRELIMINARY DELINEATION OF NARRATIVE IN FILM

Narrative in film rests on our ability to create a three-dimensional world out of a two-dimensional wash of light and dark. A bare facticity of graphics on the screen—size, color, angle, line, shape, etc.—must be transformed into an array of solid objects; and a texture of noise must be transformed into speech, music, and the sounds made by solid objects. Light and sound in narrative film are thus experienced in two ways: virtually unshaped on a screen as well as apparently moving within, reflecting and issuing from, a world which contains solid objects making sounds. Every basic spatial and temporal relationship, such as position and duration, thus has a double interpretation. A green circle might be seen to the left of a square in the same plane, or alternatively, it might be seen to lie behind the square along a diagonal line to the left. In the latter interpretation, the circle may become a “sphere,” the square a “box,” and “size” and “color” will be adjusted according to our judgments about how distance and light are being represented in a given perspective system. Similarly, the green circle may appear for ten seconds on the screen but represent many hours of world time for the green sphere, especially if there is no other “action” by which to gauge duration. Rudolf Arnheim asserts:

It is one of the most important formal qualities of film that every object that is reproduced appears simultaneously in two entirely different frames of reference, namely the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional, and that as one identical object it fulfills two different functions in the two contexts.  

The spectator, therefore, encounters at least two major frames of reference in film: the space and time of a screen as well as (a sample of) the space and time of a story world. More than space and time, however, is at stake. Causality also has a double interpretation. Changes in light and sound patterns will be perceived in at least two ways: as motion
across a screen and as movement among objects in a story world. Causality on a screen will involve patterns of a purely visual, phenomenal logic where, for example, one blob smashes into another but the resulting transformations in motion and color may not be analogous to the interactions of three-dimensional objects like billiard balls; the blobs may even “pass through” each other on the screen. Bizarre pictorial compositions and animation are clear examples of on-screen causality. In short, light and sound create two fundamental systems of space, time, and causal interaction: on a screen and within a story world. One of the tasks of narrative is to reconcile these systems.

It seems likely, in fact, that more than two frames of reference are active in our comprehension of film. It has even been argued that there is a stage of visual processing located halfway between two and three dimensional perception which produces a 2½ dimensional representation of space. Clearly, major changes occur during the conversion from phenomenal appearances on the screen to functions in a story world. One of the essential tasks of a narrative theory is to specify the various stages through which we represent and comprehend a film as a narrative. On-screen patterns of light, sound, and motion do not denote and hence cannot be true or false; they are fully present and neither narrative nor fictive. Moreover, the time in which these patterns are present on the screen is determined initially by the film projector. By contrast, a story builds complex spatial and temporal contexts, makes references to things which are not present (and may not exist), and allows broad conclusions to be drawn about sequences of actions. Moreover, time in the world of the story may be quite different than the time of the projection of the film. For example, in Letter from an Unknown Woman (Ophuls, 1948) screen time is ninety minutes while the story covers three hours of an early morning during which a letter is read, and the letter, in turn, dramatizes events spanning fifteen years at the turn of the century in the world of Vienna.

Many concepts have been proposed to help describe how on-screen data is transformed through various spatial, temporal, and causal schemes culminating in a perceived story world. The various stages have been described with concepts like script, set decoration, technology, technique, performance, material, shot, form, style, plot, diegesis, code, narration, and referent. Since nonnarrative ways of organizing data may coexist with narrative, one might also recognize a conflict among discursive schemes, an “excess” within the story. The processing of film data has an important effect on how a spectator feels about the conceptual structures which are ultimately constructed. Some of the metaphors offered by film theorists suggest that our comprehension of film proceeds only forward, one step at a time, and depends simply on local and immediate juxtapositions, but other metaphors are less restrictive. Rudolf Arnheim speaks of picture postcards in an album while Noël Burch speaks of picture postcards suspended in a void, “radically autonomous.” Early in his career Eisenstein argued that shots are perceived not next to each another in a horizontal or vertical chain, but on top of each other in collision. Later he refined the idea to include layers of pictures “rushing towards the spectator,” but not necessarily in a straight line. He proposed that film data might be perceived as arranged vertically in matrix form, exhibiting a multiplicity of criss-crossing relationships in an instant. Finally, the psychologist Julian Hochberg mentions three types of perceptual analysis in film: simple summation, directional patterns, and cognitive maps. With one exception, I will not explore these sorts of idea now, but rather will consider them in later chapters in the context of particular narrative theories.

It will be useful now, however, to separate the concept of “story world” into two parts: the diegetic and the nondiegetic. In talking about a “story,” we often refer to certain events which surround a character, events which have already occurred, or might occur in a particular manner, in a certain sequence and time span, and so forth. We understand such events as occurring in a “world” governed by a particular set of laws. I will refer to that imagined world as the diegesis. The spectator presumes that the laws of such a world allow many events to occur (whether or not we see them), contains many objects and characters, contains other stories about other persons, and indeed permits events to be organized and perceived in nonnarrative ways. (Later I will argue that a documentary film also creates a diegetic world for its events.) The diegetic world extends beyond what is seen in a given shot and beyond even what is seen in the entire film, for we do not imagine that a character may only see and hear what we observe him or her seeing and hearing. The diegesis, then, is the implied spatial, temporal, and causal system of a character—a collection of sense data which is represented as being at least potentially accessible to a character. A sound in a film, for example, is diegetic if the spectator judges that it has been, or could have been, heard by a character. However some on-screen elements (e.g., “mood” music) are nondiegetic and addressed only to the spectator. These elements are about the diegetic world of a character and are meant to aid the spectator in organizing and interpreting that world and its events. Nondiegetic elements are not accessible to any of the characters. The spectator’s organization of information into diegetic and nondiegetic story worlds is a critical step in the comprehension of a narrative and in understanding the relationship of story events to our everyday world.

Let us now attempt a preliminary delineation of narrative in film. This definition will aid us in examining narrative comprehension more
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precisely and will also provide a basis in chapter 4 for outlining five recent types of narrative theory, each of which stresses and interprets a different aspect of the narrative process.

_Narrative_ is a way of comprehending space, time, and causality. Since in film there are at least two important frames of reference for understanding space, time, and causality, narrative in film is the principle by which data is converted from the frame of the screen into _a diegesis_ - a world - that frames a particular story, or sequence of actions, in that world; equally, it is the principle by which data is converted from story onto screen. To facilitate analysis, narrative may be divided into a series of relationships. For example:

1. The relationship of diegesis and story may be analyzed with such narratological concepts as Todorov's "transformations," or a _narrative schema_. Which kinds of action sequences occurring in what kind of world will qualify as a narrative? For example, a narrative schema ("abstract," "orientation," "initiating event," etc.) describes how a reader collects a series of episodes into a focused causal chain (as opposed to a "heap," "catalogue," "unfocused chain," etc.).

Causal chains are not just sequences of paired events, but also embody a desire for pairing events and the power to make pairs. Narrative causes ("remote," "intervening," "enabling," etc.) are thus principles of explanation which are derived from cultural knowledge as well as from physical laws. Narrative causality includes the human plans, goals, desires, and routines - realized in action sequences - which are encouraged, tolerated, or proscribed by a community.

2. The relationship of diegesis and screen may be analyzed with such concepts as script, set decoration, technology, technique, shot, form, style, material, and excess. The present chapter will demonstrate that these kinds of concept may be approached by measuring their effects on a spectator's judgments about the _ordering_ of space, time, and causality on the screen and in the diegesis.

3. The relationship of diegesis and what is external to it - the nondiegetic - raises issues of _narration_: from what sort of "other world" has a diegesis been created, a character presented, events told? What has been concealed, or excluded? And, furthermore, how do we come to believe in a narrative diegesis and relate it to our own world; that is, what is the nature of _fictional and non-fictional_ reference?

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The previous chapter introduced some of the issues involved in analyzing diegesis and story (i.e., 1 above). In later chapters, I will deal with the problems of narration and fiction (3). But first we must examine the relationship of diegesis and screen, namely, how is data on the screen transformed into a story world? In order to answer this question, a distinction will be made between two types of perception operative in watching a film. These two types of perception produce different kinds of hypotheses about space, time, and causality. Distinguishing between them will allow us to examine closely how a spectator makes separate use of judgments about space, time, and causality, as well as how a spectator may integrate these judgments to produce an overall narrative rendering of experience.

TOP-DOWN PERCEPTION

The movement from screen to story world does not proceed along a smooth path and in only one direction. Many of our abilities are brought to bear simultaneously on a film, producing at least some _cognitive_ and uncertainty. As a first step toward unravelling some of these abilities and specifying the kinds of conflicts that arise, I will use a fundamental cognitive psychological distinction to divide perception into two kinds of process according to the "direction" in which they work. Some perceptual processes operate upon data on the screen in a direct, "bottom-up" manner by examining the data in very brief periods of time (utilizing little or no associated memory) and organizing it automatically into such features as edge, color, depth, motion, aural pitch, and so on. Bottom-up perception is serial and "data-driven," and produces only short-range effects. Other perceptual processes, however, are based on acquired knowledge and schemas, are not constrained by stimulus time, and work "top-down" on the data, using a spectator's _expectations_ and goals as principles of organization. Top-down processes are indirect in the sense that they may reframe data in alternative ways independently of the stimulus conditions which govern the initial appearance of the data. Top-down processes must be flexible and general in order to be effective across a wide range of situations while allowing for (unpredictable) variations among specific cases. Top-down processes are often treated as an inductive sample to be projected and tested within a variety of parallel frames of reference while bottom-up processes are highly specialized and atomistic (e.g., detecting motion). Both kinds of process operate simultaneously on the data creating a variety of representations with varying degrees of compatibility. Because top-down processes are active in watching a film, a spectator's cognitive activity is not restricted to the particular moment being viewed in a film. Instead the spectator is able to move forward and
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backward through screen data in order to experiment with a variety of syntactical, semantic, and referential hypotheses; as Ian Jarvie notes, "We cannot see movies without thinking about them." By experimenting with various methods for ordering data, the spectator creates spatial, temporal, and causal experiences which do not derive directly from screen time. Also critical in top-down processing are procedures which test the degree of "progress" which has been made toward solving a perceptual problem. Such procedures are active, for example, when we search for the "end" of a story. If we are unable to detect progress, we may begin to doubt the particular techniques we have been using, or even whether we have properly understood the goal. Because of the diversity of top-down and bottom-up processes which may be at work at a given moment in a text, perception as a whole is perhaps best thought of as a system which struggles to manage different and often conflicting interpretations of data.

In addition, the fact that comprehension may be divided into top-down and bottom-up kinds of activity helps explain some inconsistencies in the terminology employed by film writers. For example, some writers prefer to use the concept of "voice" in film as a means to identify the source of words that are actually heard by a spectator while other writers prefer to apply the concept more broadly in order to include a number of top-down factors that influence a spectator's perception. Bill Nichols argues for an expansive notion of "voice."

[In the evolution of documentary as a genre] the contestation among forms has centered on the question of "voice." By "voice" I mean something narrower than style: that which conveys to us a sense of a text's social point of view, of how it is speaking to us in a text's social point of view. In this sense "voice" is not restricted to any one code or feature, such as dialogue or spoken commentary. Voice is perhaps akin to that intangible, moiré-like pattern formed by the unique interaction of all a film's codes, and it applies to all modes of documentary.11

For Nichols, the concept of "voice" is not confined to words literally spoken, or written, nor confined to fictional narrative; instead, "voice" includes powerful, nonverbal patterns even in nonfiction (documentary) films. Accordingly, the "person" whose voice is "heard" in a text may be a much more complex (invisible and inaudible) entity than a voice-over narrator or someone being interviewed. Thus Nichols's approach is well-suited to an analysis of narration. As I will emphasize in this book, film narration cannot be limited to, say, an explicit commentary, or defined by literal, material, purely formal, stylistic, technical, technological, or "bottom-up" kinds of categories. Narration, and narrative, are preeminently top-down phenomena that require for their

analyses the use of wide-ranging, complex concepts like "point of view," or Nichols's "social point of view."

When we think of narrative as a general phenomenon that may appear in many physical forms (conversation, pictures, dance, music, etc.), we are thinking of it as a top-down cognitive effect. Wallace Martin may put it too strongly when he says that "narratives may be the source of the varied visual resources of the movies, rather than vice versa." Nevertheless, much can be learned by concentrating on top-down processes in an attempt to isolate the psychological conditions that allow narrative to be understood in all media.

I wish to examine some of the top-down processes which seem to be relevant to our comprehension of narrative. I will begin by considering how our top-down search for a coherent causal system helps to organize screen data into diegetic and nondiegetic story worlds, each with a coherent temporal system. Later in the chapter, I will consider how judgments about screen space are related to judgments about story space and the causality of a story world. In general, we will discover that conflicts arise between top-down and bottom-up processing, between story and screen, and between the diegesis and what seems external to it. Hence we will find that the ongoing process of constructing and understanding a narrative is perhaps best seen as the moment by moment regulation of conflicts among competing spatial, temporal, and causal hypotheses. "Narrative" in film is therefore the overall process as well as the result of searching among hypotheses for an equilibrium, however precarious.

TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL ORDER

There is a sequence in The Lady from Shanghai (Welles, 1948) where three distinct actions are intercut through fifteen shots in such a way that it appears that when a woman presses a button, a door flies open allowing a dying man to drag himself into a room; when she presses the button again, a car is sent speeding down a road as a truck pulls up to a stop sign; and, when she presses the button a final time, the car is sent crashing into the back of the truck as the two men in the car react with horror at their helpless condition. The problem for the spectator of this film is how to interpret these events—which seem that pushing a button brings a dying man into a room and creates a car accident.10 In effect, we are being asked to accept a special fiction ("as if") within an already fictional mystery story.

In order to solve this causal problem the spectator must evaluate the temporal relationships posed by the sequence. Four important principles of causal reasoning are that a cause must precede an effect, an
effect cannot work backward in time to create a cause, certain patterns of repetition among events make a causal connection more likely (e.g., pushing a button three times . . . ),\textsuperscript{19} and a prior event which is temporally or spatially more proximate to the outcome than others is more likely to be a cause of the outcome.\textsuperscript{18} Many different sorts of temporal situations, bearing on our judgments of causality, may be created through the juxtaposition of spatial fragments from different shots.\textsuperscript{17} As Arnheim emphasized, "the fact that two sequences follow each other on the screen does not indicate in itself that they should be understood as following each other in time." Thus before tackling the causal problem, we must briefly survey some of the possible temporal, and spatial, situations which may arise.

An extraordinary fact about the physical world is that virtually all phenomena can be explained in terms of interactions between parts taken two at a time. According to Marvin Minsky, "One could conceive of a universe in which whenever three stars formed an equilateral triangle, one of them would instantly disappear - but virtually no three-part interactions have ever been observed in the physical world." I will assume that explanations of phenomena are constructed on this basis; specifically, that the spectator constructs temporal, spatial, and causal situations by assembling parts two at a time. Thus in figure 3, temporal situation $A_B$ in the story is created by imagining a particular relationship between the durations of two on-screen spaces, $A$ and $B$, resulting in such story relationships as temporal continuity, ellipsis, overlap, simultaneity, reversal, or distortion.

More specifically, these temporal relationships in the story may be described as follows:

- \(B_1\) represents the time of $A$ as continuing into $B$ such that the story order $A_B$ is presented as identical to the screen order $AB_1$.

- \(B_2\) represents the time of $A$ as continuing into $B$ but with an initial ellipsis so that the screen order is interpreted as having omitted something from the story (which must be restored by the spectator's imagination); that is, the true order is $A$, $X$, $B_2$, where $X$ is not represented on the screen. If the ellipsis is large, but later disappears when completed by new screen events, then $B_2$ is a flashforward.

- \(B_3\) represents the time of $A$ as continuing into $B$ but only after an initial overlap in which there has been a partial replay of time already experienced in $A$.

- \(B_4\) represents a complete overlap with the time of $A$ so that story event $B$ is understood to be simultaneous with story event $A$ even though $B$ is seen to occur after $A$ on the screen; that is, story time overrides the literal order on the screen.

$B_4$ represents an overlap with the time of $A$ but with an initial brief jump back in time. This produces a fleeting but curious story time in which an effect (in $A$) has apparently been shown prior to its cause (in $B$). The spectator, in fact, is tempted to mentally reverse $A$ and $B_2$ (creating a relation like $A$ and $B_2$) in order to restore the forward arrow of time in which causes precede effects (i.e., prospective time). It is also possible that $B_2$ may reverse the spectator to imagine an even earlier time (e.g., $B_2$ which is then taken as an explanation of $A$ in the story - an implicit flashback - while $B_2$ continues to represent the "present time" of $A$. Using Noel Burch's terms, I will refer to the $B_2$ type of story order as a retrospective or retroactive story time.\textsuperscript{51} Our usual expectation is prospective time - $A$ and so $B$. Less usual is retrospective time - $A$ because of $B$.\textsuperscript{52}

Here is an example of retrospective time: Shot $A$ shows an object

\textsuperscript{40}
from a certain position, but then shot B shows a person looking at the object from that previous position. In this way, we discover that the object we saw in A had already been seen by a character (and in fact, without knowing it at the time, we were seeing how that character saw the object). Thus with shot B we are forced to mentally readjust the order of events and reconceive shot A using the character as a new reference point, as a new condition for our seeing. We now conceive of the story event as composed of, first, a character who looks, followed by our view of what can be seen from that character's viewpoint. Part of shot B then comes to stand for either a literal, brief jump back in time, or else an approximation of what it would have looked like to have seen the character first looking. In any event, what is important is that the shots require the spectator to refigure the temporal scheme. B5 represents a time prior to A — a past time, or flashback, which requires the spectator to reorder story events and imagine other events which have been omitted and not seen on the screen between B5 and A.

B6 and B7 represent temporal distortions. The on-screen duration of B (with respect to A) is radically altered in such a way that it is not immediately clear what relationship with A is appropriate. For example, the duration of B may be compressed or expanded by running the film at a new speed, showing it backwards, repeating B, showing alternative takes, omitting frames by step printing, using freeze frames, and so forth. In these situations A and B do not seem commensurate and hence we cannot immediately decide what story order is appropriate. Also included in these categories is indeterminable time. For example, in Jean-Luc Godard's Weekend (1967) there is a shot (involving hippie-guerillas) that is so carefully arranged that its time cannot be ascertained. In fact, the shot is a flashforward but it cannot be recognized as such until much later in the film when the event being depicted actually occurs! The shot is thus a retrospective, nonsubjective flashforward. The above scheme is a way of talking generally about principles of temporal ordering. However, it also applies to principles of spatial ordering. Although my discussion of the particular causal problem of the car crash in The Lady from Shanghai will center on time, it should be evident that, in general, space is just as relevant to the solution of causal problems. Therefore I wish to indicate briefly how the above scheme may be interpreted as an overview of some spatial principles of ordering. The scheme is not meant to be restrictive but merely to provide a way of comparing various narrative theories each of which will use specialized terms to examine space and time in still finer detail.

In order to demonstrate how figure 3 may be applied to space, I will for the moment make an artificial, but simplifying assumption about space. I will assume that space comprises only two sectors: a foreground and a background. The question then becomes, how may we recognize a change in space? How may a given space "connect to" and be related to another space to form a new ordered whole? For convenience I will also assume -- as in the case of time -- that the change is effected through the editing of shots even though the scheme applies to changes effected in other ways (e.g., through camera or character movement, sound, changes in lighting level). The result of these assumptions is that space may evolve in only three basic ways: a new background may appear with the old foreground; a new foreground may appear with the old background; or, both a new foreground and a new background may appear. In the first two cases, what is new is introduced in conjunction with what has already been seen (an old foreground, or else an old background). This means that spaces are being connected into a chain. In the third case (a new foreground and a new background) the relationship of the new space to the spaces which have already been seen is open and not yet defined; that is, there is a "gap" of some type between new and old space. Such a gap is indicated in figure 3 by the gap between fragment A and fragment B6. On the other hand, fragments B5, B6, and B7 represent a new space which either adjoins, overlaps, or repeats an old space so as to compose a chain of spaces.

There is a special case of the open space (A-B5) which must be mentioned. When the new foreground is simply the old background and the new background is the old foreground, there has been no real change: foreground and background have simply been interchanged across the two shots. Space has been reversed, or mirrored between the shots. Fragments B5 and B6 are meant to represent this general class of reverse angles in film. A typical example is shot/reverse-shot editing which depicts a conversation between two characters by alternating shots taken over each character's shoulder. What can spatial "reversals" like B5 and B6 mean in terms of the story world being created by the spectator from a series of on-screen spaces? David Bordwell offers a proposal:

Shot/reverse-shot editing helps make narration covert by creating the sense that no important scenographic space remains unaccounted for. If shot two shows the important material outside shot one, there is no spatial point we can assign to the narration; the narration is always elsewhere, outside this shot but never visible in the next.
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In other words, when space is reversed we do not see a camera, sets, or technicians but only more diegetic space which seemingly is part of a consistent and unified group of spaces with no disturbing (causal) outside influences (e.g., by an "author"). The new and larger space being represented through a reversal is an imaginary space - a diegetic space of the characters that is seemingly like itself in every direction.

There are, of course, degrees and kinds of chains, gaps, and reversals of space; and our recognition of the kinds will depend on the nature of other conventions governing, say, camera placement (for example, whether spaces are oriented toward a 180 degree axis of action). Connecting screen spaces to a pattern of story space does not prohibit also using gaps (B1 and B2), or other distortions (cf. B1 and B3), to create a story space which is not the sum of spatial fragments on the screen. Such a gap between screen and story space leads to degrees and kinds of "impossible" space; that is, to space which can not be justified as existing wholly within the diegesis. Impossible space leads to perceptual problems of a new kind that force the spectator to reconsider prior hypotheses about time and causality.

Causality and Metaphor

I will have more to say later about the narrative effects of spatial perception and the problem of "impossible" (non-diegetic) space, but for now I wish to return to the particular moment in The Lady from Shanghai in which it appears that a woman causes a car to crash into a truck by pressing a button. To work on this causal problem, the spectator must make a judgment about the temporal relationships of the three intercut actions. A number of factors point to some sort of continuity among the actions: no explicit motive is given for the woman's pressing of the button (hence we wonder what she is doing); she stares into space as if preoccupied by a thought (fear? determination?); it is clear from previous events that some sort of devious plan is being set in motion; the tempo of the editing increases to match the increasing speed of the diverse actions as if the actions form a group (a button is pressed, an indicator snaps on a display, a dying man sits up, a car speeds along a road); and, most importantly, non-diegetic music which began with the first push of the button continues across all the spaces and rapidly builds to a loud and high-pitched climax coinciding, and merging, with the shrieking of automobile brakes and ending with the crash of glass (the final effect?). Furthermore, nothing about the representation of time in the scene rules out a causal link among the events: conjectured effects do not precede causes and the time of the causal interaction does not violate the presumed method of interaction. Pressing a button suggests the speed of light which is in accord with the

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"instantaneous" transitions suggested by the editing, but not in accord with transitions, conspicuously avoided in the sequence, based on character movement, camera movement, or optical effects, since these latter transitions would consume a screen time requiring additional explanation within the story.

It is worth emphasizing again that what I am describing is the spectator's interpretive process (here involving time) which works top-down on the data. The impetus for creating a story time does not derive in any simple way from the running time of the film - screen time - but rather from top-down processes seeking a new order which will be sensitive to other constraints on the data, e.g. presumed causality and event duration. Even our judgment of an event as temporally continuous is not based on the necessity of its being physically complete on the screen. Perceptual illusions and constancies demonstrate that we may easily see what is not present, or fail to see what is present. Physical continuity on the screen depends on the use of equipment (camera, printer, projector) while the perception of physical continuity on the screen is a matter of bottom-up processing (i.e., the operation of sensory mechanisms). The perception of narrative continuity, however, is a very different matter. Indeed, it turns out that the best perception of narrative continuity is often obtained by certain violations of physical continuity where part of an action is left out or sometimes briefly repeated. Moreover, even blatant "mismatches" between shots will be overlooked by a spectator. This demonstrates, again, that recognition of objects and actions in a setting through top-down processing takes precedence over involuntary, bottom-up processing, and certainly takes precedence over physical continuity on the screen.

There is no general set of necessary and sufficient conditions which determine how the results of bottom-up processing must be interpreted. The perception of continuous or discontinuous screen time may lead equally to judgments of either continuous or discontinuous story time. The fact of juxtaposition on the screen carries no necessary implication about temporal sequence or spatial relationship (cf. fig. 3), nor about causality (cf. temporal relationship AB1 in fig. 3). Even a repetition of the same shot need not signify that the same time is again being represented. The reason is that more complex events may be represented than what only occurs in front of the camera and/or occurs only once.

These ideas amount to saying that human comprehension does not proceed by progressively refining sensory data from lower to higher stages until a single thought is perfected and grasped by a singular Self. Rather, the human mind seems to be organized into modules that operate in parallel, are often too specialized to "communicate" with one another (or even to make use of "words"), and produce criss-crossing outputs which conflict as well as unify. The Self in this view
is not stable and unified, but instead “diverse, capable of being all those it will at one time be, a group acting together.” Hume reached a similar conclusion from a much different perspective. He argued in 1739 that “what we call a mind, is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions.” These perceptions, thoughts, and motives “succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.” Hume could find no common feature, or continuing link, among the perceptions that could qualify as a unified Self; instead there are “the successive perceptions only.” In 1890 William James posited a “hierarchy” of selves to account for the felt presence in consciousness of an “ideal spectator,” but he retained Hume’s notions of multiplicity and conflict among the selves. For Erving Goffman, “Self . . . is not an entity half-concealed behind events, but a changeable formula for managing oneself during them.” Marvin Minsky emphasizes that the Self also functions “to keep us from changing too rapidly.” Recently, similar conclusions about the “divided” self, or “split” subject, have been reached in certain film and literary theories inspired by post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, and ideological criticism.

I believe that the diverse strategies used by an individual for managing perceptual and behavioral problems in general include the creation of hierarchies and an “ideal” position of spectatorship, and that such strategies have counterparts in an individual’s comprehension of narrative texts and in an individual’s construction of an efficient self in relation to a text. I will return to these notions in later chapters where they will be reflected in some basic concepts, such as “levels of narration.”

What is certain about comprehension is that the perceiver must search, compare, test, discriminate, remember, and speculate within many realms and imagined contexts. Evidence on the screen cannot “speak for itself,” for how can we know what is implied by the evidence and what limits may exist on a given (top-down) method of seeing? Switching to a new method of interpreting – i.e., a different top-down schema – may reveal that the data under the old method was actually inconsistent, fragmentary, mistaken, deceptive, or ambiguous. Switching methods again may recast the evidence a third time. This is particularly true for fictions which, as we shall see in chapter 7, exploit a qualified indeterminateness of signification (or, according to some radical theories, exploit the fundamental indeterminacy of signification). The necessary incompletenesses of data under alternative interpretations highlights a critical fact: there is a persistence to top-down processing. A spectator is willing to fill in some data or ignore other data in order to maintain a particular temporal and spatial context – a master “frame” of reference or schema – for events and details. For example, we rou-

Interpretations of narrative depend in a crucial way upon the
judgments we make about space, time, and causation as we work top­down on screen data. Identifying an event as a "story event" is a matter of deciding where actions begin, how they break off, and which actions belong together. We must judge not only the temporal status of special cross-cut actions but the time implied by the juxtaposition of any two shots including ensuring that time has not stopped or otherwise shifted within a shot. (Note, again, that the physical material of film - such as the break between shots - does not guarantee a priori a specific temporal relation nor guarantee a change in temporal relations.) We use hypotheses about time to search for causation and, reciprocally, we use hypotheses about causality to establish temporal order. Identifying what counts as an event involves searching for an "equilibrium" among possible "values" for space, time, and causation. Although other sorts of knowledge are dearly relevant, judgments about space, time, and causation are fundamental because they give us the means with which to see and hear: a framework within which to perceive. Even when the pushing of a button is meant to cause a car to crash (say, on an automobile test track), it is necessary to imagine the event within appropriate conditions of space and time. As George Wilson says, our task as spectators is ultimately "to work out how our perceptual comprehension of the relevant film world is related to our normal modes of ordering and understanding perception in everyday visual experience."44

In order to connect our understanding of film to our understanding of the ordinary world, we have to be sensitive to the specific techniques available in film for representing space, time, and causal relations. In watching a film, for example, we must respond to camera movements, matches on action, perspective relations, attached and cast shadows, optical transitions, screen direction, sound overlap, off-screen sound, voice-over and voice-under,45 and an enormous number of other features of the medium. Although narrative may appear in any medium, the particular materials and techniques of a given medium partly determine when and how we apply our skills of spatial, temporal, and causal construction. In this sense, the break between shots does not usually "mean" anything: it is merely a catalyst for us to proceed to generate hypotheses using certain strategies. Many difficulties in narrative analysis and film theory have arisen through the failure to appreciate the difference between a "reference" - such as a denotation - and a "procedure" or instruction to be followed in discovering/assigning a reference.46 The distinction between a reference that has been achieved and a procedure for referring is vital for any complete definition of narrative and will be addressed in chapters 3 and 4.

Thus, in summary, the spectator must find an interpretation of The Lady from Shanghai which assigns responsibility for the car crash to the woman but not on the basis of a button being pushed. The editing of the film is not dismissed as simply false, misleading, or accidental, but instead may be viewed as creating a second fiction in which a realization of the truth of the apparent causal connection is merely deferred to a later time. The contradiction whereby the woman both causes and does not cause the car crash may be represented by the spectator's grouping of on-screen elements into two simultaneous worlds: the diegetic and the nondiegetic. Nondiegetic references are not taken to be part of the character's world, and hence not subject to its laws, but instead are taken to be about that world and are addressed only to the spectator. In this way the film allows the spectator to begin to see one thing (a car crash) in terms of another (a woman), but not in a literal (diegetic) way. Just as a statue is said to emerge "out of" clay, the dying man and the car crash are to emerge metaphorically from a presumed feminine state of being: "She killed males out of desperation."47 The metaphor ("out of") functions to describe the nature of the causation. This sequence in the film is particularly complex because neither the woman nor the spectator fully understands as yet the nature of her responsibility or its consequences.

Selecting something to be seen in terms of something else - that is, substituting one thing for another to highlight a shared quality - demonstrates the close connection between creating metaphors, and discovering causes.48 To discover a "cause" in this sense is to recognize that the logic of grouping certain "events" together on the basis of a shared quality may point to an underlying, formative process. Such a formative process may act to transform that quality, thus drawing together still more events.49 In representing the car crash, The Lady from Shanghai is at the very threshold of stating a "likeness," or shared bond, sufficient to support the conclusion that a woman, or Woman, is a source of deadly threat to males. This may be expressed in another way by saying that although we must conclude that time is merely chronological in the car crash sequence, the ordering of the event nonetheless seems to betray a larger principle or pattern beginning to emerge in which a threat to males arises from the difference between male and female. The paradoxical causality whereby a woman both causes and does not cause a car crash reflects a general principle of The Lady from Shanghai that a dissimilarity between the sexes is the common link among a set of events. Indeed some writers have argued that narrative causality is essentially these larger principles of grouping (recall, for example, Todorov's notion of narrative reversals, or "transformations") which come to dominate a simple and irreversible kind of time like chronology. Roland Barthes asserts that

the mainspring of narrative is precisely the confusion of consecu­tiveness and consequence, what-comes-after being read in narrative

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as what-is-caused-by; in which case narrative would be a systematic application of the logical fallacy denounced by Scholasticism in the formula post hoc, ergo propter hoc.\(^4\)

The car crash sequence of *The Lady from Shanghai* reveals chronological time in the very process of being transformed into narrative time. It is clear that we will need the distinctions introduced in the previous chapter that were used to isolate types of time and types of causality. Also, in understanding the causal structure of a story and its associated metaphors a spectator may need to create further subdivisions of the broad categories of diegetic and nondiegetic in order to hold together data of different sorts until it is needed to produce through juxtaposition more complex and subtle descriptions of the references (and “causation”) put into play by a story. In chapter 4, I will describe several more of these subdivisions utilizing the concept of “levels of narration” in order to make more precise the notion of related, yet distinct story “worlds,” or “levels of reality.”

IMPOSSIBLE STORY SPACE

In fashioning diegetic and nondiegetic worlds we are constantly required to keep track of the ways in which our perceptions are related to the perceptions of characters within the story.\(^5\) The nature of a car crash will change according to whether we believe a woman is dreaming about a car crash, remembering one, or unaware that one is occurring. In the first two cases, the status we accord the crash – its spatial, temporal, and causal implications – derives from explicit relationships with the character; in the third case, the event is determined “negatively” as an independent occurrence, as unrelated to character perception.\(^6\)

Our knowledge of the car crash is also affected if the woman is shown only to be observing it as a bystander. The reason is that our perception still coincides in some manner with that of the character; for example, we see the event at the same time as the woman. This fourth case falls between the first two and the third; the precise extent to which our perception coincides with the character has yet to be specified by the text. Nevertheless, the very existence of the character as she looks around her world and shares ideas with other characters testifies to our own perception of the diegetic world. Her act of perceiving seems to justify, and may even direct, the spectator’s act of perceiving. Such a first-person account of space and time renders the “author” of the text invisible behind the character’s experience. Like the apparent causation in *The Lady from Shanghai*, a first-person recounting of events is an illusion, but one which is bound up with the very conditions

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which allow us to make sense of the fictional world. The creation of a “character” has enormous implications because a character is understood to perceive in ways that we might imagine ourselves imitating if we were in a similar situation.

There are, of course, many ways to show characters perceiving, and consequently many relationships we may have to their perceptions. “First-person” and “third-person” modes of perceiving may be visualized as acting at ninety degrees to one another. Actual cases, however, will place our involvement with a character at intermediate angles. For example, an eyeline match differs from a point-of-view shot according to the inferences a spectator may draw about the object that is seen. The former shows us what a character sees and when the character sees it; the latter shows us, in addition, the perspective of the character. Thus the point-of-view shot represents on screen an additional “subjective” feature. It is more restricted than the eyeline match because its representation of space and distance is tied much closer to the presumed place of the character. These sorts of (semi-subjective) effect must be taken into account as we construct the space and time of a story world.

The development of space through the perceptions of characters, like the impossible causality of *The Lady from Shanghai*, may create problems for the spectator that lead toward nonliteral interpretations of events. Fritz Lang’s *Dr Mabuse, the Gambler* (Part One, 1922) opens on a close-up of photographs of men spread out in someone’s hand as if they were playing cards. New photographs are selected as if from a “deck.” In the second shot we see the man who was holding the “cards,” Dr Mabuse, now shuffling them, though we do not see his eyes. There are no other “players” seated around the table. The third shot repeats the close-up framing of the first shot. One photograph is selected. In the fourth shot we again see Dr Mabuse as he holds the “card” up over his right shoulder, and finally we see his eyes as he looks up and stares into the right foreground (shot 4, fig. 4). The next shot presents a spatial problem. We see a man standing in another part of the room looking left (shot 5, fig. 5). Where is he? If he is responding to Mabuse, he would appear to be located in the room near where the camera was positioned in the previous shot. However in the next shot Mabuse turns to look back over his right shoulder (shot 6, fig. 6). Intertitle: “You’ve been taking cocaine again.” Mabuse continues to stare. Then we see the man again but he is now looking right (shot 7, fig. 7). We did not see him turn to face in the opposite direction. (Has he now turned away from Mabuse?) Intertitle: “If you fire me, I’ll kill myself.” We are surprised both by the dialogue and the space: If he is responding to Mabuse, he is not near the camera where we first thought him to be (i.e., near the camera position of shot 4, fig. 4), but in the background off left. The following shots make clear that our first belief was in fact
wrong. Initially neither man was looking at the other. The space seen in shots 5 and 9 (where the man is standing) must be relocated from the off-screen right foreground of shot 4 to the off-screen left background. It becomes clear that the man in shots 5 and 9 was avoiding Mabuse’s gaze. Dominated by Mabuse, he responds instantly. Later in shot 12 he will enter obediently from behind Mabuse to take the photograph.

Shot 12 finally makes the organization of the space explicit. All of this strikes us as rather abrupt and confusing. If the man had been shown turning around, or Mabuse looking in the “proper” direction, we could have correctly understood the interior of the room. The space seen in shots 4 and 5 (figs 4 and 5) in the right foreground of shot 4 has been shown to be completely false. We did not in fact see it; we saw something else. At a thematic level, Mabuse is revealed to be at the very center of the event with the ability to create and destroy space through his powerful gaze (e.g., fig. 4). Moreover, we soon discover that Mabuse himself, as a master of disguises, will often be concealed. In this way we begin to see that appearances in the film may be misleading and real power concealed. We are perhaps reminded of the opening shot in which Mabuse – almost like the invisible maker of a fiction film – shuffles photographs of men as if he had an absolute power to control destiny or assume a new identity at will.

Lang has created these effects through editing and the use of angled glances. The space of the scene is developed through attention to various rules of continuity editing (e.g., the 180 degree axis of action, matches on movement, the 30 degree rule, etc.). Lang has not used mise-en-scene or overlapping space to orient the spectator. We cannot, for example, decide from the background of shot 5 (fig. 5) where the man must be located with respect to Mabuse. Incredibly, not until shot 25 are we presented with an establishing shot of the room. Lang avoids techniques of the early cinema which would have presented the scene in a single shot as a distant tableau. Instead the spectator is initially placed “inside” the action. For this reason Noël Burch accords the film a special place in film history and praises its power to force the spectator to mentally create a continuous space and time out of a series of fragments and glances. The spectator is induced to overlook what is literally on the screen – compositions which cut up the room coupled with frequent changes of angle – in order to imagine a coherent story event.

But Lang has achieved more than a mastery of the conventions of so-called invisible or transparent editing. His use of two contradictory spaces (figs 4-5 as opposed to figs 6-7) demonstrates that character glance has the power to generate a discontinuous, or impossible, space as well as to generate the illusion of an integrated space. At a global level, too, many events in the story will prove initially baffling or remain only partially comprehensible which spurs us to search for an underlying rationale, or better, an underlying rationality. In the same way that a certain photograph, or image on the screen, offered to us by Lang is diegetically unassimilable (shot 5, fig. 5) so also are other playing-card photographs, and characters, apparently shuffled and discarded in the story world. The measured confusion we feel between screen and story may drive us toward an understanding of the demonic forms of causality which increasingly are associated with Mabuse and which, like those of The Lady from Shanghai, hold us in their grip.

Why should a glance have so much power to generate a narrative? The reason is that unlike, say, a shot of a character wiping his forehead or a shot of a vase on a table, a glance bristles with implications about space, time, and causality. A glance leaps across space: its direction orients us to something nearby and hence enables us to build spatial relationships within a scene. A glance implies temporal relationships as well: an object seen is interpreted to exist in a time continuous, or simultaneous, with the act of seeing. Also, a glance may be linked directly to a character’s intention, or to a forthcoming act by the character, or to a reaction (when the character is acted upon). A glance implies an interaction with an object. In fact, glances are so important to narrating a story world that the only glance that is generally avoided is a glance into the lens of the camera. A look into the camera breaks the diegesis because it makes the conventional reverse shot or eyeline match impossible. (Such a match would reveal the camera itself; its absence would be just as revealing.) In a deeper sense, a character’s glance is an important measure of the acquisition of knowledge by character and spectator. As we shall see in chapters 3 and 4, knowing, and thus being able to tell, is a fundamental property of narration. Psychoanalytic and feminist theories go even further: they tie the glance to the frontality of early cinema and to scenarios of unconscious desire; to forms of visual pleasure, anxiety, and fantasy (e.g., voyeurism and fetishism); and to the very constitution of a self and a gender distinct from an Other. The Lady from Shanghai illustrated that even impossible causation may affect our interpretation of diegetic events while Dr Mabuse, the Gambler illustrated that character glances may disrupt our perception of diegetic space. The impossible space created through Mabuse’s false eyeline match (figs 4-5) has the effect of interrupting the flow of space around the spectator. In Dr Mabuse the frontality of early cinema is giving way to spatial articulations modeled on shot-reverse shot, creating more complex principles of spatial ordering as well as more complex forms of continuity and discontinuity. I want to turn now to screen space in order to consider how purely graphic patterns may also play a role in the spectator’s experience of story space.
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SCREEN SPACE AND STYLISTIC METAPHORS

In Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps (1935) a Scottish farmer and his young wife agree to allow the hero, Hannay, to spend the night with them. The wife discovers that Hannay is fleeing from the police who falsely believe that he is a murderer. She decides to help him. Her jealous husband, however, becomes suspicious of the way both of them are behaving toward each other. During supper he says that he must go outside to lock the barn. Once outside, however, he walks around the house to the kitchen window where we watch from behind him as he spies on his wife through the window. Next we see a medium close-up of his face from inside the house framed by the window bars (fig. 8) followed by his point-of-view from outside looking back through the window, again framed by window bars (fig. 9). This shot discloses the wife and Hannay leaning toward each other in earnest conversation. The point-of-view position is reinforced by our inability to hear what is being said because we are outside with the farmer. Next we see the husband's face framed by the window bars from the same camera position as before (cf. fig. 8). The scene then ends with a fade-out. We realize that the husband has been deceived by appearances for he believes that his wife has a sexual interest in Hannay and that they are secretly plotting to be together.

We discovered in Dr Mabuse, the Gambler that a shot could represent a fragment of story space as itself a collection of points, one of which could become the point from which the camera reveals the next fragment of story space. In this way a master space may be constructed by connecting spatial fragments from point to point in a transitive series from within the space of the story: if A is to the left of B and B is to the left of C then A is also to the left of C. In The 39 Steps the camera has actually taken the place of a character at a point in space in order to show us how the character sees (figs 8–9). The bars on the window and our distance from them in these two shots play a crucial role in our recognition that the camera angle has changed by 180 degrees between the two shots and that the camera has, in fact, assumed a point in space which has already been seen. By thus following the angle we are able to reorient ourselves to the story space and develop it in new directions. In recognizing the point-of-view structure we have converted a place on a flat screen (marked by one horizontal and one vertical line) into a place in the story world (two bars on a window). A continuity of story space is preserved between the two shots. But this is not all. I want to show that it is not a matter of indifference where the bars of the window appear on the screen to help us in marking story space.

Let's consider four basic possibilities for positioning the window bars in the point-of-view shot (fig. 9; see figs 10–13). One possibility would
be to show them exactly where they were in the previous shot of the husband's face looking in the window (fig. 8). Figure 10 shows this possibility using asterisks (••) to mark where the bars would be in the new shot. Through persistence of vision, short-term memory, and the gestalt law of organization known as "proximity" (i.e., parts that are close together are grouped together and hence tend to be seen as one object, a whole) we would recognize an exact overlap with the previous shot. I will call this a "graphic match" between the two shots.

It has an important disadvantage: it suggests that there has not been a 180 degree reversal of angle between the two shots. If the same window bars of the first shot are to be shown reversed 180 degrees in the second shot, then the vertical bar would switch from screen left to right while the horizontal bar would remain at the bottom of the screen. This expectation of what would result if the camera angle were reversed 180 degrees (i.e., if the story space were to be seen reversed) is shown in figures 10-13 as a solid line (-----). The graphic match thus works against our perception of spatial continuity in the story world by suggesting that there has been no change of angle and hence no point-of-view from the spatial position of the husband. We can, of course, still see the second shot as a point-of-view shot but we must rely on other cues and we must "overturn" the evidence of the immobile window bars (by, for example, believing that after reversing the angle 180 degrees, Hitchcock shifted the framing to show different window bars).

A second possibility for using the window bars in the point-of-view shot would be to show them reversed exactly as we would expect them to be if the camera had reversed 180 degrees (fig. 11). In this case the graphic configuration reinforces our spatial hypothesis and supports the spatial continuity of a character's point of view. I will call this a "spatial match" between the two shots.

A third possibility would be to show the window bars as if they were reflected along a diagonal line upwards to the right (fig. 12). This bizarre sort of movement does not accord with the normal way in which characters move through and view their world. On the other hand, there has been a clear change from the view presented in the first shot which is not inconsistent with a 180 degree reversal of angle: the vertical bar has in fact switched to the right side. Perhaps the horizontal upper bar, then, is simply a different part of the window. This graphic configuration is merely inconclusive. It neither encourages nor rules out spatial continuity in the story world. I will call this an "open match" between the two shots since graphic space and story space are represented as simply "decoupled" from one another.

A final possibility would be to show the bars as if they were merely reflected upwards (fig. 13). This is the choice that Hitchcock actually makes in the film (fig. 9). It is a decision not to show the same window...
bars seen in the previous shot for at least one of the bars must be new. Hitchcock has given up a simple continuity (as in fig. 11) to obtain a most delicate effect. The new composition does not rule out spatial continuity since there has been a clear change in the graphic configuration between the two shots (the horizontal bar has shifted to the top). By keeping the vertical bar at the left, however, Hitchcock is able to unify a purely graphic pattern on the screen. It occurs in the following way: If the spectator perceives the old graphic configuration correctly reversed for the proper spatial continuity of the point-of-view shot and couples it with the new graphic configuration, the overall screen graphics of both shots form a closed inner frame within the frame of the shot. This unusual effect, I believe, results from exploiting two gestalt laws of organization: good continuation and closedness (closure). To put it another way, if one anticipates the 180 degree reversal of story space (by wondering what the husband will see if he looks in the window and how it will look to him), then one is rewarded by graphic continuation and closure on the screen. The graphics then attest to the pertinence of a question posed by the spectator of the narrative. The subtle power of this articulation is that screen space is allowed to close in on itself — apparently guaranteeing completeness in two dimensions — while story space reveals a maximum of information in three dimensions without breaking its essential continuity and completeness; that is, the two shots are linked through the shared space of the window pane while enabling us to see in two opposite directions in an instant.

In general, one can imagine other types of patterns besides an inner "rectangle" that may be fulfilled in a purely graphic way. Note especially that graphic patterns may extend off-screen (i.e., a spectator may imagine how a compositional pattern on screen may be continued off-screen and/or such patterns may extend over several shots. The important point is that the graphics of the screen complete a pattern in parallel with the completion of a coherent pattern in the story space. In such a situation, screen space neither directly opposes nor reinforces story space, nor is it neutral; instead, it complements story space. I will therefore call this an "integrated match" between the two shots. It is a moment in which our top-down processing of space — our expectation of what an invariant space in the story world should look like under a particular transformation — is smoothly integrated with our bottom-up perception of the new shapes on the screen. The virtual space we anticipate in The 39 Steps is here amply confirmed whereas the virtual space of Dr Mabuse, the Gambler (figs 4–5) was overturned. Nevertheless, a spectator's conjectures about the space of Dr Mabuse are not wasted but rather, like the impossibilities of The Lady from Shanghai, are reinvested in a more powerful (nondiegetic) hypothesis about character and story world. The new hypothesis serves to organize and direct our
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Although the example from The 39 Steps emphasizes space, I believe that screen and story may be related in analogous types of way with respect to time and causality, and furthermore, that textures of sound may be integrated, or variously not integrated, with sounds heard in the story. It is thus only a first approximation to oppose "continuity" to "discontinuity," or even "spatial continuity" to "spatial discontinuity." What must also be kept in mind is the interplay between top-down and bottom-up processes as well as the effect of creating impossible space, impossible time, and/or impossible causality.

The four types of match reveal a basic tension in our comprehension of narrative in film. Our expectation that significant changes in camera angles will be correlated with changing events in the story world potentially conflicts with our actual perception of the two-dimensional plane of the screen which contains those light and dark shapes intended to represent the story world. In a similar way, temporal references in the story may conflict with our sense of the actual duration of the imagery appearing on the screen. Narrativity, or the narrative process, seeks to strike a balance between the demands of three-dimensional and two-dimensional space, between character time and spectator time. This suggests that narrative in general is a function which correlates imagined space-time with perceived space-time. Traces of such an activity may be found in the temporal anomalies and apparent causation of The Lady from Shanghai, the virtual space of Dr Mabuse, the Gambler, and the fitting together of story and screen in The 39 Steps. A narrative cannot avoid in some way telling the story of its own telling, just as the spectator cannot avoid retelling a story which exists less on the screen than in our predisposition to make sense, to apply what we already know from the top down.

NARRATION

KNOWING HOW

There are many ways to represent a particular event within a narrative schema. In The Girl and Her Trust Grace, clinging to a handcar, is pursued by the hero in a locomotive and finally rescued from the tramps. Griffith decides to represent this simple event through a subtle and intricate series of cross-cuts between the handcar and the locomotive. He could have chosen many other ways to represent the chase and rescue. What effect does Griffith's choice have on our comprehension of the story?

The chase comprises twenty-eight shots arranged into seven groups followed by two shots which end the film showing Grace united with the hero. In each group we see the handcar and the locomotive moving in the same direction on the screen; in the first group toward the left, in the second toward the right, then left again, and so on. In the story it is clear that the handcar and the locomotive move in only one direction; that is, they do not turn around, circle back, or take short cuts. The changes in direction exist only on the screen as an effect of the narration. The direction of the chase on screen and the number of shots in each group are as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Group} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & \text{Total} \\
&\text{Chase direction} & \leftarrow & \rightarrow & \leftarrow & \rightarrow & \leftarrow & \rightarrow & \leftarrow & 28 \\
&\text{Number of shots} & 12 & 6 & 3 & 3 & 2 & 1 & 1 & 28
\end{align*}
\]

It is apparent that the number of shots in each group decreases proportionately resulting in more frequent changes of direction as the event approaches a climax and resolution. The amount of time each group is on the screen decreases according to the approximate ratio,
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If Griffith is careful not to show the actual distance between the handcar and the locomotive until they are progressively brought together in four careful compositions in the final four shots, this allows the rhythm of the editing, rather than the story locale, to direct the way in which we comprehend the chase. We are forced to constantly reassess the distances as we wonder how close the locomotive might be now and when Grace might be rescued. Closure for the event is suggested visually by the fact that the camera frames the beginning and end of the chase from similar positions near the tracks and the chase ends in the same direction in which it began. Overall, the simple patterns created on the screen work in parallel with the simple actions and reactions of the participants in the chase to create a feeling of unity and inevitability.

Part of the effect of this chase sequence on a spectator is due to the structure of expectations created by a narrative schema: the heroine’s goal reaffirmed, new complicating action on a handcar, the hero’s goal of rescuing Grace, an approaching collision of forces, and so forth. The chase sequence illustrates how a narrative schema in general works to create expectations which are clearly defined, validated at several points, directed toward a future outcome, and sharply exclusive (either Grace will protect her trust, be rescued, and fall in love, or else she will not); story time is rendered as a deadline to be met by the hero—stop the tramps before they escape and injure Grace. However, the narrative schema does not account for the total impact on a spectator; part of the effect is due to the particular way in which the event is represented as a visual “spectacle.” Christian Metz provides a hint about what a visual “spectacle” is and how it operates and its varieties.

When [alternating editing) first appeared in early films—and something of this still remains in films of our own time—it was a kind of phantasy of “all-seeingness,” of being everywhere at once, having eyes in the back of your head, tending towards a massive condensation of two series of images. If the world consists of only three things—a girl, a boy, and forces of disruption (another suitor, the tramps)—and the teller of the story has the power to reveal their motives and to show us all three, each in its perfect time, then the teller has all the power in the world, but so also do we. The rhythm of alternation between the handcar and the locomotive forces time into a strict pattern at the same time that we are seemingly everywhere at once. I want to begin to address the ways in which a spectator acquires such power and is implicated in a “phantasy” of seeing where he or she can imagine seeing everything of importance. More generally, how is narrative comprehension affected by the particular way we imagine we are seeing events? How is it possible for us to possess the knowledge we come to possess in a narrative? The answer to these questions is given through the narration and so I turn to a closer examination of narration: the conditions under which it operates and its varieties.

Two fundamental concepts are required in order to analyze narration and evaluate competing theories of film narration. The first concept is that narration is concerned with how an event is presented, how it happens, rather than what is presented or what happens. A “how” question asks about the mechanism which has created a given state of situation and may also seek an “agent” or an agent’s “purpose” in bringing about the situation. Although a “how” question may initially be answered in the story by presenting it in the mode of “what” (e.g., by identifying a particular character acting as an agent), such an answer is only provisional. The more important “how” question(s) will concern the very readability of the story and its characters: how is it possible for us to know what happens. By contrast, a “what” question merely asks that a situation or object (who, what, which one) be identified so that it may be referred to and talked about. Narrative—constituted narrowly as what happens in the story—is then seen as the object or end result of some mechanism or process—narration.

We can carry this analysis one step deeper by associating “how” and “what” with two different ways of acting upon knowledge: knowing how and knowing that. It is important to realize that knowing how to do something is not reducible to knowing that something is the case. Knowing that something is round, or a whale, or a mammal, or erroneously called a fish is different than knowing how to draw a picture of a whale. “Knowing how” involves the exercise of a skill in which something is achieved; it does not involve questions of truth or belief. Procedures may be more or less useful with respect to a purpose but not strictly true or false. (Knowing how to play the piano is neither true nor false.) Wittgenstein referred to such procedural knowledge as “knowing how to go on.” Psychologically, “how” and “what” translate into two different types of knowledge: procedural knowledge and declarative (or postulated) knowledge. Of course, both are necessary for one cannot exercise a skill or method without exercising it on something with some result, while knowing that something is the case presupposes a procedure which has been exercised in knowing. Applying this distinction to the study of narrative, we may say that narration addresses issues of procedure: how are we acquiring knowledge about what is happening in the story? To what degree are various procedures incompatible? Do conflicting
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interpretations of a text suggest conflicting procedures or points of view at work?

When specific narrative theories are examined in later chapters, we will discover that any complete model of narrative comprehension will need to incorporate both types of knowledge. The real issue will concern what knowledge to represent procedurally and what to represent declaratively, and how different the two formalisms should be that represent these types of knowledge. In watching a film we acquire and exercise skills in managing experiences while at the same time we discover what happens through the exercising of those skills. The study of narration in film is the study of the skills and procedures we apply in order to know narrative events.

DISPARITIES OF KNOWLEDGE

The second fundamental concept that is needed to analyze narration is the notion of a disparity of knowledge. Narration comes into being when knowledge is unevenly distributed - when there is a disturbance or disruption in the field of knowledge. Informally, one can grasp the importance of disparity by imagining a universe in which all observers are perfect and all-knowing. In such a universe, there can be no possibility of narration since all information is equally available and already possessed in the same ways. Therefore I will posit that the most basic situation which gives rise to narration will be comprised of three elements: a subject in an asymmetrical relationship with an object. As we shall see, the perceiving "subject" may be a character, narrator, author, the spectator, or some other entity depending on the context that is being analyzed. The situation may be represented graphically as follows:

S —— O

The vertical line acts as an "obstacle" which creates a disparity, or asymmetry, giving the "subject" a unique access to the "object."

For example, in The 39 Steps there is a literal obstacle, the window through which the husband is able to spy on his wife and Hannay, but without being able to hear what they are saying (see figs 8 and 9). This simple situation is used by Hitchcock to create a rather complex distribution of knowledge among the characters and the spectator which reverberates throughout the film creating various shades of truth and falsity. In The Girl and Her Trust, Griffith stretches out the action of the tramps surreptitiously watching Grace through a window into a mini-scene of being watched, growing suspicion, mistaken security, new apprehension, discovery, and fear.

It is no accident that flamboyant genres, such as melodramas and television soap operas, are filled with excessive forms of narration whereby characters spy upon, eavesdrop, and gossip about other characters, producing a chain of tellings and retellings based on various disparities. Each retelling manages to be slightly different from preceding ones by provoking differing reactions to the "same" event (outrage, sympathy, envy, puzzlement, scheming). Melodrama often seeks to exhaust a matrix of possible reactions to a single event by exploring differing points of view each of which reconstitutes the "event" in a new light because each is filtered through a different disparity. Comedy, too, often explores a variety of reactions to an event and often by the same person, the comedian.

I would like to offer a more detailed, concrete example of a disparity of knowledge at work in order to demonstrate how narration might be modulated through a spectrum of possibilities for the spectator of a filmed event. I will take as my "subject" character S who is spying around the corner of a building at two characters engaged in conversation, A and B. This entire event will then be represented as an "object" of perception for another subject - the spectator of the film. Just as the corner of the building functions as a barrier between S and A/B, so the motion picture screen functions as a barrier between the spectator and the diegetic world represented in the film. The situation may be depicted graphically as follows:

S ——— A/B

To simplify the discussion, I will make two further assumptions: First, the disparity of information (which is the condition for the narration) will be based only on what the spectator and the characters are able to see (not, for example, on what the spectator might hear, or might remember from previous scenes, or might expect because of genre conventions) and, second, the film's manipulation of this visual access to knowledge will be based only on a few variables associated with the position of the camera.

Figure 14 is an overhead view of character S looking around the corner of a building at characters A and B in conversation. How might this event be represented for the spectator? The illustration shows a number of alternative camera positions. The problem is to analyze how these camera positions function to restrict the spectator's access to visual information by creating different sorts of disparity. Notice that the illustration itself exhibits the principles of narration at work for we are
An overhead view of an event in which character S secretly watches characters A and B from the corner of a building. Alternative camera set-ups suggest different ways in which information about the event may be regulated and distributed among the spectator and characters by creating disparities in a subject's access to knowledge about an object. Dotted lines indicate camera movement.

Camera position 2 does not show us A and B. Our knowledge of the situation is restricted to what can be learned by watching S's reaction.

Camera position 3 begins like that of 2 but through camera movement ends by showing the spectator the precise relationship of S to A and B. This camera movement transforms screen duration into a story rhetorical of question and answer (what does S see?) followed by suspense (will A or B see S?). Although camera position 3B is not a point-of-view shot, it very nearly represents S's angle of view and distance to A and B, and hence our inferences about causality and action will develop in a context similar to that of S. Note that other devices would measure out this knowledge of space and causality differently: an eyeline match would instantaneously frame the answer to the above questions while a somewhat broader use of juxtapositions, based on the competing intentions and goals of several characters, would yield the cross-cutting Griffith used in representing the chase in The Girl and Her Trust.

Camera position 4 will be referred to as the "best possible," or "perfect," view of the event since it simultaneously shows the spectator both S and A/B, each in a complete spatial and temporal context. It is meant to show us everything of importance from the best possible angle. By contrast, position 5 is a perfect but "impossible" view. It could be inside the building (if the walls become "transparent") or else underground (if the ground becomes "transparent") or suspended overhead. It is perfect, but "impossible" because it represents a position and view which no character in the diegetic world can possess.

Camera position 6 does not show us S. It is the inverse of position 2 and we must rely on the reactions of A and B to learn about the event. We do not yet know, for instance, if S is present. Position 7 is a shot of A over-the-shoulder of B. It is nearly the inverse of position 1. Whether S is seen in the background or is blocked by A's body, one of the questions posed by this articulation is whether B has noticed or will notice S, and how that will affect what is said to A.

Position 8 begins as a "best possible" view but only of A and B in conversation; it ends with the camera inexplicably moving away from this event in order to explore a wall of the building. The spectator is thus faced with a sudden loss of information in favor of new information which may or may not be meaningful using S, A, and B as coordinates.

Filmmakers have employed all of the above ways of articulating disparities of knowledge, and many others, in order to elaborate significant patterns by which to develop and know an "object." A specific narrational device is only partially defined by technical criteria (e.g., the position of the camera); more important is an assessment of its relative power to expand and contract perception. Narration is ultimately a way of making knowledge "intermittent" and hence what is described in figure 14 is not a list of the elementary building blocks of visual narration but a set of possibilities for controlling time, for regulating our access to a fluctuating field of information. A point-of-view shot,
The function of such camera set-ups cannot be determined strictly from the position of the camera but will also depend on broader (top-down) considerations which define knowledge and pertinence, including a narrative schema which defines characters who may have a sequence of views, and whose particular goals and actions may be seen through their eyes or best seen in a certain way (while other goals and actions will not be perfectly seen or known). A character’s goal is seldom as simple as “looking toward” an object but more often includes a reason for looking, and the anticipated consequences of having seen. A spectator’s assessment of these factors is a crucial part of what the spectator sees when he or she looks at a character. Thus in naming the camera set-ups of figure 14, I am only describing familiar or initial interpretations — conventions of seeing in film which may be revised or overturned in the proper circumstances when more is known about the events. To speak of a “convention” in this way is merely shorthand for the fact that a spectator must risk some hypothesis and take on faith that subsequent events will justify the interpretation; a “best possible” view, for example, must actually turn out to be such with respect to the narrative goals and actions of the characters, with respect to a sequence of events, with respect to the value system of the epilogue, and so forth. Even the point-of-view shot which appears to be a form of subjective knowledge to establish the pertinence of the camera positioning. The reason that certainty cannot be achieved through limited empirical testing of the data on the screen (e.g., by locating the position of the camera) is that any spatial, temporal, and causal configuration may denote any other configuration, given the proper conditions. An apparent point-of-view shot, for example, may represent merely a view from very near a character’s head, or represent what would have been seen if the character’s eyes were open, or represent how a distant character imagines that he or she might be seen by another, or represent what might have been seen from that position if a character were not standing there.

Let’s alter slightly the event represented in figure 14 so as to highlight the temporal element of narration and include new types of information. Character S is now in a room with character A who is speaking on the telephone with character B. How might this event be represented for the spectator of the film? The most important obstacle that motivates the distribution of knowledge in this scene is the telephone. Therefore one method of presenting the event would be to intercut shots of A speaking on the phone with shots of B in a distant locale speaking on the phone. In this way we might come to know more than any of the characters since A and B cannot see each other while we can see everyone’s actions and hear everyone’s words. This method is similar to the cross-cutting of The Girl and Her Truth during the chase sequence. A second method would be to present shots of A and S, coupled with the voice of A talking on the phone. Suppose we do not actually hear what B is saying or see B; and perhaps his or her identity is withheld from us. In this situation our knowledge is restricted to what S, or perhaps an invisible witness in the room, might come to know about A’s telephone conversation. Other factors in the scene would determine more exactly what knowledge we were able to acquire.

A third method would be to present close shots of A. coupled with the voice of B as heard through the telephone in A’s hand. Here our knowledge is “subjective” in some measure because it is roughly congruent with some of the key information available to A to the exclusion of B who cannot hear what B is saying. (There are, of course, many degrees of character subjectivity: A’s thoughts are not being represented, A’s view of the telephone receiver is not shown, and so forth.) These three methods of presenting the event are entirely different and potentially may make a difference in how we understand the story. They may not make a difference, of course, if the filmmaker switches among them indifferently, or the story is not concerned with basic problems of knowledge and belief.

The example of the telephone conversation illustrates that narrative information acquired by the spectator cannot be evaluated in the abstract as to its quantity or relevance. Do we need to hear what B is saying, or do we learn more by watching A’s behavior, or seeing S’s reaction? What is the proper camera distance or angle to represent an object? In order to analyze the effects of narration, we first need to posit an epistemological boundary, or barrier (with respect to a narrative schema), then measure its changes, and then evaluate its interaction with the next boundary to appear. These boundaries, of course, need not correspond with material or on screen divisions, such as the appearance of a new shot, decor, or camera movement. We cannot decide in advance the precise contours of a boundary nor can we state that only three boundaries are possible when only three characters are in the scene. For example, the following are some additional non-character sources of knowledge that could be part of the representing of the above event: a musical chord coupled with the expression on a character’s face that “tells” us all we need to know; or, a “tell-tale” glance; or, a narrator’s whispered commentary on what B must be saying on the telephone to A; or, a pattern of editing that shows A and B but not at the “best possible” or “perfect” time; or, especially unusual, a shot of A but matched with the sound of A’s voice as heard through the telephone by B in a distant (unseen) locale. Consider also the representation of...
the following two telephone conversations in Jean-Luc Godard's _Sauve qui peut (la vie)_ (Every Man For Himself, 1980):

1 We see and hear Denise speaking to Paul on the phone but the next shot does not show him talking on the phone, but instead speaking to someone else in a room (before, or after, Denise's phone call?). We cannot hear what is being said; we hear only nondiegetic music which is interrupted by Denise's voice continuing her phone conversation with Paul. We cut back to Denise still speaking on the phone, and then return to Paul who is now seen talking with Denise on the phone, continuing the same conversation. He is in the room where we previously saw him. The scene ends when Paul hands the phone to Yvette and asks her to finish the conversation with Denise for him. Yvette in her own voice converses with Denise but is saying what we imagine Paul might have said to Denise (or is she reciting for us what Paul actually did say to Denise to end the conversation?).

2 Paul gets up from a table in a restaurant to make a phone call. Cut to a very brief shot of Denise answering the phone and cut back to Paul already seated at the table. We then hear Denise say, "Hello." Paul then talks about Denise with his companions in the restaurant.

The last several examples of unusual depictions of phone conversations illustrate that while a given narration may be familiar, or seem one of many ways of knowing an event, and only one of many ways narration becomes increasingly complex as one adds variables associated with character action, mise-en-scène, editing and dialogue, and considerations their change through time. One must also expand the notion of a spectator's "knowledge" beyond immediate "seeing" to include various effects produced by the sound track, our memory of previous scenes, anticipated pleasure or anxiety, generic and cultural expectations, and "visual" forms of knowledge nor on-screen knowledge even in simple cases.

**Hierarchies of Knowledge**

It should be clear from previous examples that the problem of describing narration becomes increasingly complex as one adds variables associated with character action, mise-en-scène, editing and dialogue, and considers their change through time. One must also expand the notion of a spectator's "knowledge" beyond immediate "seeing" to include various effects produced by the sound track, our memory of previous scenes, anticipated pleasure or anxiety, generic and cultural expectations, and so forth. Thus the knowledge we acquire need not coincide with "visual" forms of knowledge nor on-screen knowledge even in simple cases. For example, our ability to learn from a conversation between characters may not be attributable to the position occupied by the camera. We may seem to hear from a diegetic place distant from the camera (e.g., from a point closer to the conversation so that the words are more distinct) or from a place we never see which is evidence that another disparity, which is not visible, has been put into play allowing us a unique access to the object different from the nominal visual access.

**Narration**

Or, we may not hear what the visual position would allow. For example, in _The 39 Steps_ the camera position of figure 8 from inside the house should allow us to hear the conversation between the wife and Hannay even though the husband cannot hear it. The sound track, however, is silent (without even music) because the disparity selected to be represented is that associated with the husband who is outside the house; in this case, not being able to hear helps us to define the actual disparity that underlies the representation of the event.

Theorists have proposed many sorts of schemes by which to analyze the fine details of disparities (i.e., epistemological boundaries) within texts. George Wilson proposes that narration be analyzed along three axes: the relative epistemic distance from our usual habits of perception and common-sense beliefs (including our knowledge of film conventions); the degree of epistemic reliability or justification for the inferences that we draw from the "visual manifolds" of film; and the epistemic authority or degree of alignment between audience knowledge and character knowledge (or other source of knowledge).

David Bordwell proposes that narration be analyzed along five axes: the range of knowledge (more or less restricted) presented to the spectator and its depth (more or less subjective); the degree of self-consciousness by which the narration addresses the audience (whether direct address or more covert); the degree of communicativeness shown by the narration, that is, how willingly it shares the information to which its degree of knowledge entitles it; and the judgmental attitudes shown by the narration (ranging from mockery to compassion). My present purpose is not to appraise these sorts of scheme, but to establish the reasons why theorists identify "narration" as a special area of inquiry within a spectator's overall comprehension of narrative.

While the above categories of narration exploit an analogy with literal measurements ("distance," "depth," "alignment"), they are actually broader in scope and must be evaluated with entirely different procedures of inference, and within a very different time frame, than the split seconds of (bottom-up) spatial perception. In general, the spectator knows and anticipates much more than the information available on the screen at any point in a film. The spectator is subject to an array of (sometimes competing) clusters of knowledge and thus is in a very different epistemological "place" than the camera or the microphone.

This situation resembles the complexity attributed to perception by a modular description of mind (separate functions, often competing and unable to "communicate"). It is also consistent with the notion of an "unconscious" self which is deemed to be constructed and contradictory rather than unified: "I think where I am not and I am where I do not think." In the next chapter we will discover that in order to analyze narration even more precisely, it will be necessary to distinguish
several, potentially conflicting narrations which operate simultaneously on different “levels” of the discourse with varying degrees of explicitness, and are addressed to different disparities or contexts in which knowledge is being acquired (or rejected) by the spectator. First, however, we must examine disparity in greater detail.

Colin MacCabe has proposed that classical narratives are composed of a “hierarchy of discourses” which aim to place the spectator in a position of superior knowledge by using the camera to equate vision with truth. A hierarchy permits the spectator to make judgments and to measure relative truth moment by moment. At the end of the story, for example, the spectator is finally able to solve all the enigmas of character and action because the structure of disparities responsible for managing the partial truths of the plot becomes known through the camera. Thus one function of a graded hierarchy is to conceal and delay the end of the story by presenting the events through “less knowledgeable” agencies (e.g., characters) at appropriate moments. Higher levels of the hierarchy are meant to be concealed from the spectator who is to witness partial truths developing into moral imperatives by seeing only the characters and the diegesis. By contrast, for MacCabe, “radical” narratives are constructed on the basis of unstable hierarchies in which the spectator alternately identifies with, and then is alienated or “separated” from, diegetic events. Some of the higher-level discourses may be made explicit early in a radical film. In this way the spectator is able to gain a critical “distance” from the hierarchy and its other “discourses,” and so appreciate the “social and psychoanalytic” dimensions of being part of a community which uses specific discourses in thinking about the world.

The notion of a hierarchy is also a way of talking about the organization of a group of disparities whereby some perceivers are represented as acquiring more accurate knowledge about certain events relative to other perceivers. Ben Brewster has asserted that “changes of viewpoint” in a narrative “make possible hierarchies of relative knowledge for characters and spectators.” He shows how early Griffith films create an “asymmetry of awareness” or “pyramid of knowledge.” Applying his notion to The Girl and Her Trust, we may say that in global terms the spectator is accorded a position of superior knowledge with the characters arranged in descending order as follows:

1 Spectator
2 Tramps (early events)
3 Grace
4 Tramps (later events)
5 Hero.

Another way to measure relative knowledge is to evaluate whether the spectator knows more than (>) the same as (=), or less than (<) a particular character at a particular time. Although this is a crude measure for it says nothing about types or degrees of knowledge, it has the merit of suggesting broadly how the spectator is being asked to respond to a given narrative situation. Knowledge is linked to response as follows:

S > C suspense
S = C mystery
S < C surprise

Alfred Hitchcock conceived his films in this way. Using the example of a bomb placed in a briefcase under a table, he explained how he could create feelings of suspense, mystery, or surprise in the audience. If the spectator knows about the bomb, but not the characters seated around the table, then the spectator will be in suspense and must anxiously await the bomb’s discovery or explosion. If the spectator and a character both know that there is something mysterious about the briefcase but do not know its secret, then the spectator’s curiosity is aroused. Finally, if the spectator does not know about the bomb or the briefcase, then he or she is in for a shock. Hitchcock recognized that these effects can be intensified according to what we know about a character and our emotional involvement with him or her. He realized that there is a close relationship between a spectator’s wish to know, and his or her wishful involvement with situations and persons in a film.

One can compare the relative knowledge of subjects other than the spectator and a character in order to evaluate how the story is being disclosed moment by moment. For instance, a narrator’s knowledge of an event may be greater than, the same as, or less than that of a particular character at a particular time. Such a comparison leads to additional typologies of narration besides introducing new complexities. For example, in the next chapter we will see that some important narrators are only implicit in the text, that is, their “presence” must be inferred and constructed by the spectator. The knowledge possessed by an implicit narrator is thus difficult to compare with the knowledge of a character. Also, an explicit narrator who is not directly seen or heard, such as an implied author, raises a theoretical problem about narration: Is a narrator to be thought of as a real person, or instead as merely the personification of an abstract textual process? If it is decided that only an explicit narrator can be thought of as a real person, then defining what counts as “explicit” becomes crucial. (How explicit are the following narrations: fictional speech, an anonymous voice-over commentary, a written title containing sentences in the third-person, an eccentric camera angle?)

When one chooses to measure the spectator’s knowledge by
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comparing it with the knowledge of an implicit narrator, one can readily see that the notions of suspense, mystery, and surprise may be generalized and related more broadly to the manipulation of a spectator's expectations and to shifts in his or her attention. Thus narration in the widest sense may be defined as follows:

Narration is the overall regulation and distribution of knowledge which determines how and when the spectator acquires knowledge, that is, how the spectator is able to know what he or she comes to know in a narrative. A typical description of the spectator's "position" of knowledge includes the invention of (sometimes tacit) speakers, presenters, listeners, and watchers who are in a (spatial and temporal) position to know, and to make use of one or more disparities of knowledge. Such "persons" are convenient fictions which serve to mark how the field of knowledge is being divided at a particular time.

It is evident that specific accounts of narration have many decisions to make. What is the status of "style"? In what ways do the stylistic devices of a given medium open up or constrain our abilities to acquire knowledge? What "abilities" of the spectator are to be included in deciding how the spectator is "able to know" something? How sensitive to context is seeing? Or, for that matter, hearing, prior knowledge, memory, anticipation, desire, gender, and social class? Moreover, knowledge cannot exist in a vacuum; it must be made "worthwhile" with respect to a use or purpose, otherwise it is not recognized. Thus in addressing how knowledge may be possessed, one must also address the desire to know, and the importance of knowing relative to a frame of action. I believe that the text, and its implicit "contexts," should be analyzed as a set of interacting "levels" or "strata" analogous to, but more complex than, the pyramid of character knowledge discussed above. The proliferation of disparities of knowledge creates a multiplicity of involvements for the spectator. The multiple disparities of narration break down the impression that a film narrative is a mere photographic record of a real environment. Instead, references are generated which are only partially determined in contexts not yet fully known, leaving to the spectator the task of anticipating and constructing the various frames of reference that will be appropriate to an understanding of a world not yet seen.

NICK FURY AS AN EXAMPLE

So far I have examined narration in a rather artificial way either by describing the narration after the narrative has ended (a hierarchy of relative knowledge), or else by isolating a few moments of a narrative event (e.g., a glimpse from the corner of a building, figure 14; a phone conversation; a spectator's response of suspense, mystery, or surprise). I would now like to consider some dynamic properties of narration by looking at a short sequence in which narrative space, time, and causation are more extensively developed for a spectator. The sequence comprises the first sixteen panels of a comic book adventure featuring Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD which could easily have been a storyboard for a film. I will first simply trace what happens.

A man climbs up a fortress-like structure. In the moonlight we recognize him as Nick Fury. He climbs down into the fortress through a vent, cuts through a door, and discovers a robot guard. He throws a coin onto the floor, and when the robot bends down to pick it up, Nick swiftly knocks him unconscious with a kick to the head. Meanwhile another robot is rising up through a secret trapdoor in the floor behind Nick. Caught unawares, Nick is shot dead.

These events could be represented in many different ways and still be understood to refer to the same "focused chain" of actions as defined through a particular application of a narrative schema. The "center" which gives the chain its focus is, of course, Nick Fury. When the panels are interpreted in this manner (as opposed to other, nonnarrative interpretations), a host of elements are understood as merely parts of larger, directed movements. Although all the elements in the panels are significant, the elements are not all equally significant. For example, in panels 3 and 4, the pipe on the roof, Nick's rope and blue uniform, and his action of climbing into the vent are seen as merely initial conditions and initiating actions toward larger goals. Moreover, there is no reason to doubt that the character in the shadows in panel 4 is the same one we saw in 3; or that panel 8 continues the action of 7. These are the sorts of effect produced by a narrative schema which works to generate a focused, causal chain as opposed to, for example, a catalogue of Nick's arm movements which would organize the panels in a quite different way. However, rather than examining what the narrative schema has accomplished, I want to concentrate on how the spectator is being asked to use the narrative schema to build up a scene through partitioning and embedding a series of actions on various scales of space, time, and causality. How has the spectator been encouraged and constrained moment by moment in achieving a large-scale structure with which to represent the 16 panels as a single narrative event?

Consider the "camera" positions through which the spectator builds the experiences of Nick Fury. In panel 1 we are so close to the action that paradoxically we cannot decide what the action is: is someone climbing a wall, or pulling on two handles, or hanging helplessly? Though it would seem to be almost a point-of-view shot (because of the position of the hands), we have no idea who the person is or what
he or she looks like or even if this is what the person is looking at. Normal schema order – orientation followed by initiating event – is violated, resulting in a delay in recognizing the situation. Panel 2 begins to answer some of these questions while posing new ones, but its framing goes to the opposite extreme: radically external to the event from an improbable overhead position; that is, from a place no character is likely to occupy – a god’s eye view (cf. panels 1 and 2 with set-ups 1 and 5 in figure 14). These extremes seem to promise the spectator that a storyteller is in command of a vast range of information from the intimate to the grand, and that all important information will be provided. Yet these somewhat arbitrary extremes of framing also seem to be a warning that the story will be marked by sudden turns of events and even deceptive storytelling. The spectator should anticipate the pleasure of being surprised; the question is how and when.

Panels 3–9 establish new, temporary limits on what can be known by putting the spectator back inside diegetic space and time as encountered by Nick Fury. The representation of space and time in this segment of the story is loosely restricted to what Nick knows and when he knows it (i.e., in narratological terms events are focalized through Nick), and his central role is confirmed by another near point-of-view shot (panel 9). This pattern, however, is being established only to be suddenly broken.

Panel 10 represents a break in the narration. For the first time we do not see Nick. Where is he? Is it important that we don’t see him, or is it merely an ‘objective’ view of the robot bending down? Will we return to Nick, and if so, how? The lack of background detail and the uncertainty of where the coin lands in the previous panel leaves the spatial orientation of panel 10 indefinite and fuzzy so that whatever we first believe about the space seems sufficient to comprehend the event. In the next panel, however, Nick seems to come from nowhere to deliver a knockout blow to the robot. Nick is now ahead of events, and too fast for us. He has, in fact, emerged from out of the foreground of panel 10, from the very position of the camera! We did not see that the robot had turned around (between panels 9 and 10, as it were) in order to bend down toward the coin. Our perception of the robot bending down became a blind spot to be exploited by the next panel. In this case our view of the robot cannot have been an objective view, but must have been still another point-of-view shot which is abruptly terminated in panel 11 by Nick’s knockout blow to the robot. The spectator’s perception of the event has been carefully embedded in the perceiving of the event by a character, and then apparently relaxed, but only to be explosively reasserted.

Panel 13 represents another break in the narration, but one more serious in relation to the story. A second robot is suddenly revealed pointing a weapon. Where is this robot? What is happening? More importantly, where is Nick? Again, clues are suppressed by the lack of background detail. The final panels show Nick being surprised from behind and killed. Thus within the story Nick has been shown to know more than the first robot but less than the second. These disparities of knowledge may be diagrammed as follows:

2nd Robot > Nick > 1st Robot

or:

2nd Robot --- [-----] Nick --- [-----] 1st Robot

It is evident that choices are being made for the spectator by presenting the events in one way rather than another. After all, the second robot could have been shown earlier hiding under the floor which would have altered our relationship to Nick and his actions even though it would not have altered the outcome. (The spectator would feel suspense; Nick would seem less invincible.) Broadly speaking, the spectator’s knowledge has been presented as equal to Nick’s – producing “mystery” – in panels 1–12 and greater than Nick’s – producing “surprise” – in panels 13–16. These responses, however, have been punctuated by moments of insufficient knowledge and surprise in panels 1, 11 and 12. Thus what initially appears as a smooth string of events is actually composed of a rapid oscillation in the balance of knowledge. Roland Barthes suggests that classical narration in literature “alternates the personal and the impersonal very rapidly . . . so as to produce . . . a proprietary consciousness which retains the mastery of what it states without participating in it.” In order to describe the effects associated with such an oscillation, one must specify a reference point. Thus when the first robot bends down in panel 10, the spectator feels suspense with respect to the robot (i.e., we know more than it does) but mystery or surprise with respect to Nick. The ambiguity of our response with respect to Nick is then forcefully resolved in the next panel as Nick is shown capable of taking us by surprise. We did not know as much about him as we thought; or rather, he has demonstrated what we had hoped such a hero could do. The chain of events in the first 9 panels, encouraging us to use Nick as a reference point rather than an unknown robot, has been validated.

Curiously, there is a moment in the story which reveals an almost pure movement of narration – where knowledge is being shifted and realigned but nothing else is happening. Consider the space of panel 12 which seems to halt the story. We see Nick’s shadow falling gracefully across a door as he stands offscreen, pensive, dreamy, unmoving. This is the sort of transitional moment that Barthes calls a “catalyst.”
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He argues that it is of great importance in a narrative because it acts to maintain contact with the spectator. A catalyst addresses the spectator's interest and attention by enhancing, accelerating, or slowing down an event but without altering its course. If it encourages a spectator to remain attentive by relating fascinating but minor incidents, or by providing additional description and detail (perhaps even offering a spectacle). It sums up, anticipates, and promises further significant events. (By contrast, a "nucleus" for Barthes is an action which determines or constitutes a causal sequence; adding or deleting a nucleus would alter the course of events.) Panel 12 seems to hint that there is something important on the other side of the door. Also, Nick's shadow on the door captures our attention by asking us to pause and admire the beauty of the composition, the harmony of angle and color, the mastery and brilliance of the artist who has drawn it. But equally important for the narration is the fact that the door and the shadow are an elaborate decoy! We are looking in exactly the wrong direction. The door and the shadow are not significant in the way that the previous panels have been; what is important is a new robot rising up through the floor tiles behind Nick – a robot who is not seen because we are busy admiring a shadow. We have been misled by a view of the action. The shadow must now be reinterpreted, perhaps reclassified as some type of "symbol" that prefigures an epilogue brought on by Nick's untimely death and the end of the causal sequence. Again we must pause and wonder what Nick has really meant to us.

Nick's shadow illustrates two crucial facts about narration that we've already encountered. First, narration involves concealing information as much as revealing it. Secondly, the function of narration – what it conceals and reveals – cannot be fully determined in advance by bottom-up processing, or by comparing it against formal criteria (e.g., shot or camera position). Despite initial appearances, the view of the shadow on the door is neither the best view of the action nor the view of the second robot (cf. panel 12 with 14) nor the view of an "invisible witness" at the scene nor even Nick's view (why should he, or a witness, pause to marvel at a shadow?). Narration is determined by a flow of knowledge, not by surface features of a text. Moreover, a flow of knowledge means that some knowledge is excluded and not shown. One of the tasks of a narrative theorist is to provide a set of terms and categories with which to uncover the distribution of knowledge in a text and define the logic which moves our thinking through a series of phases. I have used these panels to demonstrate that the logic of recognizing, for example, a detail within its setting (panels 1 and 2), or an exterior space adjoining an interior one (panels 7 and 8), or sudden changes in our inferences about story time (cf. panels 5 and 6 with 10 and 11, and with 12 and 13) is no less special and exact than a point-of-view articu-

As the story continues, our former knowledge is entirely recast. We knew much less than we imagined and will need to know much more. The first sixteen panels, however, are not rendered irrelevant by the new events nor were our initial interpretations simply a mistake; rather, the first sixteen panels embodied a phase of our thinking about the story. By rationalizing step by step its method for knowing a story world, narration confronts a spectator in the most profound and subtle way with a representation of what that world is or might be, what it might become, and how other, similar worlds might be found.

FORGETTING AND REVISING

As a spectator engages the procedures which yield a story world, something extraordinary occurs: his or her memory of the actual images, words, and sounds is erased by the acts of comprehension that they require. Comprehension proceeds by cancelling and discarding data actually present, by revising and remaking what is given. A new representation is created which is not a copy of the original stimuli nor an imperfect memory of it. In comprehending a narrative, the spectator routinely sees what is not present and overlooks what is present. For example, the viewer of Nick Fury probably does not notice that the floor
strategies of panels 9, 12, and 14 have disappeared in panel 16; or that the shoulder strap of the second robot mysteriously changes shoulders in panels 14, 15, and 16; or that color schemes change drastically from panel to panel. In The Girl and Her Trust a truly startling range of "mismatches" that are plainly visible are seldom noticed even by experienced viewers. Recall also the "impossible" causation of The Lady from Shanghai, the virtual space of Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler, and the integrated match of The 39 Steps. All these effects rely upon, or else counter the conventions of, a so-called "transparency" or "invisibility" of classical texts. Defining "transparency" in film, however, has proven no easier than defining it in semantics (where it is entangled with questions of synonymy and modal logic). Transparency may be achieved for a spectator when continuity conventions (e.g., "invisible" editing) are violated, or may not be achieved when continuity conventions are adopted. This demonstrates once more that such effects cannot be explained simply by formal and technical criteria but require a theory of top-down processing in human perception.

Many explanations have been offered for transparency effects ranging from the purely perceptual (based on the fact that visual illusions and constancies are part of everyday perception) to the psychical (e.g., deferred revision, repression, and hallucination) and the ideological (e.g., "false consciousness"). In some theories transparency and invisibility become faintly sinister because they are believed to promote a violated, or may not be achieved when continuity conventions are adopted. This demonstrates once more that such effects cannot be explained simply by formal and technical criteria but require a theory of top-down processing in human perception.

Alan Williams addresses the issue of transparency by arguing that when we watch a narrative film we are actually watching four films: a celluloid strip of material; a projected image with recorded sound; a coherent event in three-dimensional space; and finally a story we think we have seen. There are perceptual "gaps" between each of these four films in which certain facts are concealed and "forgotten" about one film in order to perceive another. For example, the perception of movement in the projected image depends on not seeing the individual frames on the celluloid strip which do not move (or do not move in the same way). By contrast, if some of these same facts separating the films were emphasized, the spectator could not so easily substitute one "film" for another with the result, presumably, that a new critical distance as well as new kinds of reference would be possible. Although the notion that watching a film entails watching several films is one that is open to interpretation, it is a natural consequence of a theory of mind based on modularity and levels of structure.

Using Williams's four films, narration could be defined quite broadly by simply saying that narration is the process that operates to transform one "film" into the next. Nevertheless, we seldom define narration in such a sweeping way, preferring instead to limit it to processes operating near the "remembered film." The reason is that we seem to resist the idea that a film projector could be conceived of as a "narrator" who transforms celluloid into moving images. We resist personifying a machine in this way perhaps because a narrative schema emphasizes goals and characters, and we naturally expect that such goals and characters have been produced for us by other, albeit concealed, agents with similar goals and human-like qualities. However, we are less successful in resisting the urge to personalize the camera as an "eye" perhaps because the camera seems to act from within the diegesis in proximity to the goals of characters. Therefore, in general, an important issue for a narrative theory will concern how narration should be connected to an explicit human activity and which metaphors should be selected to pose the connection. For example, one may choose to say simply that a screenwriter "communicates," or a director "intends," or a community value is "expressed" in narrating. Still another possibility explored by some narrative theories is the rather startling belief that the spectator is the narrator. In this approach to narration, the spectator both identifies with, and misrecognizes, only himself or herself in the perceiving of the "remembered film." Such concepts as "narrator," "character," and "implied author" (and perhaps even "camera") are then merely convenient labels used by the spectator in marking epistemological boundaries, or disparities, within an ensemble of knowledge; or rather, the labels become convenient in responding to narrative.

In order better to understand the commitments of specific narrative theories to human activities, we must investigate such terms as author, narrator, voice, viewing, camera, character, narrate, and invisible witness. The next chapter will demonstrate how narrative theories seek to explain narration by breaking it into constituent parts. We shall see that for some theories, the parts will merely open new gaps and indeterminacies, open new kinds of "films" within the film. These kinds of gap will reaffirm a tension and conflict internal to texts (and to perceiving, and perceives). The resulting conflicts can never be totally resolved but at best can only be concealed anew by an arbitrary "end" to the story, and in the widest sense, by an arbitrary end to language and perception.

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NARRATION
4

LEVELS OF NARRATION

EIGHT LEVELS

Perception must occur within boundaries and limits: perception of what under which conditions? It is not enough to simply locate film comprehension under the general conditions imposed by the projection of a strip of celluloid containing photographic transparencies and recorded sound. More and finer distinctions about perceptual “contexts” will be required in order to understand how our understanding of narrative proceeds. The basic organization of events into a narrative pattern is directed by a narrative schema. However, as the focus of inquiry shifts from “what happens” to the “how and when” of our knowing what happens, a deeper narrational schema will be found setting the conditions for, and directing, the operation of a narrative schema. These conditions may change from moment to moment. Colin MacCabe’s “hierarchy of discourses,” Ben Brewster’s “hierarchies of relative knowledge,” and Alan Williams’s “four films” can all be interpreted as attempts to define suitable contexts, or levels, within which specific mental operations will be successful in organizing aural and visual data into a narrative pattern of events. Levels of a text are postulated in order to explain how data is systematically recast by the spectator from one perceptual context to another. What is remembered and what is forgotten by a spectator is systematic, not accidental. Generally the spectator engages the text in multiple ways, assuming a variety of roles for different contexts at different times. In order to delineate the various roles that specify how information may be acquired and shaped into a narrative pattern, we will need a new vocabulary. Susan Lanser, drawing on the work of many theorists, has proposed a hierarchy of roles, or levels, which describe typical ways that a reader participates in a literary text. An actual text may be described according to how it shifts among these levels to build a hierarchy (or other configuration) of relative knowledge. In figure 19, I have expanded Lanser’s basic levels from six to eight and represented them as positions on a continuum rather than as sharply exclusive alternatives. I will now examine these levels in relation to film comprehension.

A text is composed of a hierarchical series of levels of narration, each defining an epistemological context within which to describe data. A particular text may define any number of levels to any degree of precision along a continuum from the internal dynamics of a character to a representation of the historical conditions governing the manufacture of the artifact itself. I will define a “text” as a certain collection of descriptions of an artifact where the artifact must be one that materializes a symbol system, and the descriptions that are offered of it must be sanctioned by a society. An “artifact” is more than the material of an artifact and more than the symbols materialized; a text is always subject to change according to a social consensus about the nature of the symbols that have been materialized.

The concept of a “historical author” of a text has a similar complexity: part psychological, part social. As for the psychological, Roland Barthes observes, “The one who speaks (in the narrative) is not the one who writes (in real life) and the one who writes is not the one who is.” An author, however, exists not only as a biographical person, or persons, who has created a text, but also as a cultural legend created by texts (i.e., under...
one or more descriptions). Being an author is performing for a social group. For example, Alfred Hitchcock as an individual is defined by the events of his life, traits of his personality, the labor he expended in making films, his view of himself, and the shaping influences of his time. He is one of the text's first critics. With respect to the "historical audience," however, he is also a character, or legend of the time. The audience knows Hitchcock on the basis of popular beliefs about him and by virtue of sharing with him certain kinds of knowledge about society. Hitchcock's public persona (which he alertly helped to author) is composed of his famous profile, a bit of theme music, television monologues, interviews, publicity, cameo appearances in his films, and so on. As a result his name has become a brand name guaranteeing a certain kind of experience: "Alfred Hitchcock's" Vertigo promises suspense, obsession, deceit, ambivalence, mordant wit, violence, and sexual malaise. We bring this "Hitchcock" with us to the theater because we are members of his community and use his name in describing certain artifacts. In this sense, "Hitchcock" is not only the one "who writes" for an audience, but also the one "who is written by" his audience.

A text emerges, then, from a historical situation that presupposes a social consensus about artifacts and biographical authors. All texts have such a nonfictional dimension: films are made with materials and labor, marketed, and have measurable social and psychological effects; costs are incurred. However, films may also exist as interpreted fictionally, and may even explicitly address the problem of interpreting a world fictionally. Thus there must exist a transitional level that mediates between nonfiction and fiction. In order to avoid contradiction and paradox, then, statements about an embedded fiction cannot be made from within the fiction itself, but rather must emerge from a context more abstract than that to which they refer. Hence an extra-fictional level in the text is required in order to talk about objects as fictional on a "lower" level of the text. Fiction arises out of nonfiction. The truth or falsity of a fictional reference is, of course, another matter. The reason that nonfictional descriptions are "prior" to fictional descriptions in this way is that fictional descriptions do not yet refer, or refer only partially, and one must begin interpreting somewhere; that is, one must begin with at least a reference to the possibility of referring fictionally. (Chapter 7 will consider in more detail the distinction between nonfiction and fiction.)

Consider the extra-fictional narrator in the precredit sequence of The Wrong Man (1956). A distant figure is strongly backlit, casting a gigantic shadow into the foreground of what appears to be a vast empty stage. The person's features cannot be distinguished. We hear:

"Alfred Hitchcock speaking. In the past, I have given you many kinds of suspense pictures. But this time I would like you to see a different one. The difference lies in the fact that this is a true story, every word of it. And yet, it contains elements that are stranger than all the fiction that has gone into many of the thrillers that I've made before."

The third sentence with its ambiguous use of "different one" (a new kind of suspense picture, or a new kind of picture?) together with the last sentence manage to intimate that truth is only another kind of "suspense" and will be fully as entertaining as the fiction films the audience has come to expect from Hitchcock's work. And indeed the explicit pronouncements about a simple truth do not prevent what follows from incorporating both fictional and narrative patterns. But this is not to say that the precredit speech is merely a deception; rather, its function is to begin to put into place an ordered sequence of perspectives within which to interpret the "truth" of the story. After all, the audience is well aware that "every word" of the story cannot be equally true as claimed; that is, true to the same degree and in the same way. The film has clearly been made after the fact, with actors and dialogue; it includes picture and music as well as word; events are witnessed without the witness being seen, and so forth. The film depends on us accepting these sorts of stipulations; it does not attempt to hide them, but merely to organize them. Because of the necessity of imposing an organization on our interpretive activities, "Hitchcock"—although existing in the film considered as a text—must stand "outside" the film considered as a fiction in talking about what is to follow; that is, Hitchcock's voice and image here are extra-fictional. Thus at least two films are working on us at this moment: a historical artifact of a man who talked on a soundstage, and a (purported) nonfictional discourse in which a man is talking about what will later be talked about and shown. These "two films" are the first two levels of figure 19: the historical and the extra-fictional.

The extra-fictional voice need not be as "personalized" and explicit as the dim figure who speaks in the precredit sequence of The Wrong Man. Either the actual speaker may become more prominent and intrusive, and be given psychological traits, or else he or she may become less identifiable, even (as we will shortly discover) invisible and inaudible. Both the location and time of the speaking act may also be made relatively explicit or implicit. What defines the extra-fictional is its relationship to the other levels: how we imagine visual and/or aural data to be functioning with respect to other conceivable groupings of visual and/or aural data. Thus within each of the levels of narration displayed in figure 19, there exist many fine gradations which may be
exploited by a given text in presenting a variety of contexts for its information.

It is essential to realize that a narration may be implicit in a text. I will risk a visual analogy in order to clarify the important concept of implicitness. In figure 20, a series of straight lines have been used to create an implicit, or virtual circle. The circumference of the circle is nonphysically existent. The circle emerges as a pattern of what has been omitted, or is missing, in the actual configuration of lines. One can imagine, of course, a more complex series of lines, perhaps crossing, that would render the implicit circle less certain or open to other interpretations. My claim is that narration may be implicit in a similar way. In order to recognize such a narration, one will need to be sensitive to the explicit narrations, especially to what has been omitted, or is missing, in the direct regulation of knowledge in a text. I would like to analyze a particular implicit narration by focusing on one that is quite powerful and the topic of much general study by narrative theorists - an implicit extra-fictional narration that theorists often personify as “the implied author.” The opening scene of The Wrong Man ends by following a character, Manny Balestrero (Henry Fonda), as he leaves a nightclub. We first see two policemen who happen to be walking by the front of the club (fig. 21; shot 1). Then each of the next two shots, because of a meticulous blocking of the action combined with exact compositions and cutting, make it appear visually that Manny (entering frame left through a door) is overtaken by the police and is walking with a policeman on each side (figs 22-4; shots 2A, 2B, 3). We know that this is only a visual illusion - that is, an effect produced by the timing and unique angles of view - for we can also clearly see that both of the policemen walk past Manny on his left and not on both sides of him. Nevertheless, in both shots it does appear as though Manny is wedged between the policemen and has been trapped. There is an unmistakable sense in which Manny, who has committed no crime, has been seized by the police as their man. We neither see nor hear any obvious narrator describe the significance of this event. We have, however, literally seen how circumstances may create a false impression; how Manny may become a wrong man. Fortunately, the mistaken impression is seemingly ours alone and has caused no harm. This “perception of a misperception” (if we have even noticed it!) exists only under a particular description of the text; that is, only within a certain inscribed context can we recognize the event in this way. (We must, for example, be especially sensitive to the space and time created on the screen by cinematic devices and to relationships with the space and time of the story world.) I will refer to this particular context as an implicit extra-fictional narration, or as the “voice” of an “implied author.” A very powerful narration is at work here; one which virtually defines the limits of what can be seen and heard by us in the film but without defining the conditions of its own existence; one, moreover, which is able to predict events and anticipate the moral of the story prior to the epilogue. Indeed variations on this composition which places Manny between two threatening figures will appear throughout the film. Furthermore, the implied authorial narration reminds us about the police in the next scene when we hear distant sirens while Manny reads a newspaper. The sirens mean nothing to Manny and there is no indication that he notices them at all. The spectator, however, is already being positioned to know more than Manny and to fear for him. Just as “Manny” himself may be interpreted from an abstract, non-character context, so the explicit “Hitchcock” that we saw and heard in the precredit sequence may be reinterpreted as merely a kind of character playing a role in a still more abstract film, framed by yet another “Hitchcock” who is not seen and heard, namely, the implied author of The Wrong Man. The implied author, in turn, is framed by - but not reducible to - the historical “Hitchcock” who, unlike the other two Hitchcocks (one implied by an extra-fictional context, and one explicit in an extra-fictional role), expressed general dis­ taste for the film, except for its aesthetic juxtaposition of fear and irony.
Figure 21 The Wrong Man (shot 1)

Figure 22 The Wrong Man (shot 2A)

Figure 23 The Wrong Man (shot 2B)

Figure 24 The Wrong Man (shot 3)
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AN IMPLIED AUTHOR AND A CHAMELEON TEXT

We have already encountered the subtle but powerful effects of an implied author in analyzing films other than The Wrong Man. In chapter 2 we found an implicit (extra-fictional) pattern of impossible causation in The Lady from Shanghai, virtual space in Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler, and an integration of graphic and story patterns in The 39 Steps. I will not attempt to adjudicate among the various definitions and types of "implied author" that have been proposed by theorists. It will be useful, however, to examine one formulation of the concept. My purpose will be to illustrate that concepts in narrative theories are closely aligned with more general theories directed at the ontology and epistemology of film.

Christian Metz describes the implied author in the following way:

The impression that someone is speaking [in a narrative] is bound not to the empirical presence of a definite, known, or knowable speaker but to the listener’s spontaneous perception of the linguistic nature of the object . . . . The spectator [of a narrative film] perceives images which have obviously been selected (they could have been other images) and arranged (their order could have been different). In a sense, he is leafing through an album of predetermined pictures, and it is not he who is turning the pages but some “master of ceremonies,” some “grand image-maker” who (before being recognized as the author, if it is an auteur film, or, if not, in the absence of an author) is first and foremost the film itself as a linguistic object . . . or more precisely a sort of “potential linguistic focus” situated somewhere behind the film, and representing the basis that makes the film possible.

Metz is striving to isolate an aspect of our narrative comprehension which is not reducible to what a biographical author says he or she intended to accomplish with a film. For Metz, the implied author is merely an anthropomorphic and shorthand way of designating a rather diffuse but fundamental set of operations which we sense as underlying what we do in making sense and in making patterns. Metz believes that these operations are amenable to linguistic analyses in accordance with his view of the nature of film as a kind of linguistic (and social) object. He mentions two fundamental operations – selection and arrangement – though others may be imagined, such as duration (the amount of time that something consumes), exclusion, and emphasis. These are subtle effects because if they were made explicit in the film, one would simply be forced to analyze another process of implicit selection and arrangement to account for the creation of a context in which something else could be made explicit. No matter how “objective” and final the

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narration seems, it could be the result of any one of many implicit narrations that might be imagined one level higher. Hence there will always be a measure of uncertainty about what is being depicted. Although a film may explicitly dramatize what goes on “behind” the scenes – such as the setting up of the lights and camera – such a drama itself is really only another scene, and the dramatizing or construction of that scene is not shown explicitly. Clearly, with the concept of implied authorial narration one is at the very boundary of the text, at the very limit of what might still be justified as being in the text as opposed to being in a world, or in an intertext, which frames the text.

The point I wish to make is that for Metz, one must analyze the implicit selection and arrangement of film narration by using linguistic concepts, such as paradigm and syntagm, because linguistics is conceived as the master epistemological framework for describing human knowledge. One may reject some or all of Metz’s linguistic assumptions and still hold on to the concept of an implied author, but only by creating a new set of terms and concepts which themselves imply a view of the fundamental nature of film and how it may be known.

I wish to return to the two shots in The Wrong Man which seem to show Manny walking between two policemen (figs 21-4). Although I have described these shots as being part of an implied authorial narration, they may be described in a very different way as follows: “Manny emerges from the nightclub, saying ‘Goodnight John’ to the doorman, and walks toward the subway while two policemen stroll by the front of the club and cars are heard passing in the street.” One could imagine this sort of description being offered by a casual bystander who happened to be near the club when Manny emerged. It is just as accurate as the first description, but its context, or epistemological boundary, is different: it is justified by the diegesis, by the world of the characters as we understand that world by apparently being in it as a bystander might be in it. That is to say, the accuracy of this new description is being judged against a new epistemological background. I will refer jointly to the new description and its background as an implicit diegetic narration, or implied “diegetic narrator.” (I will discuss nondiegetic narration later.) How can a narrator be both “implied” and “diegetic”; that is, be invisible and yet within the story world? This situation is the pictorial equivalent of a subjunctive conditional: “If a bystander had been present, he or she would have seen . . . .” From the club . . . and would have heard . . . .” Though a bystander was not present, we presume such a person could have been (and might have been dramatized by the text), and if so, would have been subject to the same physical laws and conditions which govern Manny. There is nothing illegitimate about posing a hypothesis or making a stipulation about the “facts” so long as the frame of reference for
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arranging the data (here, the diegesis) is not confused with the data itself; this is why it is important to keep in mind the assumptions under which data is being interpreted — assumptions which I have referred to as different ‘levels’ of the narration. The same two shots of Manny and the policemen can be differently described, and function differently in our comprehension, because in the case of implied authorial narration our frame of reference is the entire (nonfictional) text while in the case of implied diegetic narration our frame of reference is the (fictional) story world.

The differing descriptions of these two shots of The Wrong Man ascribed to an implied author and to an implied diegetic narrator illustrate a crucial principle of narration:

In general, several levels of narration will be operating simultaneously with varying degrees of explicitness and compatibility; that is, the spectator may describe the text in several different ways, all of which may be accurate, each within a particular context and for a particular purpose.

Thus one may say that the opening of The Wrong Man is a product of the implied author, but in doing so, one is merely offering a specific kind of generalization which has specific limits. The implied author is at work, but not exclusively, for at a finer grain (another segmentation or analytical breakdown) other boundaries on our knowledge are temporarily in effect. In analyzing narration, one must ask what degree of precision will be necessary in order to answer a given question about a spectator’s state of knowledge.

The simultaneity of narrations can also explain how the music heard by the spectator in the first scene of The Wrong Man may be interpreted in three very different ways without necessarily producing confusion or contradiction. The scene opens with an exterior shot of the nightclub and then moves inside. However the music heard from outside the club is just as loud as what we hear inside. The lack of ‘sound perspective’ strongly suggests that the music is initially extra-fictional. The music accompanies the credit sequence whose titles are superimposed over the interior of the nightclub. The credits are extra-fictional: ‘Warner Bros. Pictures Presents . . . Henry Fonda . . . Vera Miles . . . in Alfred Hitchcock’s . . . THE WRONG MAN . . . ’. By being associated with the credits, the music becomes extra-fictional.

While the credits are being shown, however, we see a series of dissolves within the nightclub which indicate that we are also seeing excerpts from an entire evening of dancing at the club. That is, the music that we hear is also being presented as typical of an evening of dancing at the club. Such music is nondiegetic because it can only be heard by us; patrons of the club are hearing specific music at specific times, not a sample of

the music that was played during the evening. By keeping the dissolves of the title superimpositions separate from the dissolves which condense story time within the club, two levels of narration are defined — the extra-fictional and the nondiegetic — allowing the music to shift from one to the other, or be in both places at once. However, as the evening wears on and the density of people in the club decreases, the orchestration of the music decreases and a band in the background becomes visible. When the credits finish we continue to hear the ‘same’ musical number but now it is revealed that it is diegetic music being played by the band, one of whose members is Manny. When the band stops playing, the music ceases. Evidently the single musical number which we have heard could not have been played for an entire evening; instead, approximately 1½ minutes of screen music is used to present the (extra-fictional) credits, represent typical (nondiegetic) music for an evening at the club, and be the actual, final (diegetic) song played by the band that evening. The ‘same’ music functions very differently depending upon the context, precisely because several distinct contexts are made to fit. Thus the music may sound the ‘same’ to us throughout and yet be heard in three different ways. Our (bottom-up) perception of the musical sounds emanating from the screen has been smoothly integrated with our (top-down) hypotheses about the relationships of music to a story world.

The integration of screen data with events from a particular story through the use of music is also manifested through our natural use of the preposition “in” when describing these musical events. The music is “in” the club in many ways. It accompanies the credits which are seen “in” the club, but equally we may imagine that it is typical music for the club, typical music for a jazz band of 1953, typical music for this band, music heard by a typical patron or someone in particular, as well as the last song played that night of January 14. The text is open and receptive to a number of interpretations; yet, at the same time, the verbal description we apply is seemingly quite definite about what it means to be “in” the club at the beginning of the film. The “camera,” too, appears to be both in the club with the patrons and yet not quite in the club when showing the title credits. In fact, we are forced to conclude that the preposition “in” is flexible and adaptable and, like “implicit” narration, may be found to have many uses. This illustrates how a number of interpretations by different spectators may be accommodated by this preposition without suggesting that there is necessarily more than one interpretation or that a spectator must search for another one. I believe that this use of the music, and this use of the preposition describing the music, is in miniature form what is meant by the “excessive obviousness” of classical film narrative: the text sustains a reading which is generally compatible with whatever we first believe and does
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not usually demand a unique or counterintuitive explication. Normally, the classical narrative does not give the appearance of ambiguity, nor does it encourage multiple interpretations, but rather, like the chameleon, it is adaptable, resilient and accommodating. It will try to be what the spectator believes it to be.

There are limits, of course, to the amount of textual material that can be absorbed into a chameleon effect. For example, the relationships among the resolution, epilogue, and the other elements of a narrative schema need not be peaceful, and may be dramatized to a greater or lesser degree. David Bordwell observes that in The Wrong Man an uncaused resolution (based on a prayer and a "miracle") is joined with two epilogues (the first unhappy but caused; the second happy but uncaused). According to Bordwell, these aberrations leave the spectator "not only disappointed but dissatisfied." This is true, however, only within the context of the large-scale structure of the film, for the ending of the film need not greatly affect our understanding of particular episodes and causal sequences, or the implications of those sequences. Moreover, the beginning of the film, which stages the presence of Hitchcock and his declarations about a factual film, predicts that there will be friction among the levels of narration. Endings are not supposed to be "neat" in the genre of the documentary. Furthermore, the implied authorial narration, which in the opening scene dramatized the perception of a misperception (Manny apparently being "arrested" by two policemen), prepares the spectator for unsettling, and uncaused, effects. Two apparently arbitrary camera views were allowed to affect our beliefs about Manny's world, even though at that time our beliefs were unwarranted. The implication was that a misperception could arise in quite an arbitrary and unpredictable way. Thus a kind of fatalism mixed with punishment might be at work in the text and detected in Hitchcock's other films. (For example, in typical fashion the psychological trauma is ultimately focused on a woman - in this case Manny's wife.) By "remembering" the documentary genre and Hitchcock's other films, we open a gap in the text of The Wrong Man: descriptions of the power that is apparently applied in the telling (through authorial narration) now conflict with descriptions that make the story cohere in the fashion of a narrative schema. That is, a fatalistic attitude appears in spite of (or perhaps, because of) opposition from other aspects of the story-telling that strive for "consistency" among the narrations. Here, "consistency" is earned through the temporal presuppositions of a narrative schema that encapsulates our belief that certain kinds of causality rule our world, and may be found in the basic unity of initiating event, resolution, and epilogue. The ending of Hitchcock's film can be of little comfort when our happiness is shown to be as arbitrarily obtained as our unhappiness.

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I want to mention a final type of narration that appears in the opening of The Wrong Man and that bears upon our judgments of consistency and inconsistency in the film. While we listen to the music "in" the club, but before the credits begin, a title appears on the screen that represents a new sort of narration:

The early morning hours of January the fourteenth, nineteen hundred and fifty-three, a day in the life of Christopher Emanuel Balestrero that he will never forget . . .

In terms of a narrative schema, this title combined with the picture we see functions to orient us with respect to the present state of affairs in the story world. The title is about the story world and hence derives from what I will call an unmarked nondiegetic narration, or implied "nondiegetic narrator." The narrative could have oriented us by presenting the same information in another way; for example, by allowing us to overhear a conversation at one of the tables in the club. The information would be the same, but its method of presentation (as diegetic narration) would be different. A character's knowledge is limited in a way in which the words of the title are not and hence we could not ascribe the same authority and reliability to the words of a character as we can to the superimposed title. When the title assures us that something decisive will happen to Manny, we must pay serious attention to whatever may happen. In a sense, we might say that the narration is not "implied" at all because the title card itself is explicitly present, even though we do not know the precise identity of the person "speaking." Implicit and explicit are a matter of degree and judgment, but that does not mean they are vague or indistinct since one may be as precise in describing the narration as the occasion demands; the important task is to measure differences from one narration to the next.

One may choose to believe that this explanatory title ("a day . . . he will never forget") is actually a continuation of the same voice we heard earlier ("This is Alfred Hitchcock speaking"): that is, we may believe that the title speaks about the fiction from a nonfictional standpoint, not just about the story world from within the fiction. If so, one must at least concede that the "voice" is less-personalized when rendered in a written, third-person form, and that both a fade and a dissolve have intervened between the two "voices" making the place and time of the second utterance less definite: is "Hitchcock" still standing on the empty soundstage? Does he speak, write, or silently think these words of the explanatory title? (As we shall see in chapter 7, a lack of specificity is a mark of the fictional.) There is no answer to these questions in the film; more importantly, any answer we may give is uninformative beyond the fact that there are differences (i.e., if it is still "Hitchcock,"
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he has at least become more distant as the story world gains in prominence). Our uncertainty about the "voice" of the title is confined to a relatively narrow range and has no important effect on our global interpretation of the film. We may believe whatever we wish about the speaker of this title card so long as our beliefs take their place in a hierarchy with respect to the other narrations. Narration, too, may exhibit a chameleon effect. (However, as we shall see in chapters 6 and 7, a film may exploit uncertainties of narration and fuzzy boundaries to create startling and far-reaching effects.) A text is under no obligation to make use of a level of narration, much less make good use of it.

Establishing exact categories for the narrations is usually less important than recognizing pertinent relationships and gradations among the narrations. By continuing to experiment and to search for possible configurations for the various levels, a spectator becomes sensitive to the changing boundaries of sense data which the text wishes to impose. Ultimately it is the spectator's task to judge when there is enough difference to make a difference in the role he or she must play in making sense of the text.

FOCALIZATION

The first four levels in the hierarchy of narrations that we have discussed make use of narrators. The last four levels recognize that characters also provide us information about the story world, but in ways quite different from narrators. A character who acts, speaks, observes, or has thoughts is not strictly telling or presenting anything to us for the reason that spectators, or readers, are not characters in that world. Characters may "tell" the story to us in a broad sense, but only through "living in" their world and speaking to other characters. Indeed, one might almost say that these conditions, or restrictions, define what we mean by the concept of a "character."

There are, however, several different ways in which characters may "live in" their world. One way we learn about characters is through their actions and speech in much the same way that characters learn from each other. In this special context, our knowledge is limited to what is explicitly enacted by the characters, what they do and say. In this limited context, a character is essentially an agent who is defined by actions. For example, a plot synopsis of The Wrong Man - explaining who the story is about and what happens - is a way of thinking about character agency in this way: "Frightening account of what happens to a man and his wife when he is wrongly accused of being the man who has performed a series of hold-ups." In chapter 1, I argued that narrative may be conceived as "a series of episodes collected as a focal causal chain." In this definition the notion of a focus, "continuing center," or protagonist, is inextricably bound up with the very notion of cause and effect: character and action define, as well as limit, each other's logical development. The spectator has an intrinsic interest in characters as agents since comprehending a narrative event requires at least recognizing how agents interact with one another in a causal framework, rather than, for instance, interacting as storytellers or dreamers. Characters, of course, may become storytellers or dreamers by recounting events to someone. These events may even be dramatized visually for the spectator as in a character flashback or dream sequence.

In both these cases, however, the character has a new and different function in the text at another level, no longer as an actor who defines, and is defined by, a causal chain, but as a diegetic narrator (i.e., a narrator limited by the laws of the story world) who is now recounting a story within the story: he or she as an actor in a past event becomes the object of his or her narration in the present. Levels may multiply but there still exists a primary character-agent defined by actions and events. I will refer to this primary level of actions as a neutral, or nonfocalized, narration (or depiction) of character. Introducing the narratological concept of focalization is meant to remind us that a character's role in a narrative may change from being an actual, or potential, focus of a causal chain to being the source of our knowledge of a causal chain: the character may become either a (higher level) narrator or a (lower level) focalizer. How does a "focalizer" differ from a "narrator"?

Identifying a character as an agent within a causal scheme is already to implicitly raise the issue of that character's awareness of events in his or her world. An agent is a subject with a presumed, but as yet unspecified, set of personality traits, or subjectivity. A narrative text, however, is under no obligation to provide information about an agent's awareness beyond the tentative inferences we may draw from causal events. To the degree that specific information is provided, however, one may speak of focalization through (by) a character, either internally or externally. For Henry James, such a character was a "reflector." The term is apt since it replaces the notion of "communication" with the notion of "private thought" - a reflection on something - that nevertheless manages to sum up and clarify a surrounding situation and so also become a reflection of something. Focalization (reflection) involves a character neither speaking (narrating, reporting, communicating) nor acting (focusing, focused by), but rather actually experiencing something through seeing or hearing it. Focalization also extends to more complex experiencing of objects: thinking, remembering, interpreting, wondering, fearing, believing, desiring, understanding, feeling guilt. Such verbs of consciousness are marked in language by the fact that an indirect object is not appropriate: we can say "Manny sees the police," but not "Manny sees the police to John." By contrast, verbs of
which police; nevertheless this inference may could not know the character's experience. For example, if John sees that Manny looks toward the police, he may infer that Manny sees the police; nevertheless this inference may be false or incomplete (Manny looks but sees something else; or he sees the police but does not take special notice of them; or sees them and thinks about mowing his lawn, etc.). In general, inferences that John might make about Manny's thoughts are only speculative.

The auditory equivalent of the distinction between "looking" and "seeing" is "listening" and "hearing." The first term of each of these pairs has an intersubjective quality to it (i.e., a person's behavior may suggest when he or she is looking or listening), and hence is appropriate in a communicative context (where such a fact could be reported by a narrator), or for nonfocalized description, while the second term of each pair is more closely aligned to a private (internally or externally focalized) experience or thought which is not open to inspection in the same way (and hence can be reported only by a focalizer). In the case of complex experiences of character consciousness, a diegetic observer, or narrator, would be wholly inadequate to the task. For example, if Manny's memories were to motivate a flashback sequence in the film, a diegetic observer would see only that Manny was staring vacantly into space. The spectator of the film, however, might well see and hear Manny's conscious memories (initiated perhaps by a dissolve), but only by identifying them uniquely as Manny's, that is, inaccessible to a diegetic observer - experienced by Manny but not narrated literally by him to us or to a bystander. In internal focalization, story world and screen are meant to collapse into each other, forming a perfect identity in the name of a character: "Here is exactly what Manny sees: these shapes and colors are in his head." or "Here are his thoughts." The spectator's task is to identify the story world with the mental understanding of a specific character. (Hence in figure 19 the spectator's role in internal focalization is one of "identification.""") Of course, in the broadest sense Manny and his memories are created for us by higher-level narrations (e.g., the extra-fictional narrator); but even so, one cannot simply equate focalization with narration since incomplete or inaccurate character perception is attributed first to the character, not to a narrator. Focalization displays character perception as a consequence of the events of the character's world even if other (nondiegetic) worlds are also affected. That is, focalization represents the fact of character perception, even if we may discover later that the character misperceived and even if our misperception about the character turns out to have other consequences in our ongoing experience of the story. Although the levels of narration are arranged as a series of dependencies, like the folds of an accordion, that does not mean that each level, within its prescribed context, does not have a unique function to perform in representing a complex epistemological field.

Private experiences of a character may be rendered externally or internally. External focalization represents a measure of character awareness but from outside the character. It is semi-subjective in the manner of an eyeline match: we see what Manny looks at, when he looks, but not from his unique spatial position; we must infer that we have seen what he has seen and how he has seen it. An eyeline match, however, is only one device which acts to externally focalize narrative through character. Three of the first five shots following the credit sequence of The Wrong Man as well as the next twenty-seven shots isolate Manny and his activities through a variety of techniques. For example, the camera moves to follow Manny's movements and also to anticipate his movements. The camera waits on a subway platform as a train stops and Manny gets off; later the image is black as the camera waits in a darkened bedroom for him to arrive and turn on the lights. The camera also follows his attention as he looks at four separate pages of a newspaper with varying expressions on his face. We see each of these pages and are invited to imagine Manny's thoughts: what significance do these specific pages have for him and what are the connections among them? (The connections will become clearer as the narrative progresses.) The scene ends on a close-up of him. The first thirty-two shots of the film clearly establish Manny as a center of attention, and we learn much about him even though he has said nothing about himself and there is virtually no dialogue ("Hi ya Manny. How's the family?"). Overall the narrative of these shots has been externally focalized through Manny."

Internal focalization is more fully private and subjective than external focalization. No character can witness these experiences in another character. Internal focalization ranges from simple perception (e.g., the point-of-view shot), to impressions (e.g., the out-of-focus point-of-view shot depicting a character who is drunk, dizzy, or drugged), to "deeper thoughts" (e.g., dreams, hallucinations, and memories). One of many examples of internal focalization in The Wrong Man occurs when Manny is placed alone in a prison cell. We see twenty-one shots of Manny looking at objects and walking nervously about the cell (external focalization). These shots are interrupted by another scene so we do not know exactly how long Manny's intense feelings build up within him; or rather, we are invited to imagine whatever amount of time we believe...
The people he sees within his dream are shown at the age they were his dream as he is observing past events. In confronting him, she has would become fifty-eight years later. In fact, in an earlier dream! old could not, of course, have had a conversation with the person Borg

various people he meets during the fateful automobile trip; that is, another Borg is now acting, and being acted upon, in the diegesis as

Focalization through a character depends upon other, higher levels of narration that, for example, define and ground the character who is to have an experience. These other narrations are always superimposed in a film; occasionally several may be relatively explicit, and may even be in conflict with one another. This situation may produce unusual representations of character subjectivity. For example, in Ingmar Bergman’s _Wild Strawberries_ (1957) a character holds up a mirror to reflect the face of another character. This shot, however, is actually the result of at least six different levels of narration operating simultaneously, but not always in harmony. We understand this particular mirror shot in relation to a historical author, “Ingmar Bergman,” who is (1) presenting a story in which a character in the story, Isak Borg, becomes a diegetic narrator who is (2) recounting in voice-over a story he has written about an automobile trip he took one day. We hear Borg narrating the story about himself but we never see him speaking. Instead we see Borg (3) riding in the automobile and conversing with various people he meets during the fateful automobile trip: that is, another Borg is now acting, and being acted upon, in the diegesis as simply a (nonfocalized and externally focalized) character. While riding in the car, however, we also see him fall asleep and hear the “previous” Borg explain in voice-over: “I dozed off, but was haunted by vivid and humiliating dreams.” The sleeping Borg (4) imagines seeing himself at his present age of 78 in a new locale. This “new” 78-year-old Borg then (5) witnesses various events of his boyhood (many of which he could not actually have seen when he was a boy). We see him as a witness within his own dream and we also see the past events he watches/remembers/infers; that is, we see two degrees of internal focalization. The people he sees within his dream are shown at the age they were when Borg was a boy. One of these persons, a 20-year-old woman named Sara, however, suddenly confronts the 78-year-old Borg within his dream as he is observing past events. In confronting him, she has assumed a new role since the Sara that Borg remembers as a 20-year-old could not, of course, have had a conversation with the person Borg would become fifty-eight years later. In fact, in an earlier dream/memory he had tried to speak with her but had discovered that he was apparently invisible and inaudible. Nevertheless, in this particular
Narration in general is the overall regulation and distribution of knowledge which determines when and how a reader acquires knowledge from a text. It is composed of three related activities associated with three nominal agents: the narrator, actor, and focalizer. These agents are convenient fictions which serve to mark how the field of knowledge is being divided at a particular time. Some theorists would add a fourth overlapping circle to the left of “narrator” to create, in effect, two types of narrator: on the far left, a “pure showing” by an unobtrusive “presenter” which intersects with a circle which would be confined to “verbal recounting.” The new contrast would be between narrators who show (present) and those who tell (speak and write); or perhaps the contrast would be between narrators who use pictures and those who use words.

If a character in a film is watching a television show, all the music from the television will be diegetic with respect to that character even if some of the music is nondiegetic with respect to characters who exist only on the show. Therefore, in interpreting narration it will be crucial for the analyst to specify the arrangement of levels and the (top-down) course of reading that is in effect.

Although there is a firm distinction among narration, (nonsocalized) action, and (external and internal) focalization, it is often convenient in analyzing narrative to use the terms “narration” and “narrator” in a general sense to refer to all three types of agency in order to concentrate on the overall regulation and distribution of knowledge throughout a text that determines how and when a reader acquires knowledge. I will usually use “narration” and “narrator” in a broad way, relying upon context to indicate when they are to be understood in a narrow way (i.e., as opposed to both acting and focalizing).

Focalization is an attempt to represent “consciousness of.” In treating it as part of the above tripartite division of activities, I have defined focalization (in figs 19 and 25) in a way significantly different from other writers. For instance, Mieke Bal allows unidentified and undramatized narrators as well as characters to focalize events. However, allowing experiences to appear without a definition of an “experiencer” — that is, experiences not attributed to a particular individual but rendered in the “third person” — risks dissipating the distinction between narration and focalization. How are we to know the difference among narrators who remember, imagine, or directly experience a scene? And how would these situations differ from an invisible narrator who merely presented a scene by “setting the stage” and arranging the action for us to witness? Or who merely reported a scene without mentioning any of the experiences which led to the report? Moreover, what is to be gained by allowing impersonal, “personal” experiences in the text?

Of course, if a narrator is given a body and a personality, then he or she may focalize events, but only because he or she has thereby become a “character” of sorts. Seymour Chatman argues that a narrator cannot focalize at all because a narrator is outside the story, in a different time and place, and thus can only report, not see and hear events unfold.

The very act of reporting implies that the narrator already knows more than a reader, or knows it sooner, and hence is on a different level of the hierarchies of relative knowledge. (However, Chatman goes even further and concludes that focalization is not a distinct or viable category with which to analyze narration.)

I have also defined “nonfocalization” in a new way. Gérard Genette, for instance, treats it as a global aspect of narration related to the “omniscience” of a narrator. He argues that a narrator’s power to know more than any character or reader may be demonstrated by entering many characters’ minds resulting in a net zero focalization, or nonfocalization, for the text as a whole. Nonfocalization in Genette’s sense might better be called “multifocalization.” Even so, it is not a necessary component of omniscience nor is it useful in examining local effects of character action and awareness.

### Levels of Narration

Susan Lanser incorporates three additional concepts in her version of figure 19 which I have not used: status, contact, and stance. The reason is that Lanser interprets the levels of narration as a communication between a “sender” (on the left side of the illustration) and a “receiver of a message” (on the right). Her three concepts describe the sender’s relationships, respectively, to his or her “speech act,” to the receiver, and to the message. The goal of the entire system is “maximal authority” and “maximal reception.” I have avoided these three concepts in an attempt to remain neutral between a communication theory and various other theories which seek to explicate in quite different ways the goals and processes which drive narration. I do not wish to debate here the merits and demerits of a communication approach to an
analysis of the comprehension of narrative texts. I do believe, however, that communication theories have substantial limitations. The following are typical statements in support of a communication model:

Just as there is, within the narrative, a large exchange function (enacted by giver and recipient), similarly, in homological fashion, the narrative, viewed as object, is the basis of a communication: there is a giver of narrative and a recipient of narrative. In linguistic communication, I and you are presupposed by each other; similarly, a narrative cannot take place without a narrator and a listener (or reader).41

(Roland Barthes, 1966)

Every narrative . . . is a mélange of four basic components: speaker, speech event, agents, and narrated event. As such it is structurally equivalent to instances of daily discourse in which someone reports something.42

(Dudley Andrew, 1984)

A narrative is a communication; hence, it presupposes two parties, a sender and a receiver.43

(Seymour Chatman, 1978)

Barthes begins with the fact that characters communicate with each other and then decides that narrative must be the most general communication of all. Chatman begins with narrative as a communication and then discovers perceivers who must be in communication. Both arguments seem to reduce the processes, effects, and uses of narrative to a single purpose so that perceiving has a single goal; as Barthes suggests, “listening” becomes the same as “reading.” James Kinneavy flatly states that “all uses” of language depend upon an encoder, a signal, a decoder, and the reality to which the message refers. This four-part structure, he asserts, is so basic that it simply “speaks for itself.”44 Apparently, everything that solicits meaning is to be imagined as a speech, a hypothetical speech, or a message transmitted from somewhere.

Other theorists have been much more skeptical about communication models:

Writing is not the communication of a message which starts from the author and proceeds to the reader; it is specifically the voice of reading itself: in the text, only the reader speaks.45

(Roland Barthes, 1970)

[We have come to take for granted that we explain textual details by adducing narrators and explain narrators by adducing qualities of real people. . . . [However, much of] literature is interesting and compelling precisely because it does something other than illustrate the personality of a narrator. For the moment I want to suggest that this strategy of naturalization and anthropomorphism should be recognized not as an analytical perspective on fiction, but as part of the fiction-making process. That is to say, making narrators is not an analytical operation that lies outside the domain of fiction but very much a continuation of fiction-making; dealing with details by imagining a narrator; telling a story about a narrator and his/her response so as to make sense of them.46

(Jonathan Culler, 1984)

No trait we could assign to an implied author of a film could not more simply be ascribed to the narration itself: it sometimes suppresses information, it often restricts our knowledge, it generates curiosity, it creates a tone, and so on. To give every film a narrator or implied author is to indulge in an anthropomorphic fiction. . . . I suggest . . . that narration is better understood as the organization of a set of cues for the construction of a story. This presupposes a perceiver, but not any sender, of a message. This scheme allows for the possibility that the narrational process may sometimes mimic the communication situation more or less fully. A text’s narration may emit cues that suggest a narrator, or a “narratee,” or it may not . . . . [T]here is no point in positing communication as the fundamental process of all narration, only to grant that most films “efface” or “conceal” this process. Far better, I think, to give the narrational process the power to signal under certain circumstances that the spectator should construct a narrator. When this occurs, we must recall that this narrator is the product of specific organizational principles, historical factors, and viewers’ mental sets. Contrary to what the communication model implies, this sort of narrator does not create the narration; the narration, appealing to historical norms of viewing, creates the narrator. . . . [W]e need not build the narrator in on the ground floor of our theory. No purpose is served by assigning every film to a deus absconditis.47

(David Bordwell, 1985)

It is not merely in the contexts of literature and film that communication models seem inadequate; they have also been attacked on general linguistic and philosophical grounds.48 Nevertheless, escaping the “anthropomorphic fiction” embodied in the word “narrator” is not easy. Bordwell still speaks of narration in vaguely animate terms as an
ordinary language. Is almost certainly operating in other ways as well.

2 3

have a real function in our lives even if narration is not a personality

and related terms are well-established in critical practice as well as in

ordinary causality and in our presumed roles as actors able
to make order in the world. Personifying narration would seem to
have a real function in our lives even if narration is not a personality
made real nor a communication made public.

According to Wallace Martin, most theorists of narrative attempt to
find a position somewhere between accepting or rejecting the communi-
cation model. He suggests three intermediate positions, which I inter-
pret as follows:

1 Narrative texts contain special and private spaces for a reader's per-
sonal involvement with the story beyond what may be communi-
cated.

2 Narrative is a cooperative enterprise whereby both reader and writer
contribute [equally?] by virtue of being members of particular historical
communities that share cultural values and literary conventions.

Although the reader and writer share the responsibility for producing
sense, they may perform different functions.

3 Narrative is the product not of readers, writers, and conventions, but
of an act of reading. Readers and writers possess identical skills
at the level of an act of reading. Readers and writers possess identical skills
of comprehension. A writer is merely the first reader. The central
problem therefore is to describe consciousness and investigate the
various skills of comprehension: what conditions make a reading
possible?

It would seem that these intermediate positions might overlap with
one another and even be compatible with certain communication theo-
ries. This reminds us that there are many functions for perceivers to
perform in using and exchanging narrative, and many ways for percep-
tion to relate to purpose. If a text is sometimes a "communication," it
is almost certainly operating in other ways as well.

"organization" that has the power to "suppress," "restrict," "generate," "emit cues," "signal," "mimic," and "create." It may well be that
"narrator" is a metaphor, but if so, one that permeates our thinking
about the world, and is in need of explanation on that basis. "Narrator"
and related terms are well-established in critical practice as well as in
ordinary language. Are such metaphors accident of speaking, a mere
convenience, a delusion we should learn to live without, or something
more fundamental dealing with our embodiment in a world? How do
does these ways of speaking address our intuitive sense of the appropriate-
ness of speaking in this way? Perhaps these metaphors are evidence of
a displacement of the human ego onto the world, or else of an overriding
faith in ordinary causality and in our presumed roles as actors able
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have a real function in our lives even if narration is not a personality
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ries. This reminds us that there are many functions for perceivers to
perform in using and exchanging narrative, and many ways for percep-
tion to relate to purpose. If a text is sometimes a "communication," it
is almost certainly operating in other ways as well.
Some aspects of narrative may be endlessly combined in strings through addition and subtraction. The notion of levels brings with it the relationships of embedding and hierarchy, which, in turn, provide mechanisms for a fundamentally different kind of contribution to human cognition than laws of addition and subtraction, or the rules of branching networks. A higher level, acting like an exemplar or guiding procedure, may constrain, but does not determine, the organization of data rising from below, or arriving from other sources. Thus “levels” are a way of talking about flexibility, complexity, and efficiency in modeling a situation—how different processes interact and how data is discarded, compared, and integrated.

In this sense, a set of levels may be thought of as a “vertical” partitioning of data that operates simultaneously with a “horizontal” segmentation across a specified range of knowledge. Moreover, since a lower level depends upon the working assumptions of all of the levels above it, each step down the hierarchy increases the number of assumptions that must be made and narrows the range of knowledge available to the spectator. Thus the hierarchy of levels may be seen as a set of probabilities that predicts the likelihood of hypotheses. For example, unless there is evidence to the contrary, an image is more likely to be interpreted as “objective” (i.e., nonfocalized) than “subjective” (externally or internally focalized) because fewer assumptions are necessary.

A hierarchy of levels also helps to explain what Richard Gerrig calls “anomalous suspense” (a person may continue to feel suspense while reading a story even though he or she knows the plot). Since these responses may occur in reading either nonfiction (e.g., history or biography) or fiction, the explanation must lie partly in the dual nature of narrative: the declarative knowledge of narrative (given through a narrative schema) depends upon an awareness of the contingency of cause and effect chains—that is, depends upon a person’s ongoing assessment of the probabilities which govern the grouping of events—while the procedural knowledge of narrative (given through narration) is stratified into levels, allowing a person to respond to the contingency of cause and effect chains in multiple ways. Thus a reader’s participation in narrative is not limited to the binary choice of whether to know, or not to know, but may assume more complex nuances within a range of epistemological contexts each of which, in turn, defines a limited form of contingency.

One should not think that analyzing narration as a series of levels implies that the narrations must be consistent or assembled into a single hierarchy (see fig. 26). For example, Todorov asserts that narrations may interact in three fundamental ways through linking, alternating, or embedding and thus may be seen rhetorically as repetitive, progressive, antithetical, complementary, parallel, nested, and so forth. Presumably, levels may also be overlapping, deceptive.
NA RRATIVE COMPREHENSION AND FILM

Figure 26a & b Simple and complex configurations of narration

NA RRATIVE COMPREHENSION AND FILM

LEVELS OF NARRATION

Narrative point of view is the relationship between any pair of levels of narration, not necessarily adjacent. The relationship between a pair of levels may be analyzed in various ways. Even so, point of view is only a partial description of the movement of narration through a text. For example, although the choice of a particular point of view is frequently analyzed in terms of the information which is thereby suppressed, other effects – such as the overall management and delay of enigmas, the arrangement of action sequences, and soliciting the reader’s, or spectator’s, interest – are, more global in nature and are best analyzed when narration is considered as an interlocking system of many levels.

Narrative omniscience refers to any one of the higher levels of narration. The level may be relatively explicit (e.g., intrusive commentary) or implicit (e.g., implied authorial evaluation). The highest level of narration – that which frames all the other levels but which cannot itself disclose its own framing – is simply everything the reader, or spectator, comes to know about the structure of the text and provides a reference point from which to measure any other level. Omniscience does not mean that the reader finally knows all, or that there is an author/narrator who knows all, but merely refers to the reader’s toleration of a boundary or limit to what finally can be known in the text. This boundary, in a more or less arbitrary manner, usually attempts to dissipate the desire to know more. Just as a narrative schema attempts to shape causality on both large and small scales to achieve a closure effect, so narration typically seeks a measure of completeness, an “omniscience effect.” For example, to narrate the “end” of a story one must do more than merely stop: an appropriate ending normally requires a point of overview from which the previous knowledge that has been gained by the reader is shown to have been acquired through a comprehensive power to know. Of course, even the most explicit assertion that a power to know is comprehensive is still not an explicit assertion of its own power to know.

I conclude by offering a characterization of film narrative which draws upon topics discussed in this and previous chapters.

Film narrative is a way of understanding data under the illusion of occurrence; that is, it is a way of perceiving by a spectator which organizes data as if it were witnessed unfolding in a temporal, spatial, and causal frame. In understanding a film narrative, a spectator employs top-down and bottom-up cognitive processes to transform data on the screen into a diegesis – a world – that contains a particular story, or sequence of events.

“Story” data takes two forms: declarative knowledge (“what”
NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION AND FILM

happens) and procedural knowledge ("how" it is witnessed and known).

1 Declarative knowledge is generated by a narrative schema ("abstract," "orientation," "initiating event," etc.) which yields a series of episodes collected as a focused causal chain (as opposed to a "heap," "catalogue," "unfocused chain," etc.). An experience of time emerges as data is processed and associated, that is, as the spectator reads fragments on the screen (creating such story relationships as temporal continuity, ellipsis, overlap, etc.). Different experiences of time ("description," "duration," "causal implication," "order") are produced according to the complexity of juxtaposition allowed by the particular method (heap, catalogue, episode, etc.) being used to associate data. These temporal experiences related to the story may reinforce, oppose, or be variously integrated with screen time.

An experience of space, too, emerges as data is processed and associated, creating such story relationships as spatial chains, gaps, and reversals that in turn may reinforce, oppose, or be variously integrated with the two-dimensional space of the screen.

Focused causal chains are not just sequences of paired story events in time and space, but embody a desire for pairing events and the power to make pairs. Narrative causes ("remote," "inter­vening," "enabling," etc.) are thus principles of explanation, or criteria for grouping elements, which are derived from cultural knowledge as well as from physical laws: the human plans, goals, desires, and routines - realized in action sequences - which are encouraged, tolerated, or proscribed by a community.

2 Procedural knowledge is generated by a narration (or narrational schema) which yields a series of levels, or epistemological boundaries ("disparities"), associated with such nominal agents as narrators, actors, and focalizers. Acts of witnessing by these agents (similar to the spectator's acts of perceiving) function as explicit frames of reference for declarative knowledge. Several levels may operate simultaneously with varying degrees of compatibility and explicitness producing multiple descriptions of the data.

Procedural knowledge is limited to specific epistemological domains but the domains may be connected to one another. For instance, an event may appear to the spectator as if it were being directly witnessed ("scene"), or alternatively the event may appear in the second degree as merely referred to, or "mentioned," by a witness ("summary"). This is a simple illustration of the recursive nature of narration: a given level - describing how an object is being perceived - may itself be dramatized and

LEVELS OF NARRATION

become an object of perception, that is, become declarative and known through another (higher-level) procedure, one step more distant, which merely "mentions" the object. Hence a common structure for narration is hierarchical where one subject-object pair (describable in a temporal, spatial, and causal frame of reference) becomes the embedded object of another (more powerful) subject in a higher frame of reference. Levels may be linked, alternated, or embedded, and may assume a variety of rhetorical functions.

As a medium, film is a distinctive collection of techniques for representing time, space, and causality on the screen. Normally these techniques (e.g., sound and picture editing, camera movement, and mise-en-scene) should be understood not as conveying a "meaning" in themselves, but as "instructions" relating to procedures and rules used by a spectator in constructing a set of interrelationships. Such procedures are neither true nor false, but are measured only by their success or failure with respect to some goal.

By contrast, the declarative knowledge being produced by a spectator is true or false about the story world and may also be converted into propositions which the spectator believes to be true or false about his or her own, ordinary world. The operation of this latter type of reference, and its relationship to story and screen, is governed by a theory of fiction (see chapter 7).

The concepts in these general definitions must be supplemented, interpreted, and refashioned in accordance with the aims of particular narrative theories. Take, for example, my claim that narrative is a way of understanding data under the "illusion of occurrence." One way to interpret "illusion of occurrence" would be to seize upon the word "illusion" and argue that the perceptual illusions presented on the screen (e.g., of three-dimensional depth and motion) are the basis for cognitive delusions in which a spectator mistakes narrative patterns for the real world, or else imagines himself or herself within the story world. In this interpretation, narrative would be seen as attempting to psychologically baffle or transport the perceiver.

Another way of interpreting "illusion of occurrence" would be to emphasize the word "occurrence," embracing Arthur Danto's formulation of narrative as

an account in which the general knowledge of what kind of thing must have happened [under a known general law] is replaced by the specific knowledge of what specific thing, of the required kind, in fact occurred.
Narrative in Danto's view is the end result of substituting concrete instances into laws covering causal interactions. Danto's formulation explains why one cannot argue with the logic of a fictional narrative by instances into laws covering causal interactions. One can disagree with the general law which seems to be at work, or with its application, but not with "what happened," for that is a category mistake. Danto's concern—narratives constructed by historians—is thus doubly constrained: specific events occurring in the real world must be collected and then subsumed under one or more master narratives of greater generality.

Not all theories make the kinds of distinction I have used above in my general definition of narrative. Nevertheless, I believe that my distinctions will be useful in evaluating how a concept is functioning within a particular theory. I also believe that many basic concepts (e.g., realism, time, editing, the camera, space, causality, voice, text) should be broken up into components and redefined according to their top-down and bottom-up aspects as well as their declarative and procedural aspects. The result will be a new complexity for some familiar concepts, but a better fit with the powers of narrative.

FIVE TYPES OF NARRATIVE THEORY

Narrative is enormously complicated even when we set aside its exchange value as a manufactured object in a community and concentrate on its use value as a psychological object for a perceiver. Many theories of narrative may be constructed by beginning at different points, highlighting different aspects of the phenomenon, and ignoring others. Roughly speaking, I believe that one can mark out five recent types of narrative theory using the above general definition of narrative as a frame of reference. The five types of theory differ in the relative weight they assign to various aspects of narrative and especially in how they draw the line between declarative and procedural knowledge and the importance they assign to sensory knowledge. Without denying the sophistication and subtlety of individual theories, I will refer to the types broadly as being distinguished by an emphasis on plot, style, communication, reception, or the human drives.

One type of theory concentrates on the developmental logic of that "series of events" which is collected into a focused causal chain. This aspect of narrative organization may be termed the "plot." Vladimir Propp broke it down into a set of minimal actions each of which was further classified as a particular "function," conceived as "an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action." Propp insisted that the study of what is done in a narrative should precede "questions of who does it and how it is done." An important result of research based on this type of narrative theory emphasizing plot was that different actions in diverse stories could be shown to perform similarly, that is, to have the same "function" in producing the coherence of the events. For example, Propp argues that identical functions underlie each of the following events producing a powerful similarity among them in spite of the fact that they come from different stories.

1. A tsar gives an eagle to a hero. The eagle carries the hero away to another kingdom.
2. An old man gives Sucenko a horse. The horse carries Sucenko away to another kingdom.
3. A sorcerer gives Ivan a little boat. The boat takes Ivan to another kingdom.
4. A princess gives Ivan a ring. Young men appearing from out of the ring carry Ivan away into another kingdom.

In a classic study, Propp found that in a hundred Russian folktales, there were only thirty-one functions and that while some of them could be omitted in particular stories, they almost always occurred in the same order in all the stories. The idea of a fixed set of functions in an unvarying order helps to explain some of the underlying similarities that may be perceived among certain groups of stories. In this way, "plot" becomes a theoretical and abstract concept capable of explaining a range of data, including the data of stories not yet invented. Plot theories of narrative, though, have little to say about procedural knowledge and narration. Only a few of Propp's functions touch on the issue of the regulation and distribution of knowledge in a text; hence, his method will be inadequate for analyzing plots that depend on complex enigmas, psychological attitudes, or subtle shifts in perception and awareness. At best, plot theories are confined to the aspect of narrative that I have called nonfocalized narration.

A second type of theory concentrates on style, on how the devices and techniques which are specific or intrinsic, to a given medium operate to convert a "plot" into a "story." Style in film is conceived as a relatively autonomous system comprised of a set of uniquely cinematic techniques. However, defining the differences between plot and story, and the interactions between them that betray style at work, is a most delicate task. According to David Bordwell's definition, plot is at one remove from what is visibly and audibly present in the film before us; it includes certain inferences about narrative events as well as certain nondiegetic material bearing upon those events. Style is at a further remove from plot; it is a mental reconstruction of some of the events.
Aristotelian narrative with a beginning in phenomenal form, a middle
in plot, and an end in story, one may glimpse the true importance
of "plot" as that "middle term" which separates style from story – preserv­
ing the integrity of each – while explaining the transformation of first
into last.7
A second crucial problem for a narrative theory emphasizing style is
to draw a firm distinction between the aesthetic and the nonaesthetic
(the "practical") so that the effects of "style" – the particular use of
materials and techniques that are deemed unique to a given art medium
– may be better isolated. Kristin Thompson, building upon the work of
the Russian formalists, asserts the importance of "art" as follows:
The nature of practical perception means that our faculties become
dulled by the repetitive and habitual activities inherent in much of
daily life. Thus art, by renewing our perceptions and thoughts,
may be said to act as a sort of mental exercise, parallel to the way
sports is an exercise for the body.73
Thompson approves Victor Shklovsky's pronouncement that the "pur­
posite of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived,
and not as they are known."
Art is a ceaseless and never-ending struggle to "defamiliarize" the familiar.77 Thus it may be that Russian
formalism, as one stylistic theory of narrative, has no need for a theory
of interpretation separate from a theory of the sensation of things as
they are perceived. The emphasis on sensation here recalls Bertrand
Russell's "knowledge by acquaintance" from which he derives all other
knowledge (e.g., "knowledge by description," or "knowing that").78

LEVELS OF NARRATION
Russell argues that "knowledge by acquaintance" includes an acquaint­
ance with all the sense-data of things and with oneself (memory, intro­
spection) as well as with certain universals (e.g., qualities like redness,
spatial and temporal relations, and logical universals like resemblance).
Russell also argues that the notion of knowledge by acquaintance is
fully compatible with ontologies based upon materialism, idealism, or
dualism; that is, a strong form of empiricism is not a necessary conse­
quence of this type of knowledge. It would seem that something akin
to knowledge by acquaintance is the epistemology underlying Russian
formalism and its varieties. Consistent with the idea that acquaintance is
logically prior to all other forms of knowledge and reasoning, Thompson,
along with David Bordwell, is able to forcefully argue that the goal of
narrative criticism is not to uncover meanings or connotations, or to
produce interpretations, but to analyze the actual patterns of the specific
and concrete devices in each art medium that engage our perception of
narrative.79 This bold attempt to rethink the role of interpretation, and
our interaction with the knowledge produced by narrative, will no
doubt attract considerable comment.

A third type of theory treats narrative itself as a general, transcendent
sort of medium, one a discourse or speech act – which is superimposed
upon specific media like film and literature. This approach concentrates
on how the techniques of "narration" (e.g., knowing how to do things
with words or pictures) function as a general means of "communi­
cation," much like ordinary language and rhetoric, in altering and
conveying a pre-existent story (setting, character, action, theme) for a
spectator or reader. Narration in this sense is not confined to, or derived
from, "aesthetic" discourse, but rather is powerfully connected to
human goals and the exchange of information. As discussed earlier,
works by Susan Lanser, Seymour Chatman, Mary Louise Pratt, and
Wolfgang Iser illustrate the approach.80
The most recent approaches to narrative comprehension continue to
focus on "narration," and "knowing how," but have shifted the attention
from authors and narrators toward the reader – toward the re­
ception of narrative and its immediacy for a reader.81 What are the
conditions which make possible a reading? How is sense made by the
reader? In what ways does a reader imagine and construct authors and
narrators? "Our easiest approach to a definition of any aspect of fic­tion," says E.M. Forster, "is always by considering the sort of demand
it makes on the reader." In the reception approach, discovering "mes­sages" from an author becomes less important than studying the psy­
chology of a reader and how he or she is engaged by a text. For example, suspense, mystery, and surprise might be defined according to a
reader's response to what he or she knows relative to what a particular character knows; or, a genre might be defined according to a
reader’s hesitation between two competing interpretations.\textsuperscript{56} Reception theories may also define a reader’s “horizon of expectation” in historical or sociological terms. These theories mark a return to the perceptual processes that were important to the Russian formalists even though they never developed a detailed theory of perception.\textsuperscript{81} Nevertheless, reception theories differ strikingly from style and communication theories across a range of basic philosophical beliefs concerning the nature of meaning.\textsuperscript{82}

A reception theory may make use of linguistic methods without thereby being committed to the assumptions underlying a communication theory. Recall that for Metz the spectator’s perception of film imagery was a “spontaneous perception” of a “potential linguistic focus.”\textsuperscript{80} This notion may be developed in several different ways by a reception theory. For example, language may be connected to a theory of “inner speech” activated in a film spectator (conceived as either preconscious speech or conscious pre-speech),\textsuperscript{84} or, it may be connected to a theory of the ordinary ways we create and exchange verbal reports about visual experiences. One need not posit an author, or delivery man, against which to measure the discovery of subvocal or vocal meanings. David Alan Black has created from these kinds of ideas virtually a new area of film study which he calls a theory of “synopsis.” He argues that particular films are understood as narratives, and function within political settings, according to certain highly condensed verbal summaries we make of them.

[R]ather than saying that a film shows us something . . . we have reason to want to say – however circuitous it may sound - that the viewing of the film has authorized us to say, to relate, that we have seen something; in fact, that we have seen something said, related.\textsuperscript{86}

Black’s novel theory and terms are meant to describe at the same moment both the reception of film narrative through what can be said of it, and the possibilities of its comprehension within languages already established and spoken in society.

A fifth type of narrative theory is related to reception theories, but asserts that the cognitive abilities of a reader used in producing various types of knowledge do not exhaust what is at work in responding to a narrative. There are forces “driving” cognition itself. Prominent among the class of so-called drive theories is psychoanalysis. It begins with the assumption that the instinctual drives are defined as mental representations of stimuli originating within the organism; that is, it is assumed that the human body creates representations not just of the external world but also of various internal, physiological states.\textsuperscript{85} Internal and external representations jostle and intermix, and are not always clearly

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distinguishable or conscious: what is seen in the external world, especially, may have an origin from within – may be dictated by desire or fear. The study of human memory thus becomes critical because in storing and interconnecting information, it may erase such traits as the “source” of the information when assigning it a new meaning within a mental structure. Since “consciousness” is a relatively high-level form of awareness with severe capacity limitations (similar to the restrictions on short-term memory), it cannot be a full measure of what we know or why we act.

Like other types of theory applied to narrative texts, psychoanalysis may seize upon one or another aspect of the narrative phenomenon. It may, for instance, interpret the “plot” as a set of symptoms or distorted symbols analogous to a patient’s dream; or, more fundamentally, it may challenge the very idea that a “story” underlies a plot. Jonathan Culler argues, for example, that studying the formal relations between story and plot neglects the insights offered through Freudian mechanisms, like deferred action. (Deferred action involves experiences and memories that are revised at a later date, acquiring new meanings to fit new circumstances or a later stage of psychic development.\textsuperscript{85}) The operation of such Freudian mechanisms makes it “difficult to establish a bedrock of events which then get reordered by narrative: for narrative ordering may be what constitutes key events as events.”\textsuperscript{86} Furthermore, unconscious desires and fantasies, may construct a “plot” by concealing and repressing other plots. These ideas hint that the “narration” we imagine in a narrative may be interpreted in terms of a “primary process” of human thought governed by the pleasure principle (and anxiety) and not just as an aspect of the preconscious-conscious system governed by the reality principle and rationality, i.e., a “secondary process” perfectly generating an underlying, coherent “story.”\textsuperscript{87} Narration in this deeper psychoanalytic sense engages a reader in bringing forth unconscious (infantile) wishes and conflicts as well as provoking the reader to react to what is brought forth, or merely threatened (or possibly threatened!) to be brought forth, in his or her interactions with the text. A psychoanalytic approach stresses that the spectator’s conscious understanding of a text is inseparable from his or her often unconscious memories and feelings. Under psychoanalysis the narrative object becomes fully as dense, complex, and contradictory as the human mind.

One of the difficulties a drive theory encounters in explaining narrative is that there is little agreement on which psychic mechanisms are pertinent, how they function, how they may be represented, and when they may appear in a text. Furthermore, unconscious drives, or “instincts,” are contradictory by definition because they spring from unresolved tensions which must be repressed – desires that have been
driven out of conscious experience (under the influence of the "reality principle"). Contradiction in its many guises is crucial to a psychoanalytic theory of narrative for it testifies to the actions of the unconscious. Thus the critic must search for the structure of narrative in unlikely places (or at several strata of human thought). The critic must boldly read against the grain, searching for the nonliteral, the counterintuitive, and for what is not said and not shown (i.e., repressed, forgotten, distorted, or disowned). The critic looks for what is incompatible in the text (i.e., for evidence of conflict and anxiety) and hence he or she must strive to disunify what appears to be complete. This remains true even if the human drives are rendered as explicit themes in the form of declarative knowledge (e.g., films about psychoanalysis like Freud, Spellbound, and Secrets of a Soul) because the drives will continue to operate as (contradictory) procedural principles for the generation of the textual material. Psychoanalysis thus acknowledges a limit to what can be made explicit and coherent in a text as well as a limit to the types of knowledge humans can acquire about the psyche. At the center of the psychoanalytic method is a search for what is invisible and implicit and what may never be known. Such material of the irrational provides few landmarks for the analyst. Nevertheless I believe that cognitive psychology, like other reception theories, needs a drive theory. I also believe that psychoanalysis needs a more complete theory of the secondary process. Whether cognitive psychology and psychoanalysis need each other, however, is still another question.

Our perception of events in a story occurs within a variety of epistemological boundaries set by the levels of a narration which we initially believe are "in" a text that is "out there," rather than also in our own perceptions and imaginings. A narrative theory, too, initially classifies human experiences by setting boundaries on our thinking about objects that exist "out there." It specifies what will count as a narrative; what psychological effects may be produced by it; the possible uses, social value, and aesthetics of narrative; and how a history of narrative should be written. As such, however, a given theory is responding to some of our deepest beliefs about human beings and the nature of society, and reveals not only a narrative artifact, but also how we are thinking about the working of the human mind.

LEVELS IN HANGOVER SQUARE

As we watch a film, the camera seems to reach out toward us, eliciting hypotheses about space and time, answering our thoughts at the same moment that a world is given shape on a screen. Paradoxically, the camera seems to be both a pretext for our speculations about an event and the already completed, material record of what must be experienced. The camera through its framings seems to become the very embodiment of narration, of "knowing how to go on..." about a world it already knows. In this sense, every theory of film narrative will make claims about the nature of the camera and its functioning. Roughly, its functioning will be described as being either "subjective" or "objective." In this chapter I will examine various claims about subjective uses of the camera; the next chapter will consider objectivity.

A camera's subjectivity becomes important when a narrative theory seeks to explain how a spectator may be put in contact with an author who is a subject, as well as with a world of characters and narrators who are also "subjects." I want to begin to address how a camera may be thought "subjective" by first looking closely at the levels of narration in the opening shots of John Brahm's Hangover Square (1944) (see figs 27-46). I will then consider particular issues bearing on subjectivity, and how these issues have been formulated in distinctive ways by particular narrative theories.

Overall, the opening shots of Hangover Square take us steadily downward through the levels of narration from powerful, extra-fictional narrations to nondiegetic and diegetic narrations, and finally to characters and internal focalization through a specific character. The 20th Century Fox logo and such opening credits as "Directed by John Brahm" point toward a historical author (figs 27, 29) while the title "in Hangover Square" which follows the names of three actors and appears in special lettering points in two directions: "up" toward a historical context where property rights are defined for the artifact with this name
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(the word "in" implies an "outside") and down toward an embedded (fictional) story where the same name functions as an abstract for the narrative schema to be constructed (fig. 28). These opening titles are extra-fictional.

The tenth and final opening title (fig. 30) resembles the written, explanatory preface of The Wrong Man discussed in the previous chapter. It is a combination of extra-fictional and nondiegetic narrations which tells us about the story which is to follow:

This is the story of George Harvey Bone who resided at number 12, Hangover Square, London, S.W. in the early part of the Twentieth Century. The British Catalogue of Music lists him as a Distinguished Composer - - -

These two sentences are a strange mixture of the exact ("number 12 . . . S.W.") and the indefinite ("in the early part of the Twentieth Century"), soliciting both an extra-fictional interpretation and a fictional, nondiegetic interpretation, respectively. The sentences mark a transition from nonfiction to fiction. They appear nonfictional when one focuses on the overprecision of the description. The relative insignificance of what is described only heightens the sense that the concrete details that are being evoked have come from a real world. Further, the details are themselves said to be detailed in an "authoritative" source (the British Catalogue of Music).1

On the other hand, the indefinite time stated in the written title is more typical of fictional reference (as if to say, "One day early in the twentieth century . . .").2 The text seemingly offers facts while beginning the fiction. The second sentence does not end with a period. Instead, it is marked by unusual punctuation (three dashes) and seems to suggest that the statement in the British Catalogue is incomplete or wrong in a significant way; perhaps calling George Harvey Bone "distinguished" needs to be qualified. Additionally, the spectator may wonder why the story of a man's life is named for a street. Like Hitchcock's opening pronouncement in The Wrong Man that facts are thrilling, the narration here carefully preserves suspense by announcing a "story," citing an authority, intimating that these words are not as specific as they appear, and then inviting the spectator to participate in a search for more complete references, including a (moral) pertinence for us in another part of the twentieth century. The words themselves on the title card are suggestive, but indefinite about their authority ("This is the story . . ."). As our analysis of the following shots will make clear, although the search may be based on fact, it will be dominated by cognitive processes that are characteristic of a narrative reasoning that makes use of fictional references. The ten opening titles thus begin to put into place an ordered sequence of perspectives within which to interpret the "truth" of the story. By citing the British Catalogue, the narration conceals the extent of its knowledge while allowing the story to proceed through a series of less knowledgeable sources of information.

The story continues with a fade-in to a close-up of fire spouting from the end of a barrel organ followed by an iris-out and dolly-back to show an organ grinder turning the crank (fig. 31; shot 1A). The opening image is no accident; both fire and the melody of the organ grinder's music will be important motifs throughout the story, helping to generate a large-scale pattern among local causes. The camera continues its bold, assertive framing of the action by craning up and away from the organ grinder, finding and following a lamplighter while gliding above the street (fig. 32; shot 1B), and reaching the next street lamp before it can be lit (fig. 33; shot 1C). When the lamp is lit the camera is already on the same level as a second-floor window of an Antiques store in the near background (fig. 34; shot 1D) and is ideally positioned to see into the window. The camera dolly's forward to the window where we see the back of a man who is turned toward the frightened face of an old man (fig. 35; shot 1E). The camera then moves impossible through the glass window and up behind the shoulder of the unknown man (fig. 36; shot 1F). From the title that functioned as an explanatory preface to this point the narration is best described as nondiegetic. Even though the narration is no longer describing the story in words (as in the written title, fig. 30) and though the drawings behind the titles have become moving photographs (suggesting a new causal and epistemological situation), the camera has continued to both anticipate the action and provide perfect views of it (e.g., from above the street). These views are impossible for characters in the diegesis to possess.3 In its foreknowledge of diegetic events as well as through its independence from diegetic physical constraints, the camera acknowledges the diegetic world but is not (at this time) submitting to it.

The spectator may wonder when the camera will submit to diegetic constraints; that is, restrict its framing in such a way as to blend in with such elements as the decor, costumes, lighting, and the music of the street organ in order to strengthen the dominant epistemological context - a London street during one night in the early part of the twentieth century. The old man, trying to defend himself, is throwing objects at his attacker. Diegetic sound in the form of noise being made by the two men as they struggle mixes with the music and slowly becomes more prominent. The camera moves forward past the shoulder of the attacker to confront the old man who now looks directly into the camera and throws an object which momentarily blacks out the image (fig. 37; shot 1G). With this brief movement past the man's shoulder, the camera has abandoned the possibilities of nonfocalization or external

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focalization in favor of an internal focalization through the eyes of the attacker – a point-of-view shot (hereafter abbreviated as "POV shot"). The blacked-out image minimizes the on-screen cues for a new shot and allows a cut (probably for technical reasons) to a new shot while maintaining the narrative continuity of an internal focalization (figs 37–8; shots 1G–2A). The camera continues to advance on the old man (fig. 38; shot 2A) who is stabbed (fig. 39; shot 2B) and drops from sight. The camera then moves upward as the killer’s hand grasps a kerosene lamp (fig. 40; shot 2C) and rapidly tilts down to follow the lamp being hurled onto the old man’s body lying on the stairs (fig. 41; shot 2D). The camera’s move upward and tilt down represent the still unseen gaze of the killer. The total effect has been that of a smooth progression from the framing of fire at the end of a barrel organ to the internal view of a killer setting fire to his victim.

We finally see the face of the killer as flames leap upward (fig. 42; shot 3). The unusual, or eccentric, angle from below (cf. fig. 42 with figs 31–41) places the killer’s head within a corner of the ceiling. The distorted, artificial perspective of the diagonal lines encourages the spectator to experiment with stylistic metaphors, to charge space itself with the demonic force of a personality. Such a description of the composition, especially if it is connected to other moments in the text, is evidence of another, simultaneous narration at work – an implied nondiegetic, or else implied extra-fictional, narration. The explicit narration also is subtly changing our access to narrative information. The face of the killer has been revealed (but not his emotions or motivation) and the next shot is an eyeline match (or possibly a POV shot) showing the stairs engulfed in flames (fig. 43; shot 4). The narration is withdrawing slightly from the killer so that his experiences, though still central, may be externally focalized allowing the spectator to learn more about his intentions and the causal underpinning of these events.

The final shots of the scene take us back outside the antiques store where the organ grinder sees the fire (fig. 44; shot 5A) and runs to the store window drawing a crowd and a policeman (fig. 45; shot 5B). The policeman then runs to sound the alarm and the scene ends on a fade-out as he is ringing a fire alarm (fig. 46; shot 6). These final two shots outside the store mark the end of a narrative unit, but not the end of the narrative. We have returned to our starting point in the street with the organ grinder, but not quite. Shot 5 crosses the 180 degree axis of action established by shot 1 (cf. fig. 44 with fig. 32) thus marking a slight departure from the beginning space and qualifying the geographical closure by promising to open new space: though we have returned to our starting point, the mystery of a burning building and a murder must now be resolved. Shot 6 just prior to the fade-out is left as a kind of narrative excess to be carried forward into the following scenes.

Although we look into the store from the outside (shot 5B), we possess more knowledge than any of these characters and will soon know a great deal more, for we will soon discover that the killer is the composer George Harvey Bone.

If one were to represent graphically the changes in narration through the ten titles and first six shots of Hangover Square, the result would be something like an inverted pyramid: a smooth v-shaped curve beginning with the extra-fictional logo of 20th Century Fox and progressing steadily "down" through other layers of the narration, becoming more and more restrictive until reaching an internal focalization through George Harvey Bone at the bottom tip of the "v." The narration then withdraws from him, moving back "upward," until it reaches an external view of the burning Antiques store. This view is a general view (i.e., diegetic narration) of a crowd of people who are distinguishable only for being onlookers, one of whom is a policeman who exists only to perform the action of sounding a fire alarm. The narration at this point has become diegetic and/or nonfocalized; it merely reports an event and is indifferent to the way in which any single individual might have seen it.

20th Century Fox (historical author)

\[ a \text{ fire alarm is sounded} \]
\[ (\text{nonfocalization}) \]

George Bone’s perceptions

(internal focalization)

The narration, however, has not returned to the type of narration that began the film, but rather has left us anchored in diegetic space and time, ready for the next scene to extend our understanding of these events. After establishing its power and credibility (e.g., through the perfect but impossible views of the moving camera in shot 1A–F, figs 31–6), the narration may operate in less explicit ways (e.g., through the eccentric angle of shot 3, fig. 42). Overall our knowledge has been distributed in a precise, hierarchical manner and in such a way as to make clear that the method of distribution will continue to yield information. Our knowledge has been balanced between external and internal views, and arranged in a formal symmetry (v-shaped and nearly closed) that both reveals and conceals information. Disorder in the story world has yielded to carefully controlled spectacle. The change from one narration to the next has been almost imperceptible (like slowly deflating and then inflating a balloon) even if large-scale changes are easy to see (e.g., from expansive written titles to a highly restricted
POV shot). The narration is economical, continuous, unified, productive, and by the end of the sequence, self-effacing: in a word, "classical." Most importantly, we are prepared to accept further explorations of these same types of restrictions on our knowledge, especially a continuing (and deeper) display of the psychology of George Harvey Bone. In the next scene, for example, moving distortions overlaid on a POV shot will represent not only George's disturbed perception but the blinking of his eyes.

SEPARATION OF MATERIAL AND STRUCTURE

The classical arrangement of the opening narrations in Hangover Square functions as a prototype for the film to develop and play against. In particular, it allows the musical track to indulge in a variety of excesses in characterizing the mind of a mad composer. The waltz music of the street organ is heard not only during the murder inside the Antiques store, but also later as a nondiegetic accompaniment to the action and, remarkably, as part of George's climactic piano concerto. His psychosis, activated by "discordant sounds," is triggered when he plays and hears the organ grinder's waltz which he has unconsciously written into his composition, leading him to set fire to the concert hall and perish in the flames madly playing at his piano. In fact, his concerto turns out to contain most of the film's significant musical motifs and to also recall George's murder of an enticing but scheming nightclub singer and the burning of her body. Music, murder, art, madness, sexuality, discordant sound, genius, mood, and fire are being compressed by the sound track into a dense tangle. As Claudia Gorbman observes:

The viewer starts to notice music from all sources . . . interpenetrating in the most disturbing manner. Concurrently with the progressive blending of musical types and levels of narration, the distinction between George and his murderous alter ego begins to break down . . . In narrative cinema, music actively crosses narratological boundaries — between the objective and subjective, the diegetic and nondiegetic and metadiegetic — and Hangover Square foregrounds this liberty of the musical score to a hallucinatory degree.¹

The visual narrative of Hangover Square provides a background against which the music may be "parsed" in a variety of ways and may interact with many textual elements from moment to moment. The music itself does not prescribe a "meaning" nor does it necessarily mark the boundaries of the narration, even though at times it expresses the madness of a particular character. The ebb and flow of the music and the simultaneity of various narrations again illustrates a fundamental principle of the analysis of narrative: narrative and narration are critically dependent upon top-down cognitive processes and are not determined by the formal boundaries of the material on screen, the "techniques" for displaying material, phenomenal categories that describe material, nor bottom-up cognitive processes. This concept is so important that I will refer to it as the principle of the "separation of material and structure." As we shall see, "structure" will be variously interpreted by different narrative theories. In empiricist accounts, structure resides in patterns in the material text (and the question then becomes what should count as being "in" the text); in rationalist accounts, structure is mental (and the question becomes what should count as being mental beyond "immediate consciousness").

Material and structure are not identical: it is a fact that different materials may achieve the same structure (synonymy) and that different structures may be achieved by the same material (ambiguity); or, when spread out in time, the same structure may reoccur in different materials (repetition), or the reoccurrence of the same material may nonetheless elicit different structures (multiplicity). The basic idea is that a pattern is more than a listing of its elements: some powerful rule or (top-down) process must bridge the separation in order to draw various elements into relationships. One of the problems for a narrative theory, then, is to explain how a spectator decides how much and what kind of knowledge will form a (structured) unit at a given time. In what ways may on-screen data be partitioned and reformed? What role do bottom-up processes play in overcoming separation? These questions are ways of asking how much separation between material and structure will be posited by a narrative theory.

The principle of separation applies not just to music, but to any sound or picture element, or technique (e.g., camera "angle" or "match" cutting). Consider the POV shot. On the model of shot 1 of Hangover Square (figs 31-7), one could easily imagine a POV shot comprising only a portion of a single shot. For example, the camera could begin with framings and movements which provide the spectator with a privileged access to nondiegetic knowledge (e.g., anticipating events through perfect but impossible views), then the camera could move steadily closer and into the mind of a particular character, adopting the character's perception, and finally back out again to allow the character to move in front of the camera so that we might objectively see his or her facial reactions. Only a portion of this shot would be subjective. On the other hand, the transition between shots 1 and 2 of Hangover Square (figs 37-8), which makes use of a match on action across a momentarily black image, demonstrates that a POV shot actually could be comprised of a sequence of shots and still maintain the strict temporal and spatial continuity of a narrative internally localized through a single character.
Therefore the presence of the POV shot as a narrative structure cannot be determined mechanically by measuring such material divisions as shots. Even in a wider context, the relationship between narration and the editing of shots is not fixed but must be discovered. Although the spectator often relies on editing to highlight, say, the performances of actors which, in turn, help in establishing pertinent narrative units and boundaries (e.g., ending a scene at the proper time, cutaways, perfect views, reaction and detail shots), there is no necessary relationship between editing and narrative structure.

A key question for a narrative theory is how to describe the causal connection between the structure of a text and materials, or techniques; that is, in a film text, the connection between the spectator's formulation of structure and the physical camera (or the microphone), or else their technical "representatives" on the screen (e.g., angle and aural pitch). I want to begin to examine some of the ways in which this question has been addressed by different theories of film narrative and to show that narrative theories are based on assumptions about the appropriate connection of structure and material. I will begin by focusing on how depictions of character subjectivity in film narrative may be related to the spectator's perception of the material on screen.

WHAT MAKES FILM SUBJECTIVE?: A CASE STUDY OF LADY IN THE LAKE

Sooner or later most writers on cinema mention Robert Montgomery's Lady in the Lake (1946). It is one of the few classics whose fame rests on its convincing "failure." Writers, however, are sharply divided over the reasons for the failure and the conclusion to be drawn about its nature of narrative in film. For most of its 103 minutes, the film appears to be an elaborate POV shot from the private eye of detective Phillip Marlowe (played by Robert Montgomery). Characters look directly into the camera when speaking to Marlowe. At various times we see Marlowe's arms and feet at the edges of the frame; we see his shadow, smoke from his cigarette, his image in mirrors; we see extreme close-ups of a telephone receiver as he talks, lips approaching for a kiss, an on-rushing fist approaching for a knockout blow. The camera sways as Marlowe walks, shakes when he is slapped, loses focus when liquor is splashed in his eyes, and blacks out when his eyes close for a kiss and when he's knocked out.

There are six notable exceptions to Marlowe's pervasive POV: the opening and closing titles, and four scenes of Marlowe at a desk in his office speaking directly into the camera. These office scenes appear to take place shortly after a murder case has been solved. As Marlowe explains in the office scene which follows the opening titles.

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Right now you're reading in your newspapers and hearing over your radios about a murder. They call it "The Case of the Lady in the Lake." It's a good title. It fits. What you've read and what you've heard is one thing. The real thing is something else. There's only one guy who knows that. I know it.

Marlowe announces his power and authority to tell the story and teases us with the strange, but appropriate, name of the case. He even tells us how he will tell the story:

You'll see it just as I saw it. You'll meet the people. You'll find the clues. And maybe you'll solve it quick. And maybe you won't. You think you will, eh? OK [points finger at camera]. You're smart. But let me give you a tip. You've got to watch them. You've got to watch them all the time. Because things happen when you least expect them.

Although Marlowe acts as a diegetic narrator (telling his own story), there are hints that other, implicit narrations are at work; or alternatively, one might say, other epistemological descriptions offered by a spectator will apply. For example, the opening titles present important clues and motifs; the unpolished phrasing and choice of words in Marlowe's speech at his desk links the film as a historical artifact to the genre of hard-boiled detective fiction; and his speech has an introductory quality to it reminiscent of Hitchcock's opening monologue in The Wrong Man.

Writers concerned with this film, however, have not pursued the implicit narrations, nor the explicit narration by Marlowe. One reason for this neglect is the final scene of the film which occurs with Marlowe at his desk. The case has been solved and Marlowe is explaining a few loose ends when into the room walks the female character who for most of the film has been Marlowe's adversary and a prime murder suspect. They declare their love and announce that they are going away. They declare their love and announce that they are going away, then they die. So the case is solved and forgotten as the telling of the story; personalized narration becomes simply nonfocalized narration. Closure is achieved for the two causal lines of the story that involve crime and romance. The overall flashback structure of the film is dissolved and forgotten as the telling of the story seemingly disappears without a trace into the character of Phillip Marlowe who has solved the case, won the woman, and has no further point of view to offer. This makes it seem as if the rest of the film is subjective and present, that the POV shot is its only device, and that all other aspects of the
story (decor, the end of a scene, ellipses) must be related to the surface perception of the character Marlowe who speaks from his office until finally his own story catches up with him and his narrating is no longer needed. It is not surprising, then, that critics take the POV shot as a synecdoche for the film’s narrative and a test for how spectators relate generally to the experience of the medium of film where someone apparently has the power both to narrate and to share experiences with the spectator. *Lady in the Lake* is therefore useful as an extreme film because it has a way of bringing forth basic premises in a critical method. These premises and their bearing on narrative comprehension will be my main interest in discussing critical reactions to the film.

Julio Moreno rejects the use of the POV shot as a depiction of Marlowe’s experiences in *Lady in the Lake*, asserting that “in cinema it is not possible to speak, in the strict sense, of a narrator. The film does not narrate, but rather it places the spectator directly without intermediaries, *in the presence* of the facts narrated.” For Moreno, cinema is too real to represent a fictional subjectivity because the spectator’s eye is *equivalent* to the camera’s *objective* lens. He stresses that the “nature” and “essence” of cinema is photography. The search for a “first-person visual” narration cannot succeed because photography can capture only the external world, not private experience. Even if we may sometimes think in images, photography cannot capture those pictures. Moreno contrasts the “purely visual” qualities of cinema to the “verbal” nature of literary narrative and concludes that the POV shot is at best merely “imitating . . . a form of literary narration.” In attempting to recreate a verbal “I see x,” the POV shot is not being true to the nature of cinema. Words on a page, however, can capture verbal thought and thus literature is the proper medium for first-person narration. Predictably, Moreno is suspicious of the use of spoken words in film, and nostalgic for the silent cinema which was purely visual, though he does not oppose certain visual metaphors expressive of character nor what I have earlier classified as an “external focalization” of narrative through a particular character—for example, through the use of eyeline matches—since these devices do not threaten the inherent objectivity of the external views provided by photography.

Moreno’s argument is reminiscent of aspects of André Bazin’s theory of cinema. According to Bazin the film image acquires a fundamental objectivity because of its causal history: the spectator knows that an object which was once in front of the camera has left its imprint on film automatically through the action of light waves on a chemical emulsion. Moreover, the recording process occurs with no significant intervention by a human agent. Bazin disliked *Lady in the Lake*, GermanExpressionism, and Eisenstein’s montage effects because the techniques employed seemed designed only to manipulate the natural recording process in favor of contriving abstract meanings and promoting an author’s evaluation of reality. Bazin wanted the spectator to be an “invisible witness” whose freedom to see and interpret the image would be limited only by external conditions imposed on the camera by a concrete situation, even though the situation might be fictional.

Bazin’s ideas have been central to many debates in film theory. I cannot here survey the range of arguments that have been raised against Bazin and that, by extension, could also be raised against Moreno. One important line of criticism, however, has been that Bazin places too much faith in the techniques and institutions of cinema; that the spectator encounters facts only under a description and through a practice, not directly through a quality of “presence” on the screen; that cinema constructs a world rather than captures a pre-existent one; that what is comprehended as “real” in film is not exhausted by what is visible and audible.

If cinema is too real to support a narrated subjectivity for Moreno, it is not real enough for Joseph Brinton. The spectator’s eye, he says, is always superior to the camera’s lens:

Just as the dramatic perceptions of everyday life lie beyond the optical scope of the eye, striking cinematic effects depend on what the spectator apprehends outside the scope of the camera. . . . The relationship of human vision to the camera is a variable one, determined not by the eye itself, but by the human mind behind its retina . . . . Realistic utilization of a movie camera, whether “subjective” or “objective,” does not rely on the physical science of photography, but on the psychological science of human perception.

Again *Lady in the Lake* is held to be a failure, but now because it was not sufficiently subjective, rather than because it was false to the objective nature of photography. Brinton itemizes some of the “distinct superiorsities” of the eye over the camera (greater mobility, efficiency, angle of view, resolution of depth, etc.) and argues further that representing true subjectivity depends upon exploiting a spectator’s shifts of attention and memory through a blend of subjective and objective techniques. The cinema will need to adjust all of its resources to the psychology of the spectator; or, to put it another way, *all* film techniques have a subjective use, not just the familiar “subjective” devices like the POV shot. The aim is to show how a character thinks, not just *what* a character thinks about or sees. According to Brinton, this involves a spectator’s entire process of thinking and hence a wide range of techniques will be required with no technique necessarily excluded.

One premise of Brinton’s approach is that it is people who make narratives and meanings, not sentences or cinematic shots.
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Moreno believes it is vital to draw a line between literature and film (and others in the same spirit have drawn lines between theater and film, painting and film, music and film, etc.). Brinton suggests that narrative is not defined by specific material forms, or stimuli emanating from such forms, but rather is defined through a person's predisposition to make narrative and meaning using whatever is at hand. Brinton is thus suggesting a cognitive-psychological approach where narrative is a mode of reasoning and is not visible in the way that a photograph or a material object is. Still, Moreno does not go so far as to adopt Bazin's distrust of editing and, though Moreno emphasizes the nature of different media, materials and techniques, he would agree with Brinton that editing might be a useful tool to represent character subjectivity. Thus there seems to be an area of overlap between the two positions that would permit new approaches to utilize features of both in seeking to explain subjectivity in film.

A SYNTHESIS: TELLING/SHOWING/SUMMARY/SCENE

André Gaudreault draws on a widely used distinction in narrative theory to propose that there are two master types of film narration. Whereas verbal narrative uses only "telling" and theatrical narrative uses only "showing," film has a special nature which allows it to utilize both telling and showing, or what Gaudreault calls "narration" and "monstration." This raises the possibility that much of Brinton's theory may be combined with Moreno's theory. Telling involves a "narrator" who places the events of the narrative in the past, or creates some other non-present temporal modality, such as the conditional. (Recall Philip Marlowe at his desk telling the audience, "You'll see it just as I saw it.") The film narrator works only through editing. By contrast, showing involves a "monstrator" who places the events of the narrative directly in front of the spectator at present time. The monstrator works only during the process of shooting the film. The monstrator delegates power to the camera to occupy the place of the spectator at the scene of the action which is to be recorded. Gaudreault says that the monstrator's actual "speech act" occurs only during projection of the film at which time the monstrator creates an illusion of presence for the spectator by quoting what was recorded in the past, but without acknowledging that it is a quotation. It is clear that the success of Gaudreault's theory will depend upon further careful elaborations on the troublesome issue of time in film, on the unresolved relationship of speech and language to pictures, and on the nature of covert monstration.

Gaudreault's notion of monstration seems to have been devised in order to embrace ideas like those of Bazin and Moreno. Monstration allows one to imagine a narrative "scene" as simply an event happening in front of a camera rather than as something already invented and narrated (i.e., as already told). Monstration exists only in the present tense. The result for Gaudreault is that one of the two components of the film experience (showing) may be imagined by us to have existed independently of the camera and, moreover, we may witness it again by searching for its causal traces in the film image. On the other hand, Gaudreault's notion of "telling" seeks to account for the other great tradition in film theory associated with Sergei Eisenstein (and Brinton) which emphasizes the film's active engagement with a spectator's processes of thought and emotion, traditionally associated with editing, producing a sort of mental realism. Thus the nature of editing for Gaudreault would seem to reduce to an intricate ellipsis: a breaking apart and omission, a "summary" of a pre-existent scene, or scenes, which acts to color something old or construct something new. Gaudreault insists that the opposition between telling and showing is exactly the opposition between editing and shooting a film. The resultant theory is a unique hybrid of ideas which achieves breadth and empirical precision at the cost of a certain rigidity which, if it doesn't violate the principle of the separation of material (and technique) from structure, at least reduces the distance between material and its function to an uneasy minimum. This leads to a number of questions about Gaudreault's scheme. What exactly does the camera record: an actor, or a character who is already fictional, or both? Does monstration include set design, composing the image, anticipatory camera movements, performance, and sound? Is off-screen space simply what is not being shown at present, or is it space which has been withheld in the telling of the event? Does the sound of a door opening off-screen tell us, or show us, the door? And finally, does telling include slow motion, the 180 degree axis of action, and editing which has been "displaced" into the mise-en-scene (as in work by Sergei Eisenstein, Miklós Jancsó, and Jean-Luc Godard)? These problems are perhaps not insurmountable. Relaxing the definitions of telling and showing would allow more flexibility in describing related effects on a spectator, but would also tend to slide Gaudreault's theory back toward an acknowledgement of the two great traditions of Eisenstein and Bazin (Brinton and Moreno) without specifying their interrelationship.

Gaudreault's linking of showing to "scene" hints at another, closely related opposition which is variously defined and employed in theories of narrative: scene versus summary. Classical film narrative, like the traditional novel, appears to alternate between scene and summary. David Bordwell remarks, "By the early 1930s, montage sequences became so common that we can say that the classical Hollywood film consisted of only two types of decoupage units: scenes and summaries." The basic idea behind this dichotomy is that the spectator must presume...
that a narrator (usually nondiegetic) is explicitly at work “telling” the story when he story appears in some abbreviated form (e.g., a synopsis of the action, a rearrangement of story events by the plot) but need not imagine such a narrator when space, time, and causality are rendered in some standard form—a “scene” that appears to respect an action’s duration, plausibility, and definiteness (mere “showing”). In this sense, a “scene” may be taken as a zero-degree line for measuring how space, time, and causality may be manipulated in a narrative until their construction becomes “obvious” or pertinent in a summary, opposed, point for point, to a second alignment among summary, information, the absence of “overt” narration, and/or the treatment of action’s duration, plausibility, and definiteness (mere “showing”). For Bordwell the importance of projection is that it makes “narration” dependent on the nature of the medium (it is projected in real time). The medium, in turn, includes the unique qualities of a film’s techniques and stylistic system. In effect, Bordwell shifts the objectivity that Bazin and Moreno found in the film image, and that Gaudreault found in the shooting time of monstration, to the mechanism of projection. His purpose, however, is to give weight and priority to style, to the concrete materials of the medium. By linking style to the fundamental time of projection, style becomes a basic ingredient of cinema—as one of the ways in which the medium controls narration and the spectator’s perception of plot and story. Style, thus separated from the profilmic, is free to exist in certain situations only for itself as a purely artistic and arbitrary manifestation of the film medium as a medium. Style becomes “palpable,” working on us just as relentlessly as the projector. Furthermore, style becomes worthy of study in its own right; as we have seen, this view spawns a class of narrative theories distinct from reception theories, even though style need not be entirely decoupled from other textual and historical factors.

Genette’s temporal distinction between film and literature, when combined with Bordwell’s emphasis on the importance of medium-specificity for narrative, may divide these media too much. The conventional nature of the equality between narrating time and story time in literature, stressed by Genette, may be just as valid for film. What one sees in the split-seconds of cinema’s screen time may depend on one’s skills in looking, purposes, background knowledge, attention, and accidental circumstances. Our ability to process data top-down should not be confused with the mandatory nature of bottom-up processing. The intercut chase sequence in The Girl and Her Trust, for example, and the chameleon-like time of the credit music of The Wrong Man demonstrate that there are occasions in which the spectator has great freedom to adjust and fill out a temporal sequence. (Recall that even though the classical, chameleon narrative presents a range of correct choices, it will congratulate the spectator for his or her particular selection by intimating that that selection is uniquely correct.) Projection time may set certain limits and thresholds but the extent to which it determines or “strictly governs” narrative comprehension is an open question. This is especially true when one considers the powerful effects of a spectator’s memory and the organization of his or her conceptual system. In another context, Bordwell says of space: “By means of conventional schemata to produce and test hypotheses about a string of shots, the viewer often knows each shot’s salient spatial information before it appears.” In some measure this idea should apply to time as well: the spectator should be able to anticipate, rethink, or construct time in ways quite apart from the time of projection.
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SUBJECTIVITY IN NARRATIVE THEORIES

The somewhat modest conclusion to be drawn from the above range of arguments is that although one may begin with what seems to be a straightforward way of describing events in a story as occurring in either a scene or summary format, one is soon led into more fundamental issues concerning the nature of cinema, how we watch it, the relationship of the eye and "I" to the camera and editing, the role of the film projector, qualities of the medium, problems of narration (e.g., telling and showing), and what constitutes realism. In other words, the narratological terms used in describing film are built upon more basic assumptions about the nature of cinema, what cinema does best, and what it ought to do. Since these narrative terms and descriptions may also be used to chronicle changes among a group of narratives and establish period classifications, they may be employed to write a history of narrative cinema and a history of its value in society. (For example, Gaudrault claims that films in the period 1895-1910 were exclusively constructed on the principles of monstration.) The starting point for a narrative theory may be humble and even obvious but the path soon enters a thicket where hard decisions must be made about large expanses of territory.

Again, we see that narrative theories are not neutral but derive from more fundamental beliefs including implicit theories of perception, the importance of vision in knowing the world, how that world may be seen, and what it should look like when we understand it (cf. "I see what you mean"). As a narrative theory moves deeper into the human mind to explain our ability "to see," it begins to draw on one or more general theories of consciousness and the human drives. Thus it should not be surprising that the narrative of Lake in the Lake may come to embody such processes as dream, fetishism, anxiety, perversion, and universal myths. In calling attention to reception and style-based theories of narrative above, I have hardly begun to sketch the range of theories that may be applied to explain the subjectivity of Lake in the Lake. It will be worthwhile to consider some additional judgments about the film and their relationships to narrative theories.

A drive theory: narrative as driven by dreams and instincts

Robert Eberwein claims that Lake in the Lake is possibly the most sustained equivalent in film of a genuine dream. . . . What Montgomery did, in trying to present the equivalent of a literary first person point of view was - I believe unwittingly - to duplicate the conditions of a dream. But not OUR dream, surely. The perspective of viewing which the audience is presented is, thus, in its consistent use of a method (although at times inconsistent), actually less cinematic, less like our ordinary experience of film . . . . In effect, the film denies its fictive significance as a film by restricting itself to the subjective camera. It offers the equivalent not of a first person narrative, but of one written in the second person. It is as if we were being told for the duration of a novel: "Then you watched the woman enter the building"; "you drove faster and faster until the car crashed against the post"; "you shot at the man with your revolver," etc. Unbearable. It breaks down the barrier between art and life.19

Like Moreno (who says film cannot have a literary narrator) and Gaudrault (who says film does have a literary narrator but one who must compete with a monstrator), Eberwein builds his idea of narrative on the differences in material between film and literature, and ultimately, on the differences between art and life. He decides that, both as a "logical necessity" and as an "artistic consideration," a dream sequence in film requires a combination of subjective and objective shots to maintain the integrity of art as opposed to life.20 Lake in the Lake is too pure and too intense.

Eberwein develops his particular notion of dreamwork by arguing on the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan.21 Stuart Marshall also uses Lacan in explaining the "failure" of Lake in the Lake, but argues that Montgomery's attempt to create a "total" identification between the spectator and Phillip Marlowe is in actuality not an important part of the film.22 Marshall finds such psychic mechanisms as scopophilia, fetishism, and the Oedipal drama - which refer back to the original trauma of the recognition of sexual difference - much more significant than dreamwork in assessing the subjectivity of Lake in the Lake. Furthermore, he argues that the film works on the spectator in an entirely unexpected and surprising way by actually being the narrative of a heroine - with the unlikely name of Adrienne Fromsett - who is radically transformed through the socialization of her drives - not those of the hero - and through her submission to the Law of the Father. The result for the heroine is a new name (by marriage), and for the spectator a rather complex and contradictory working through of a male castration anxiety.23 For Marshall, subjectivity cannot be isolated in a single character or a single experience but must be defined through conflict and opposed experiences. If male subjectivity is at stake in the film, it is not because Phillip Marlowe is a male, but because the processes at work narrating the story enact a typically male psychic drama for the spectator.

One may think of a drive theory as probing an extreme of a spectator's psychological labor. Drive theories like those of Eberwein and Marshall
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attempt to explain what allows our thought to be coherent. Since narrative is one form of coherence, it is natural that psychoanalysis itself in its theory and practice makes explicit use of narrative fictions, such as the “primal scene” and “family romance,” in describing how thinking progresses from the instinct-determined autism of the infant to the socially adaptive and veridical thinking of the adult.33 These foundational scenarios may then be compared to more prosaic narratives. One problem that remains is how to describe the impact on an individual psyche of other forces, such as the social and political; or, in a more limited sense, how to describe the impact of the actual materials and style put forward by a textual object. Without some conception of external influences and material effects, a drive theory (or a reception theory for that matter) moves toward solipsism.

Narrative as a manifestation of plots

William Luhr approaches *Lady in the Lake* by comparing the plot devices used in four versions of the story—in the novel, two drafts of the screenplay, and in the film. He analyzes references to “female impersonation” in the plot of the film and finds that the action of the film “establishes a rigidly oppositional, partially sado-masochistic structure of sexual interactions.”34 Though his method is based on a study of action and plot, not on psychoanalysis, he reaches a conclusion similar to that of Marshall: the central character is actually Adrienne Fromsett, not Phillip Marlowe. The story is about her “duty” to help “her man.” By the end of the film this duty has been made clear. “Nothing else, not her career, not any other aspect of her personal life, is important. She has learned her place.”35 Like the lesson of Griffith’s *The Girl and Her Trust*, a girl must find her man and trust in him. For Marshall, however, the effects of the theme of “impersonation” found by Luhr would extend far beyond the actions of an enigmatic character and instead reach toward the dynamic and shifting emotions which make up the personality of the spectator. In the context of psychoanalysis, the very ideas of “Fromsett” and “Marlowe” are already impersonations—constructions standing in for the shaping of a spectator’s sense of self.

It is clear that different approaches to narrative may reach conclusions that are compatible. In the present case, one could imagine Marshall’s psychoanalytic method being applied to an analysis of plot (e.g., searching for Freudian “symbols” in *Lady in the Lake*) or Ebertwein’s method being applied to style (e.g., drawing parallels with dream processes36). An analyst might also seek to expose the psychopathology of character, or to produce a psycho-biography of a historical author or other communicator,37 including the recipient. Additionally, psychoanalysis could be applied to an analysis of the narration of a text, to its procedural principles, as if the text itself were on the analyst’s couch generating a discourse implicating the spectator in processes of transference and counter-transference.38

Luhr also examines *Lady in the Lake* in relation to its historical authors (Raymond Chandler, Steve Fisher, Robert Montgomery), studio economics, and genre. He notes, for example, that the genre of film noir permits, and even encourages, unusual stylistic experiments like bizarre POVs shots. He thus opens the film toward biographical, economic, and historical factors—toward the social substance which underlies the exchange value of narrative as a manufactured object. His discussion of the “intentions” of the authors could be further developed into a communication theory (of the use value) of narrative; that is, the film could be seen as conveying messages, or as embodying an *a priori* personal (or studio) vision of the world, which it is the task of the reader to decode and recover from the impersonality of the material object.

Narrative as a manifestation of history

It is not uncommon for a theory to make some connections between the psychological labor of recognizing narrative—its use value—and the social, economic, and institutional base which regulates how capital, resources, and physical labor bring forth narrative as a material object with a purpose and exchange value. Again, this touches on an area that is not my main concern in this book. Nevertheless, it might be instructive to examine one set of premises which connect narrative to society and history.

Dana Polan, following Pierre Macherey, holds that “narrative is an imaginary solution to a problem posed . . . by its social moment.”39 Polan traces in American films of the 1940s the social problems of war, postwar communism, consumerism, and the changing roles of women. He discovers that a dominant power and a disturbing paranoia interweave and find each to be a parodic mirror image of the other. Power here is the power of a narrative system especially—the power that narrative structure specifically possesses to write an image of life as coherent, teleological, univocal; narrative, then, is a power to convert contingency into human meaning. Paranoia here will first be the fear of narrative, and the particular social representations it works to uphold, against all that threatens the unity of its logical framework. Against the horror of all that escapes its seemingly overwhelming force, narrative takes on a number of possible strategic forms.40
For Polan, the structure of narrative thinking is also the power to justify social values by creating an order (and a destiny) for them. By contrast, paranoia is the fear of narrative power. This fear may itself be represented in a text by elements which seek to escape or work against narrative unity – elements which are “excessive.” The belief is that power and fear “mirror” each other in narrative texts in the same way that dominant and subversive social values contest one another in a historical situation. For Polan, Lady in the Lake is not the triumph of a personalized vision but the mark of a loss of control, an inability to escape a point of view. The sustained POV shot in the film dramatizes a descent into paranoia, aggression, doubt, sadism, and masochism which intermittently attacks the power of narrative to make conventional sense of the social issues of the 1940s.

In spite of worthwhile efforts like that of Polan and Bill Nichols, and the more conservative approach of Will Wright, the sense of history produced through most narrative theories is often tentative and self-serving. It is no easy task to match a powerful psychological theory of narrative to a theory of the balance between stability and change in a social and political setting. If history is somehow “expressed” by narrative, one will still need to know the detailed psychological (and biological) conditions which make expression possible.

There is a danger that a narrative theory might imagine history in its own image or attempt to explain it away by simply absorbing it. For example, J.P. Telotte, like Eberwein, finds dream at work in narrative conditions which make expression possible.

Our narrative placement in Marlowe’s perspective and the paradoxical incarnation that results – simultaneously an absence and a presence – point up the fundamental purpose of such dream-like experiences. They involve us in a search for ourselves, for some mysterious element of the psyche that might render us complete by enabling us to find our own correct place in the world. In Lady in the Lake, we especially look into those stases directed at the camera by the other characters in the narrative and find in this “gimmick” a tentative rendering present of a normally absent portion of the self, a human complicity affirmed in spite of the usual sense of spectator absence that film typically affirms. Through this mechanism, then, the film points up a basic function of the detective story: it engages us in a dream of individual and cultural completion, forcing us to recognize how much we are indeed the stuff that dreams are made of.

Telotte’s argument celebrates paradox by embracing several senses of “presence” and “absence” (simultaneously present) to suggest the impossible union of personal and social (the word “completion” appears often in his essay); but since he mentions nonpsychological determinants only in psychological terms, he never quite reaches the actual social and historical dimension of human experience. Instead he shuttles between the concrete and the incredible using his own brand of dream reading to imagine a spectator in history. He claims, for example, that the ambiguous references to “them” – as in “You’ve got to watch them” – in Marlowe’s introductory speech (more fully quoted above) refer to dream images which will erupt suddenly from within our own psyches during the film to reveal ourselves in our own dream. Telotte admits that these private and reflexive dream images cannot appear in the film and must remain “unframed,” but the film can nonetheless refer to them indirectly by using Marlowe’s introductory speech to frame a story (an “imaginai trip”) which then frames door images which literally frame characters who enter or exit in a search for social and cultural completion; presumably this is meant to suggest that the spectator must be ever alert to what can not be framed and to his or her own search for social (and metaphorical?) completion.

Telotte discovers that Lady in the Lake contains forty-five different door shots and proceeds to interpret them in a variety of metaphorical ways, apparently looking for what cannot be explicitly framed – that is, history. Telotte’s argument connects stylistic metaphors into chains that embrace each metaphor’s negative (e.g., framed but not framed). For example, he says that no truth comes “neat,” but like a door always “opens onto,” and leads into, another enigmatic area. He then connects doors to windows, archways, and mirrors, and then to characters who erect disguises as “barriers” for anyone who seeks to “enter their realm.” Ultimately these characters, he declares, are victims of their own mise-en-abyme, becoming “disconcertingly unfixed and unpredictable, much like the figures of dreams.” Characters are caught up in a chain of actions: framing, framed, reframed, unframed, and unhinged.

For Telotte (and drive theories in general) what the camera actually frames is merely the beginning of what must be framed by the spectator in comprehending the film. Clearly we are a long way from the simple camera of Julio Moreno. One can, however, go still further.
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Holistic theories of narrative

Telotte's myth of human "completion" and oneness - an end to a mise-en-abyme - is fully realized in Vivian Sobchack's application of phenomenology to the experience of film. For her, Lady in the Lake is an illustration of a more fundamental, astonishing fact: film itself has a "body" which is quite literal, and not at all metaphorical, and its bodily functions may be compared directly with human ones. She describes the "failure" of Lady in the Lake in the following way:

Although the function of both Marlowe's body and the film's body is the same (i.e., to focus attention within a visible intentional horizon and express that perception as a viewed view), the bodily means by which that function is achieved are visibly different - and dependent upon the different material nature of the respective bodies. . . . That is, the human lived-body does not attend to the world and realize its intentional projects of attention in the same visible manner as does the film's lived-body. . . . Lady in the Lake also problematizes another aspect of the failure of the film's body to disguise itself as human. . . . [A]s the film's lived-body emphasizes its perception as grounded in a human body, it becomes a slave to that body, afraid to leave it for fear it will lose its already tenuous hold on its disguise. Thus, Lady in the Lake becomes peculiarly claustrophobic to watch. Its perceptive and expressive behavior is curtailed and constrained by bodily existence rather than enabled by it. Marlowe, and we as spectators, are literally grounded in bodily existence, and perceptually and expressively live the body through none of the other modalities of experience it should enable: dreaming, imagining images, projecting situations, temporarily assuming another's situation as a subject.

For Sobchack, what is "visible," even in cinema, is only contingent and not fundamental. In a somewhat complementary way, Bruce Kawin believes that cameras, projectors, and films literally have a "mind." Thus the starting point for these writers is that the film possesses a body and a mind. In a sense, we have moved full circle from empiricist accounts which seek to minimize the separation between the material and structure of a text by giving great weight to the differences between the arts and distinctive styles, to rationalist accounts which widen the separation by positing unobservable processes driving consciousness (reaching a maximum with psychoanalysis), and now back to holistic accounts like those of Telotte, Sobchack, and Kawin which again virtually abolish separation, but by concentrating on a phenomenology of appearances that refuses to distinguish between subjective and objective, mind and material. In the holistic accounts, thinking about material operates to fully animate it. Such accounts are monisms and are an extreme version of a reception approach to narrative; the ones just mentioned take consciousness (intention, attention, memory, dream, expression . . . ) to be the unifying principle of all phenomena, whatever their material forms. It is an open question, however, whether consciousness is whole or modular, whether it is the central reality of existence, and in what ways it is identical to other existents.

HOW MANY CAMERAS ARE IN A FILM?

It should be clear that one cannot arrive at an explanation for the perceived "failure" of Lady in the Lake without specifying the narrative and perceptual theory to be used in analyzing the film. Therefore I will be content with a narrow and limited conclusion. If one takes Hangover Square with its large number of explicit and rapidly shifting levels of narration as a reference point, then Lady in the Lake will appear strange and constricted. The comparison suggests that if the purpose of Montgomery's film is to create an identity between spectator and character, the primary reliance on a single device of internal focalization - the point-of-view shot - actually limits what the spectator can easily know about the character. Though a PO V shot may appear simple and straightforward in comparison with "objective" narration, it actually requires the spectator to hold together a greater number of assumptions - corresponding to the descriptive assumptions of all of the levels of narration above it - and hence is more restrictive than higher-level narrations. For example, the specific angle of view on an object is normally irrelevant to our comprehension of the object in space - any one of several angles would suffice in a nonfocalized narration. However, in a POV shot the specific angle of view is importantly tied to the attention and awareness of a specific character and thus the angle must be captured and held in working memory by the spectator. Or, to put it another way, the spectator's recognition of a character's awareness depends crucially on a counterpoint of character awareness with a non-psychological narration, such as a nonfocalized or even externally focalized narration. The sustained use of a single type of narration reduces the range of information available since the spectator must attempt to continuously infer relevant contexts while holding surface details in place - details normally discarded in creating a narrative when contexts are objectively narrated.

The above argument can be restated in psychoanalytic terms. For Freud, "personality" depends for its definition on an Other, or perhaps Others. There is no absolute Self in this view, but only a series of relationships that have been experienced with others - a series of relative contexts that have taught a sense of "self." Levels of narration in
this view, then, become a mechanism for providing the spectator with the possibility of multiple, fluid identifications with a character by providing additional contexts (Others) against which to know the character. Moreover, since levels of narration need not be compatible, the possibility arises that contradictory desires/anxieties may be represented for the spectator through overlaps, juxtapositions, and breaks in the narration. With a multiplicity of levels, the text may work through complex forms of Otherness: archaic stages of development, paradoxical feelings, disguise, ambivalence, bisexuality, and masochism. Therefore, in a psychoanalytic explanation, complexity of character facilitates story and character complexity; simplicity obstructs it.

What can be said, then, about the relationship between the spectator and the “subjective camera”? I believe that the concept of a camera can be defined only within a particular theory of narrative or nonnarrative comprehension in film. A theorist uses concepts like “camera” and “screen” in order to describe a spectator’s degree of “separation” from the material of film (as a condition for his or her “comprehension” of the experience of film). Further, the idea of levels of narration hints that Gaudreault’s two kinds of camera—one which narrates and one which monstrates—may not be enough within a given narrative theory.

Perhaps there is a different kind of camera for each level of narration! The historical, profilmic camera (which usually rests on a tripod) is not quite the same camera which we reconstruct under the pressure of organizing data narratively in our effort, say, to imagine an organ grinder in Hangover Square as he discovers a fire in an antiques store, or Phillip Marlowe’s ability to have a point of view on a lady.

We perhaps may go still further, and wonder what other constructs of the spectator undergo subtle changes in function from one level of narration to the next. For example, when the frame of reference is one of the higher levels of narration, it may be appropriate to conceive of “character” more in terms of the qualities we imagine for “real persons.” Comprehending characters in relation to real persons is not a naïve way to understand narrative, just as it is not inappropriate to comprehend a steam rising in a film’s relation to its frame of reference. What is inappropriate is confusing a character with a real person, or failing to recognize the diversity of levels and functions in a narrative text when the task is to understand not what, but how, we understand.

To return to the notion of a camera, there would seem to be two basic choices: one could simply say that the camera as such is relatively unimportant (recall Brinton’s comment that “striking cinematic effects depend on what the spectator apprehends outside the scope of the camera”); or, alternatively, one could broaden the notion of camera to include its immediate “context” which would include the (top-down) skills and knowledge brought to the film by the spectator. Christian Metz asserts:

When I say that “I see” the film, I mean thereby a unique mixture of two contrary currents: the film is what I receive, and it is also what I release, since it does not pre-exist my entering the auditorium and I only need close my eyes to suppress it. Releasing it, I am the projector, receiving it, I am the screen; in both these figures together, I am the camera, which points and yet which records.

In defining a broader (top-down) context for a “camera,” one would need to recognize at least three variables (each of which could take a range of values): person (or nominal agent), time, and place. That is, the “camera” would be defined according to how pictures and sounds condense at a given moment into a single hypothesis that stands for an event occurring in a time and place for a given person, such as an author, narrator, character, or spectator. For example, in comprehending a particular moment in Hangover Square we may say to ourselves, “here is George Harvey Bone’s reaction to a prior event at the same moment that he is being told about it”; or, “since George already knows about the event, here is his public reaction”; or, “George’s public reaction here alters my beliefs about the prior event.” There are, of course, many ways of being “here,” many situations, many kinds of observers and agents, and many ways to view temporal and spatial order and duration. This means that the spectator typically will be engaged in a myriad of ongoing and changing relationships with the text, each of which will be marked as intelligible from one moment to the next by his or her sense of a “camera” that marks for someone a time and a place: present, past, or hypothetical; here and now, but moving to there and then. The goal is finally to be able to say, “now I know,” or “now I know how to go on.” In this way, the meaning of “camera” may abruptly shift as the occasion demands, much as the meaning of “I” or “now” or “here” shifts on the occasion of its use. The “camera” is both an effect of the text and a trace of the process of our reading.

Whether a narrative theory has one camera or many, the concept of a camera cannot be used merely to separate what is “out there” from what is “inside” the spectator unless the concept is rendered trivial, and a battery of new terms is created with psychological overtones to describe the spectator’s experiences. Thus to say that “the camera never lies” in taking shots is to miss the point, for how can “the camera” be separated from the rhetoric of its shots, from the many ways in which it is itself taken by an audience? Though theorists may agree that
POV shot is "subjective," there is little agreement on how it is subjective. The reason is that "shot," "photograph," "image," and "picture" are not equivalent terms even though they are all related to a camera. A narrative theory will need to specify how such terms are to be used in explaining the spectator's engagement with a representation of experience that is one or more times removed — experience which is surely "present" to the spectator in the theater, if only to a degree. In short, the narrative theorist in fashioning his or her terms must deal not just with the reality of stories, but with how stories are made real by the spectator.

FROM SUBJECTIVITY TO INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Focalization of narrative through a character, whether explicit as in a point-of-view shot or implicit as in certain "expressive" uses of technique, is dependent upon the possibility of its opposite: a refusal to focalize. In this chapter, I wish to examine the conditions which govern our perception of images and sounds when we imagine that we experience them independently of a character, even if we imagine that a character might also have had, or will have, similar experiences. What we see is diegetically intersubjective, or "objective," in the sense that it is reported independently by a narrator, or else appears seemingly without any mediation as a "fact" of some kind. In this way, objectivity becomes a pertinent opposite to the forms of subjectivity examined in the previous chapter.

I also wish to examine how conditions in a film may be varied to produce different sorts of objectivity. My goal is ultimately to confront the issues that arise when objectivity and subjectivity interact in a narrative film by being alternated, overlapped, or otherwise mixed, producing complex descriptions of space, time, and causality. How do such juxtapositions affect the spectator, and moreover, what happens when the spectator is unable to decide on the status of an image or sound — when narration is multiple, inconsistent, or indeterminate? All of these situations, at least on a small scale, produce effects quite different from the normal process of embedding that promises to place various narrations in a strict hierarchy from historical and implied authors to internal focalizations through characters. That is, objectivity as classically conceived is dependent on a finally delineated hierarchy of the levels of narration. (The notion of levels was introduced in chapter 4 as a way of making precise distinctions among the epistemological contexts that may be used by a spectator in making judgments about objectivity and subjectivity.) Although we must make choices and try out hypotheses in order to interpret a text, there is no requirement
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that certainty be achieved. A given theory of narrative, therefore, must include concepts that are capable of describing complex mixtures of objectivity and subjectivity.

Let's begin by considering one way that an objective narration might be created, step by step, in opposition to a subjective narration. I will take character S as my subject and begin with character S's point-of-view of object O, rendered in two shots: (S, O). The first step of the transformation will be to reverse the shots so that the object appears, followed by a shot of the character who is looking (from the same position from which we saw the object in the previous shot): (O, S). In this way, our perception of temporal order has been subtly affected: by reversing the usual "arrow" of implication, one has opened the potential for other kinds of temporal sequences and relationships. Next, another shot might be inserted between O and S (say, cutaway X) so as to delay showing the character who is looking at object O. Finally, the film might never show the character who is looking at O even though it is still the character's point-of-view. These steps may be summarized as follows:

S, O    point-of-view (POV) shot
O, S    discovered (retrospective) POV
O, X, S  discovered and delayed POY
O, X, ... X, S discovered and delayed POY
O, ... [S] discovered and open POY

This sequence represents a movement from what is explicit to what is implicit about character S's perceiving of O. (The square brackets indicate implicit knowledge.) We do not doubt that character S looked at O, but in the discovered and open version of the POY shot, for example, we will never know exactly how character S's face looked when he looked at O; that is, our procedural knowledge concerning O has been reduced because the representation of character S has been made implicit, i.e. "[S]." Note especially that what is at issue in this sequence of transformations is our procedural knowledge of O, not our procedural knowledge of S. I am not examining the issue of how we come to know about S (as an object), only how we come to know about O as an object.

Now let's imagine a second set of cues, operating in parallel with those cues pushing the sequence toward implicit knowledge, that instead take the representation step by step from what is definite about the character who sees O to what is indefinite about the seeing of O. In this situation we move from a feeling of confidence that it is character S, and no other, who sees O, to uncertainty about which character, or characters, if any, see O. Schematically, the two movements are as follows:

1. we see that S sees O (first four versions above of the POY shot - explicit and definite POVs);
2. we infer that S sees O (implicit and definite POV, e.g., last version above - discovered and open POV);
3. we see that someone sees O (explicit and indefinite POV);
4. we infer that someone sees O (implicit and indefinite POV).

The movement from explicit to implicit measures the inferences that we must make in determining a reference to a type of thing in the diegetic world while the movement from definite to indefinite measures the specificity of the reference that is made. The more "implicit" a representation becomes, the more it relies upon inferential chains and a prior knowledge of the spectator to make it emerge. The more "indefinite" a representation becomes, the more uncertain it is which one of the relevant class of things is being referred to. What interests me for present purposes is the extreme case above (4): implicit and indefinite reference. An example would be a discovered and open POY shot where we begin to wonder which character actually has seen the object. Suppose further that we begin to sense that this question cannot be answered. Here we are not far from imagining that the object might have been seen by anyone, or has been seen by no one as yet. In this case, our view of the object has become idealized: simply a view that is unattributed - an "objective" view - rather than the view of a unique person - someone whose identity is definite, the character. Of course, we will be surprised if it is later revealed that all of the shots actually were the views of a particular character. Surprises, however, cannot be avoided: a spectator cannot make sense without risking hypotheses, and these hypotheses may need to be revised or discarded.

Accordingly, the sequence of POY shots discussed above may be extended as follows:

O, S    discovered and open (implicit and definite) POV (i.e., 2 above)
O, ? explicit and indefinite POV (3 above) (here the notation "?" stands for a shot which does not identify which character sees O, e.g., a shot of the legs of the character who is watching)
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O . . . [?]

implicit and indefinite POV (4 above) (i.e., we presume that some character is seeing O)

O . . .

POV?

O

non-POV ("objective" view)

As a view is made increasingly indefinite, "responsibility" for its accuracy is dispersed until we reach the non-POV shot which offers knowledge about an object without relying on a character. A theorist may interpret such a diffuse, intersubjective view in one of two ways: as simply a fact which cannot be challenged; or else as a suspicious statement or view (by someone unknown) for which no explicit context has been provided, nor any evidence supplied, that would permit the truth to be evaluated. In the former interpretation, the object is only itself (an ontological datum); in the latter interpretation, the object is only a conclusion with some of its (epistemological) premises missing. Applying this rather harsh dichotomy to narrative theories results in two classes of theories: one class adopts the former interpretation and trusts third-person narration to be potentially the most accurate about objects while another class of theories adopts the latter interpretation and trusts first-person narration to be potentially the most accurate. In order to untangle the assumptions being made by these two classes of theories about the nature of "third-person" and "first-person," it will be useful to analyze a concrete example of objective narration.

THE HISTORICAL PRESENT OF INVISIBLE OBSERVATION

I now wish to try to formulate one specific type of implicit and indefinite reference that is not a POV shot in order to bring out some of the variables at work in "objective" reference. Recall my discussion in chapter 4 about the opening shots of Hitchcock's film Man 442. I described these shots within two very different frames of reference: first, within the film considered as a fictional text (producing an implied Authorial Narration), and, secondly, within the film's fictional story world (producing an implied diegetic narration). Under the first description, the spectator sees Manny Balestro (Henry Fonda), emerging from a nightclub, being overtaken by two policemen who walk up behind him and appear to walk with him, one on each side, as if to arrest him. The spectator clearly sees, however, that this impression is only an illusion created by two particular camera angles, since both of the policemen actually pass Manny on his left and take no interest in him. Still, this moment which dramatizes how a misperception might arise will have repercussions later as Manny in fact becomes a "wrong man," accused of a crime he did not commit. This is a powerful and "objective" description of the film for it addresses knowledge not possessed by any character in the story world and predicts (indeed knows!) the epilogue of the narrative.

As important as implied authorial narration is to our comprehension of the text, I wish to concentrate here on the second description of these same shots which produces a less powerful, objective narration: an implied diegetic narration. Within the limited context of the film's fictional story world, then, the shots might be described more modestly as follows:

Manny emerges from the nightclub, saying "Goodnight John" to the doorman, and walks toward the subway while two policemen stroll by the front of the club and cars are heard passing in the street.

In chapter 4, I argued that one could imagine this sort of description being offered by a casual bystander who happened to be near the club when Manny emerged (and who, naturally, would have been subject to the same physical laws and conditions governing Manny). Since a bystander was not present, however, and not dramatized by the film, the description must be modified as follows: "If a bystander had been present, he or she would have seen Manny emerge from the club . . . and would have heard . . . ." The description is now in the subjunctive conditional mood. It represents a hypothesis, contrary to fact, that we are making about our perception of the world of the characters as we understand that world by apparently being in it; that is, we are perceiving the world of the characters through projecting and imagining a situation in the diegesis whereby declarative knowledge of the relevant kind could be obtained and a description produced. In effect, we are merely testing and ratifying what we think we know by saying that we expect Manny's world to behave in certain ways and to possess certain properties. This film's world as itself an object must be independent of certain angles of view, even if it is dependent on certain others (e.g., an "implied author's" view). Analytically, then, one may think about this contrary-to-fact hypothesis in several ways. It may be said to represent the spectator's procedural knowledge of the event in any of the following ways:

1 a stipulation about possible facts in the diegesis;
2 the perception of a bystander who could have been created to perceive the event had the author chosen to do so;
3 the perception of a patron of the nightclub who was created by the author and who could have been present, but was not;
4 a view that was seen by no one but might have been seen by someone (cf. the implicit and indefinite POV shot discussed above); or,
5 one or more observers at the scene who are "invisible."
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All of these ways of describing our knowledge of the event make use of counterfactual conditionals. A counterfactual may be accepted as true despite its false antecedent; for example, the statement, "If I had dropped a pear out of the window yesterday instead of eating it for lunch, it would have fallen at an acceleration of 32 feet per second per second," is true. (In fact, it is true even though I have only imagined it as an example in an argument.) Philosophically, these sorts of statement require a special analysis that goes well beyond immediate data; general sets of covering laws and discursive contexts must be weighed and reviewed. Psychologically, this is precisely the sort of analysis best suited to top-down perceptual mechanisms which must be able to handle an enormous number of specific cases that have not yet, and may never, occur. To return to the example from The Wrong Man, I believe that we cannot rid ourselves of such hypotheticals unless we interpret a diegetic event within a different epistemological context (and even then certain conditions may be presupposed). Consider how the following descriptions avoid counterfactuals by invoking other epistemological contexts:

1. "Manny took the subway home after work" (a synopsis: nonfocalized narration).
2. "Henry Fonda, under the direction of Alfred Hitchcock, emerges from the nightclub . . . " (text as historical record).
3. "The early morning hours of January the fourteenth, nineteen hundred and fifty-three, a day in the life of Christopher Emanuel Balestrero that he will never forget . . . " (nondiegetic narration as presented in an opening title).
4. "It was now early morning and Manny was leaving the club after he had played in the band all night. Two policemen suddenly come up behind him as he walks slowly toward the subway station, thinking of nothing in particular. Every step brings them nearer to Manny" (narration in the epic preterite and historical present tenses).

Only the final description seems equivalent to the implied diegetic narration that we have been discussing. But notice in this new description (4) that the anomaly engendered by the counterfactual of an assumed diegetic narration – positing, say, an "invisible" observer who is witnessing Manny's emergence from the club – has been replaced by an equally anomalous verb tense, the "historical present" or "past present." Such a description of time paradoxically combines a past tense or past progressive with a present deictic ("It was now early morning"); "Manny was [now] leaving") and uses the past perfect ("he had played") to indicate an earlier event. In this way the past tense comes to indicate the diegetic present, and the past perfect tense the diegetic past. The entire tense system is thus shifted forward in time so that a past event (Manny's walk) is made to appear in the present ("come up," "walks," "thinking," "brings") while its narration comes impossibly from the future and is premised on knowledge gained after the event occurred. The past is being narrated with knowledge from the present, but when the past becomes the present ("was now"), there seems to be no diegetic place or role remaining for the narrator except as invisible, timeless oracle. Left undefined (indefinite) is the time and place of the telling, as well as the specifics of the knowledge base being exploited by that unknown person(s)/narrator(s)/historian(s). Built into such narration is an evaluation of the past from a perspective much later in time. Thus there arises a fundamental and ongoing tension between presenting a past scene as it is – or, as if it were – occurring now and presenting its "significance," its important aspects, in light of future events which have already occurred: an event's beginning in the "present" must be made congruent with its ending as already known by the narrator.

The essential nature of implied diegetic narration – including interpretive statements about the diegesis offered by a spectator who has adopted the diegetic world as a frame of reference – is captured equally by the historical present tense or by an implied counterfactual. One cannot escape the internal tension in a text between present and future times because some minimal principle of selection and organization must be – must have been – at work. Therefore to the degree that the reader or spectator is able to even more clearly sense in a narrative description what must/will have happened, he or she becomes aware of an implicit authorial narration that overrides the implicit diegetic narration: "was now" is mixed with warning signals to become a "rhetoric of anticipatory caution," to borrow Meir Sternberg's phrase. (For example, camera angles make it appear that the police surround Manny as if to arrest him.) When we use this new information – these more explicit anticipatory signs – as a basis for guesses about the future of the event, then we are attempting to characterize a still more powerful (authorial) narration; attempting, that is, to impose our will on the future of the event being represented, rather than being confined to imagining how it is being lived now by a character. As a result we have moved beyond the historical present of diegetic narration to posit an extra-fictional, authorial narration.

The historical present tense has been a topic of debate among those who theorize verbal narrative. It clearly resembles the "objective," third-person narration of historians since historical accounts routinely offer a fact or an event under a description which could not have been known to be true at the time nor have been witnessed by an observer at the time. (Hence, the explanatory power of such an account.) For
example, "The Thirty Years' War began in 1618" could not have been known to be true in 1618. Arthur Danto maintains that narrative structures are not just at the center of historical inquiry, but in fact "penetrate our [everyday] consciousness of events in ways parallel to those in which . . . theories penetrate observations in science."10 On the other hand, Käte Hamburger and others argue that this way of creating the time of certain "facts" is what actually defines a text as fiction, not fact.11 The consequence is that for Hamburger, first-person narration cannot be "fictional" because of its uncomplicated tense. Without attempting to adjudicate this dispute, I will only remark that Hamburger's claim, in assuming that first-person narration is more likely to be comprehended as free of error and prejudice, seems in danger of confusing narrative with fiction by concentrating on one simple feature they share—a certain organization of temporality—instead of isolating the differing cognitive goals of each. My own approach in analyzing narration is to emphasize the complexity of such temporality whether stated in a "third-person" or "first-person" mode. The fictional or nonfictional status of a given narration is a separate issue.12

SIMULTANEOUS TIME SCHEMES

The existence of the historical present tense suggests that there may be other complicated time systems at work in narrative. Consider some examples of how character thought could be represented:

1. I know Manny must have been thinking about his evening when he left the club (explicit, first-person narration that summarizes/interprets the speech/thought of a character).
2. Manny seemed to be thinking, "It sure has been a long night!" (implicit, first-person external focalization of narrative through Manny).
3. Manny thought about his evening and the subway (unattributed report of an internal focalization).
4. Manny thought, "It sure has been a long night! I wonder if the train will be on time?" (direct discourse, i.e., quoted, interior monologue).
5. Manny felt that it had been a long night and he hoped that his subway train would be on schedule (indirect discourse). [Notice the shift from first to third-person, the back-shift of tenses, a mild use of summary in a propositional format, and the tag clauses—"Manny felt that," "he hoped that."]
6. Sure he was tired but a man like him worked long hard nights and now his train better be on time (free indirect discourse).

In the free indirect version above (6) of internal focalization through Manny, portions of Manny's actual thoughts (4) ("sure," "long," "train," "be on time") have been mixed with a narrator's interpretation of those thoughts in such a way that the reader cannot separate the two nor evaluate the accuracy of the interpretation (cf. the minor change from "night" to "nights" with the major change from indicative mood -"I wonder . . ."—to imperative mood —"[it] better be on time"). The reader knows only that there exists a mixture of internally focalized and narrated descriptions. The narrator's interpretation, of course, may be more perceptive about Manny's thought than is Manny himself. Notice that something similar to the historical present tense ("was now") has reappeared in the free indirect ("was tired . . . now"). Notice also that, with the exception of the direct quotation of Manny's interior monologue (4), the appearance of a verb of consciousness in a sentence need not imply that Manny is thinking in just those words and no others. Similarly, if Manny's experiences were to be internally focalized through images in a film, it does not necessarily follow that the images seen by the spectator must be taken as literal representations of Manny's mental images (or even direct translations of his thoughts as expressed in words). There are many ways of rendering character thought in literature and film without purporting to (nearly) reproduce that thought.13

It seems clear that in comprehending narrative scenes, a perceiver is able to make use of complex time schemes whether he or she is initially confronted by sentences or by pictures, by subjective or by objective representations. The often-stated belief that film images are always in the "present tense" fails to take into account top-down perceptual processing and is inexact even in the simple case of comprehending a scene. As I argued in chapter 1, our experience of time in a text emerges when data is processed and associated. Different experiences of time are related to the complexities of juxtaposition allowed by different methods of associating data (e.g., through a heap, catalogue, episode, etc.). The lines between "scene" and "summary," and "first-person" and "third-person" narration, are not easily drawn even in sentences, much less in pictures.14 Distinctions based on grammatical surface features like pronouns neglect top-down processing, and at best furnish only rough approximations for the spatial, temporal, and causal networks that define our procedural knowledge of an event. How pictures acquire a narrative significance cannot be reduced to how surface features and techniques are delineated, or marked by bottom-up perceptual processing, but instead must be analyzed in terms of the top-down cognitive processes which drive us to offer descriptions and apply (macro)propositions to what is seen and heard and read. One need not worry about whether a shot, or something else in a film, can be equated with a "word," for this equation and similar ones are never reached: neither a shot nor a word is determinative in an analysis of either a film or a sentence.
Complex narrations like the historical present may be analyzed in several ways. I have chosen to collect narrations into broad categories, such as the categories of diegetic narration and internal focalization (see chapter 4). These categories could be further subdivided according to degrees of implicitness and indefiniteness, and their effects on what is given as explicit and definite. An implicit "negative," for example, acts to completely overturn what is explicit, resulting in irony. Certainly other criteria will also be relevant. One could expand this approach even further by deciding to analyze a complex temporal narration in terms of two or more major types of narration which would then be viewed as operating simultaneously. This may well produce incompatibilities which the perceiver must strive to understand and resolve. For example, what is called a "scene" (in the historical present tense) might be a kind of reconciliation between an implicit authorial narration and an indefinite diegetic narration where each balances the other. This kind of analysis begins to approach narration not just as a structure but as a process, and also recognizes that a point may be reached where two narrations cease to be perceived as simply a mixture of separate features but instead become a blend with entirely new properties able to generate entirely new effects.18 (As an analogy, consider that table salt is a blend of a poisonous gas, chlorine, and a corrosive metal, sodium, that reacts explosively with water.) It is important to keep in mind that a complex narration, such as the historical present, is neither ambiguous nor vague, but merely composite and open in a specific way. We are not being asked to choose between two possible narrations, nor are we bewildered by the sentences or pictures which actually appear. The historical present is merely indeterminate – implicit and indefinite – about one aspect of its temporal organization, but is no more confusing than the appearance of indefinite articles in general, such as references to "a tree in someone's backyard."

Complex narrations pose crucial problems for narrative theories. A communication theory of film narrative, for example, must try to locate the communicant of an implicit and indefinite narration, such as implied diegetic narration. That is, when the temporal complexity of a shot is at issue, how is one to interpret the "invisible observer" who creates the present while acting from the future? Is the "invisible observer" a stand-in for an author or narrator (who created the artifact in the "past"), or a stand-in for a narratee (who is prophetic)? Are shots in a film the result of mental images thrown outward by certain entities in an effort to communicate? Is the "invisibility" of an implied diegetic narrator to be thought of as someone's "intention" to communicate "covertly" (i.e., to disguise the communication)? These questions are not meant to be a critique of communication theories, but merely illustrative of the questions which will arise and an indication of the grounds of the debate.

Narrative theories based on "reception" – the responsive activities of the reader or spectator – do not have the above kinds of problem. The invisible observer is merely a shorthand description for a counterfactual conditional statement expressing the spectator's knowledge of an event (e.g., "If I had been there, then this is what I would have seen"). Reception theories must, however, describe invisible observation in more detail if the concept is to have explanatory power. Reception theories must also be careful to avoid a blatant anthropomorphism and especially to avoid a claim that invisible observation is the foundation for a general theory of film, or for a theory of editing in narrative cinema.19

Consider, for example, the following list of the major components of one common type of invisible observation. The list is an attempt to make explicit the assumptions which taken together underlie our comprehension of a scene when that comprehension is stated in terms of one type of "invisible observer."

1. **Invisibility.** The observer has no causal interaction with the events which are witnessed and thus cannot, for example, control the entrances and exits of characters. The observer is an eavesdropper who is unheard as well as unseen.

2. **Ubiquity.** The observer has the ability to move instantaneously throughout scenic space and to remember what has been seen and heard, but not to move forward or backward in time.

3. **Alertness.** The observer is attentive to events so as to be able to avoid obstructions and assume the "best" or "perfect" angle on the action at all times (as in camera position 4 of fig. 14). This implies appropriate shifts in distance.

4. **Neutrality.** The observer assumes a "standard," often straight-on angle to the action. By contrast, an "eccentric" or awkward angle (for example, fig. 42) would be interpreted simply as a failure of ubiquity (see 2 above); or as an emotional reaction, emphasis, or evaluative judgment on the action (i.e., as the appearance of a more powerful and intrusive narration).

5. **Impersonality.** The unique personality traits as well as the gender, age, race, class, etc. of the observer are muted – made indefinite – so that what is displayed is strictly a perceptual experience and, in principle, intersubjective, i.e. regulated by general norms of seeing. This rules out looking into the minds of characters or perceiving data which is impossible for characters to experience, such as nondiegetic music or privileged views (as in the impossible camera movement, figs 31–6). Perceptions are represented as if they were capable of...
films as

Hence our fascination with such complex and explicit "first-person" narratives and their unique structures of objectivity and subjectivity.
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enigma of Charles Foster Kane: he was an inconsistent, ambiguous,
and finally unknowable man.26

Examining Citizen Kane as a whole, one can pick out not just subtle,
but spectacular shifts in the narration that are not unlike those analyzed
in Hangover Square in the previous chapter. There are departures from
the “best view” of an event (e.g., within the “newsreel” sequence, figs
47, 48); impossible camera movements (e.g., three camera movements
involving the side and rooftop of the El Rancho Cabaret including
moving “through” the glass of a skylight); impossible and omniscient
camera movements (which reveal at the end of the film a secret no
character is able to discover); and eccentric views (e.g., Jed Leland’s
memory of an event he did not witness in Susan Alexander’s apartment
that is rendered in six shots, four of which are reflections in a mirror).
In addition, there is an odd present-time (past-time?) reverie of the
dying Kane in the opening scene: five consecutive shots reveal snow
falling inside his room and across his face. For only a portion of one of
these shots do we see that the snow is artificial and falling within a
small transparent globe held in Kane’s hand. But is this the same snow
that is falling in the other shots? The barrier separating an “outside”
of something from its “inside” is thus shown to be problematic; or
rather, it is represented as a barrier that will be penetrated freely in the
film in exploring psychological mysteries and making the past present.

In an ordinary narrative film we may know quite well what a character
is thinking about, and we may even see the distant object that is the
subject of thought. Still, this does not guarantee that a shot of the
distant object is meant to represent the actual contents of the character’s
thought. For example, a character glancing over his shoulder in a sig­
ificant direction, or staring straight ahead fixedly as he travels to
confront someone, need not imply that the object of attention, when
finally shown, must be a representation of a (present or past) mental
image. A simple example: a character stares angrily at a building; cut
to a new character inside the building; then the first character walks
into the room. Although the second shot is clearly tied to the first
character’s plans and goals, it is also “objective” in another sense; as
such, it could be merely an “external focalization” of narrative through
the first character. (“X stares angrily at a building; at that moment,
inside the building, Y....”)

Here is a slightly more complicated example: in Point Blank (Boorman,
1967), we see shots of the Lee Marvin character searching for his
unfaithful lover and hear the powerful, staccato beat of his footsteps.
These images are intercut with shots of the woman in her present
surroundings — which are unknown to Marvin — while the sound of his
footsteps continues over images of her. (In the first shot of her, we see
her eyes spring open as if she has heard his footsteps.) Later we see
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Lee Marvin and hear the footsteps even though he is no longer walking, but waiting and spying on her. Hence this representation seems to have crossed the line from external focalization into a type of internal focalization (obsession, premonition). 37

The examples above illustrate that when we see what we believe a character to be thinking about, we may only be seeing the object of his or her thought as it exists independently in the world even if an obsessive desire for the object continues to be represented. Similarly, when a character remembers the past, we may only be seeing the past as it might have been represented earlier in the story when the character was then living it as the “present.” There are still further, distinct possibilities for the flashback:

1. We see an actual, present memory image of the character (reliving the experience); or,
2. We see what the character remembers has been remembered on other occasions (a mental image formed from repeated retellings of the past); or,
3. We see a summary of the character’s present words as they are being written, thought, read, or spoken, silently or aloud in a monologue or dialogue; or,
4. We see “objective” glimpses of the events upon which the recollection is based but mixed with the character’s desires and fears (cf. free indirect written discourse and the example from Point Blank).

These possibilities raise again the sorts of issue that we considered in discussing how Manny’s thoughts on leaving the nightclub could be represented in direct, indirect, or free indirect discourse, or in other ways. This is no coincidence since a flashback may be taken as merely a special instance of the historical present tense where a character makes the past present for the spectator by providing narration from a (diegetic) “future.” Needless to say, the character in the future is functioning differently in the narration than when he or she is seen captured in the past. One cannot analyze narration in a text without clearly distinguishing the relevant levels of narration that may explicitly overlap as well as the levels that may be presupposed by a representation. It should also be clear that in general representing narrative events in pictures makes them no more explicit, detailed, consistent, objective, certain, present, or precise than representing them in words.

Given a character flashback in a film, then, which of the above interpretations of the sequence is correct? The answer is that it seldom matters! There often is no need for a text to be definite, or for us to decide. (Try to determine the status of Lee Marvin’s footsteps: are they literal or metaphorical? Do they qualify as an aural flashback? If so, whose?) Recall that the “chameleon” text, which I have associated

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with classical storytelling, usually adapts to whatever the spectator first believes about the story. The greater the latitude allowed for the spectator, the greater the number of spectators who may participate. Of course, representations that are less explicit and definite create dangers as well as opportunities for storytelling. I would like to examine two films—one in the next section and one at the end of the next chapter—that exploit the intricacies of flashback narration to make a great many possibilities count. These films will show some of the ways in which our narrative comprehension of objective and subjective, past and present, may be profoundly challenged and, in some cases, rendered inadequate.

MULTIPlicity IN LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAn

Lisa’s voice-over narration and the film’s imagery

Max Ophuls’s Letter from an Unknown Woman (1948) was the first film Joan Fontaine produced through her independent production company, Rampart. It was a romance adapted from a Stefan Zweig novella and designed for an audience of women. Joan Fontaine plays the tragic heroine whose continuous, confessional voice-over dominates the action. In spite of the fact that it is a classic “woman’s film” focused almost entirely on a woman, I believe that it is marked by a relentlessly masculine attitude. The masculinity, however, emerges only when one examines the subtleties and contradictions of the film’s narration. An important component of any narration concerns what has been excluded from the story—what has not been selected, given a duration, organized, and emphasized in the telling. In Letter from an Unknown Woman, a hidden and powerful masculine discourse can be traced through a series of omissions and incomplete structures. By closely examining the film’s narration, I will demonstrate how a text may exploit what is missing and undecidable about a narration in order to raise fundamental issues about character and spectator perception. In this case the issues specifically concern gender, the developing sexuality of an adolescent girl, and how a world may be made and encountered through one’s body. It will also be discovered that different conceptions of narrative, and narration, underlie some of the sharply different interpretations of the film offered by critics.

The film opens one night in Vienna at the turn of the century with a handsome, dissolute concert pianist, Stéfan Brand (Louis Jourdan), preparing to flee from a duel that has been arranged for dawn. His mute manservant, John, hands him a letter. He begins reading and we hear the voice of Lisa Berndle (Joan Fontaine) speaking the words of the letter:
By the time you read this letter, I may be dead. I have so much to tell you and perhaps very little time. Will I ever send it? I don't know... If this reaches you, you will know how I became yours when you didn't know who I was or even that I existed.

Stefan does not know who has written the letter or what relationship he might have had with the woman. As Lisa continues to speak, we move into the past and see her as a 15-year-old adolescent schoolgirl who becomes infatuated with her new neighbor, Stefan, and the music she hears him play. Lisa's secret love for him grows into an obsession and even though her family moves away from Vienna, she admits that "Quite consciously, I began to prepare myself for you." She becomes a young woman of eighteen, returns to Vienna, and is finally able to contrive a meeting with Stefan. They spend a passionate night together, then are separated; Lisa gives birth to their son, Stefan Jr, and nine years later marries a wealthy, high-ranking military officer, Johann, who adopts her son, knowing the father's identity.

By chance several years later Lisa meets Stefan again. He does not recognize her but believes they may have met in the past. She goes to his apartment at night but still he does not remember her. Devastated, she leaves the apartment to roam the streets. Within days her son dies of typhus. We then see her the day after her son's death, writing the letter to Stefan shortly before her own death from typhus. We realize that Johann, who had followed Lisa to Stefan's apartment, is the person who has challenged Stefan to a duel.

Four times during Lisa's voice-over in the film, we return to the present to see Stefan reading the letter. When he reaches the final page, a note informs him that the writer had died before finishing it. Stefan is finally able to remember Lisa and we see his memory images which are fragments from previous scenes narrated by Lisa. When John writes Lisa's name on a piece of paper, Stefan learns that John had not forgotten her.

The carriage arrives to take Stefan to the duel. He decides to accept certain death. Stefan climbs into the carriage after seeing a final image of the 15-year old Lisa and hearing her voice. "Oh, if only you could have recognized what was always yours, could have found what was never lost." The film ends with the departure of the carriage which parallels the beginning of the film with Stefan's arrival in the carriage.

Unlike the flashback structures of Lady in the Lake or Citizen Kane, the representation of memory in Letter from an Unknown Woman raises immediate and unsettling problems. I would like to summarize some of these problems by listing various ways in which one might interpret Lisa's voice-over narration, specifically, the relationship of her words to the accompanying images.
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Even if the viewer were to split apart voice-over and image by imagining them arising in different temporal contexts, or were to assume that one of them might be objective while the other is subjective, difficulties will remain. In order to account for the complexity of the film, I believe that additional sonic and visual elements will need to be separated from one another and that elements excluded from the narration will need to be considered. Furthermore, since the viewer comes to believe that the film is accurately reporting events, the possibility arises that non-character narrations are interacting with, or supplementing, narrations attributed to Lisa and Stefan.

It is a fact that Lisa's letter delays Stefan's escape and in some measure causes his death. Therefore what judgment of Lisa is the viewer expected to make? The answer to this question will depend in part upon the viewer's assessment of Lisa's intentions which, in turn, will depend upon which Lisa is being represented at a given moment (i.e., the 15-year-old, the 18-year-old, or the dying Lisa), how deeply and accurately the film enters her consciousness, and how often there are fluctuations in the degree to which events are rendered objectively, or subjectively. Critics are greatly divided on these questions. One reason for the lack of consensus is that Ophuls creates a measure of uncertainty about Lisa's motives while clearly dramatizing the intensity of what she feels. She is an unknown woman in more than one sense. Karel Reisz observes:

[Ophuls's] approach to character is oblique, under-emphatic, hinting at emotions rather than portraying them directly. Lisa's story is recounted with great tenderness and revealing detail, but the real source of her passion somehow never emerges: it is too superficially motivated and remains, at last, unassessed.33

To illustrate the interpretive difficulties that result from Ophuls's approach to telling the story, I will pick six possibilities — from extreme to relatively moderate — for the rendering of events through Lisa's subjectivity. I will correlate these degrees of subjectivity with the kinds of judgment we might make of Lisa.

1 The film plunges very deeply into Lisa's consciousness. She is an obsessed, hysterical romantic; she lives a fantasy existence where the perfect love can be perfect only in heaven.34 Some of the events we see may be part of a hallucination by Lisa or the product of a delirium associated with typhus.
2 Lisa is overcome with her hopes and dreams. She forces Stefan to share those dreams. By writing the letter, she makes her memories become his, and he goes to his death.35
3 Lisa unintentionally draws Stefan to his death.36

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4 Lisa is a victim of her own personal feelings as well as the selfishness of Stefan.37
5 Lisa is a tragic heroine caught "between what she conceives of as a biologically rooted duty and her spiritual wish to be free" within a rigid, patriarchal society.38
6 Lisa and Stefan are innocent victims of a malicious fate. The film portrays their world in an objective way.39

Tony Pipolo adopts an extreme, subjective position. He claims that Ophuls fully evokes Lisa's consciousness by linking the various postures, movements, and framing gestures of the camera with the various moods of restlessness, contemplation, anticipation, and dejection of Lisa, the unknown woman. . . . [Ophuls] invests a silent image, a slight camera movement, an unusual camera angle with heightened emotional power that instantaneously conveys exhilaration, joy, despondency. Such a close correspondence between the camera's attitudes and the character's emotional and psychological states can be found throughout the film.

Pipolo concludes:

As a result, [Ophuls] has achieved much more than an approximation between camera view and character consciousness, for at such moments as those described, the camera almost attains an actual consciousness itself. In effect, . . . the correspondences between character and camera "behavior" amount to this: the camera is personified to the degree that it acts in unison with, and often as a substitute for, the character consciousness which controls it.40

Moreover, for Pipolo it is not just the camera which embodies Lisa's consciousness, but also the mise-en-scene, shot composition, editing, and sound.41 Pipolo is able to reach these conclusions because he has a holistic theory of narrative (see chapter 5).

George Wilson promotes a more moderate view of the film's narration. He permits non-character narrations to coexist with Lisa's voice-over so that the viewer is able to clearly see what Lisa cannot see, namely, that she has an imperfect understanding of herself. These non-character narrations allow Lisa to be "viewed throughout with tact, sympathy, and serious affection." Indeed for Wilson the film is able to promote the idea that certain mysteries cannot be penetrated or understood and hence that Lisa cannot be judged.42
I would like to look closely at a few sequences in the film that draw the attention of most commentators and a few sequences that no one notices. My aim will be to untangle some of the complexities of the narration as well as to demonstrate some of the assumptions about narrative that underlie diverse interpretations of the film.

Early in the film there is a scene in which the 15-year old Lisa steals into Stefan’s apartment in order to walk through his rooms and touch his belongings. In one room she discovers his piano. With her back to the camera, she slowly walks toward a sofa. The camera moves smoothly to center not Lisa, but the piano in the background about thirty feet from Lisa. There is now a cut to Lisa on the far side of the piano walking slowly around it to touch the keyboard (figs 49, 50). What is startling about this cut is that no spectator ever notices the flagrant disregard of space: Lisa has leaped over the sofa and the piano to travel thirty feet across the room. This powerful effect of forgetting is the result of comprehending the narrative. For the first second of shot 2 (twenty-eight frames), we do not see Lisa. (I will assume that we disregard her shadow on the wall which places her just off-screen!) One second of screen time, however, is apparently enough to make the actual time that must have elapsed in crossing the room vanish; in its place is something less easy to measure – our anticipation of her anticipation. Our anticipation is an imaginary time attributable to Lisa’s desire for Stefan through his piano. Fixated on the piano, she advances toward it, and the spectator completes the action; or rather, the spectator constructs a virtual time in which the action is realized.

On a fairly basic level, then, we see that one of the ways that narration may create a virtual reality is by leaving something out, leaving something behind; in this case, the time of walking across the room. The film’s narration creates Lisa as a narrator/character who is creating a fantasy that will exact a price: she and her illegitimate son will die of typhus. However, the film also represents Lisa and her punishment more subtly and in ways that continue to draw upon what is missing and excluded from the story. Here is where a masculine discourse addressed to the spectator will make itself known in the film.

Shortly after touching the piano, Lisa is discovered by John and flees from the apartment. She rushes onto a staircase and is shocked to discover her mother secretly kissing a man – an act not unrelated to Lisa’s own secret longing for Stefan. Nevertheless, for Lisa it is an illicit view – one of many views she must deny having in the film. In fact, the film’s narration will consistently work to dispossess Lisa of a viewpoint and take away her power to see, leaving only, as it were, blind desire.
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Another example of the film's exclusion of Lisa occurs when the 15-year-old Lisa spies on Stefan late one night as he brings a woman home to his apartment. We watch from behind Lisa as she stands in the shadows on the staircase above Stefan's entrance hall. Holding Lisa on the right, the camera displays her illicit view and follows Stefan as he leads an unknown woman into his apartment. Later in the film from the identical camera position we watch as Stefan late one night brings the 18-year-old Lisa home to his apartment for the first time and the camera again follows him as he leads her into his apartment, the unknown woman-to-be. It is evident that Lisa has become that other woman she saw as an adolescent. The spectator witnesses this transformation from a viewpoint on the staircase associated with a now absent character — the 15-year-old Lisa. The 18-year-old Lisa can no longer be a witness because she has become Stefan's object, an object of his sight and touch.

George Wilson argues that the repetition of the camera position on the staircase is meant to show that the 18-year-old Lisa lacks self-awareness. He finds it significant that in the first staircase shot Ophuls chose not to represent Stefan and the other woman through a point-of-view shot attributed to the adolescent Lisa because such a shot would not afford the sharpest comparison between the two epistemological fields. Tony Pipolo, however, argues for another interpretation of such repetition in the film since he believes that "Lisa's and the camera's consciousness are, for the most part, one and the same." Thus, he claims, repetition "perfectly manifests the behavior of [Lisa's] fixated consciousness." In particular, the repeated camera position on the staircase is an "involuntary projection" of the 18-year-old Lisa, and the camera movement which follows her as she is being led into Stefan's apartment is the 18-year-old Lisa's "invisible but vibrant consciousness re-viewing a memory [of what she experienced on the staircase when she was 15 years old]."

It seems to me that the film oscillates between portraying Lisa as a distant, unacknowledged subject who is denied a legitimate position of view and portraying her as overpowered by an intimacy wholly defined by the male subject, Stefan. Lisa is thus depicted as an object of both fear and desire, as someone to be kept at a distance and brought close. Her subjugation — or, "sacrifice" as some would say — begins with an early scene in which the 15-year-old Lisa is in the courtyard listening rapturously to Stefan's music. She has not yet seen Stefan, only heard his music. The spectator, however, sees more than the adolescent Lisa. Seven shots of Stefan at the piano are intercut with eight shots of Lisa conversing with a girlfriend in the courtyard. In the following diagram I have arranged the seven shots of Stefan in sequence with the largest scale shot (two extreme long shots) at the top and the smallest scale (two close-ups) at the bottom.

One notices immediately that when the seven intercuts of Stefan are placed together they form a familiar pattern by which space is developed in classical narrative: a detail shot (set-up 1) followed by an establishing shot, and then progressively closer shots until a "climax" is reached (in this case a repetition of the initial close-up, set-up 1; fig. 51) followed by a gradual expansion of the scale to close the sequence.

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Set-ups

1. high angle close-up of hands at keyboard
2. extreme long shot of Stefan at piano
3. long shot of Stefan at piano

Thus if Lisa's voice-over is truly in control of every aspect of the film, then it would seem that her consciousness is organized in classical Hollywood fashion to promote continuity and clarity; or alternatively, that a non-character narration has organized the space surrounding Stefan's piano in order that Lisa's relationship to Stefan might be experienced in a particular way by us.
The courtyard scene excludes Lisa in a remarkable way. She is not present to have any of these views of Stefan; she can only imagine them from the courtyard, or remember having imagined them while writing the letter just before dying. Yet Stefan’s hands are being emphasized in relation to the absent Lisa. The first shot of the fifteen-shot courtyard scene shows Stefan’s hands at the keyboard (set-up 1). It is marked by an introductory and closing dissolve which leaves the space of the hands initially undefined and relatively “free-floating.” The two dissolves are not directly related to the voice-over narration nor to a break in time since the music being played is not interrupted between shots 1 and 2: rather, the dissolves allow the hands to become a detail shot for two spaces: the interior room where Stefan is playing the piano and the courtyard where Lisa is gently swinging on a swing. Further, as we shall see, the hands will become part of a complex and intricate causal pattern that will extend beyond these two spaces and beyond the playing of a piece of music on a particular day. Although this causal pattern will not draw our attention through paradox or “impossibility” as in *The Lady from Shanghai* where a woman apparently causes a car to crash by pressing a button (see chapter 2), it will nevertheless reverberate across the film as part of an emerging, nondiegetic metaphor linking Stefan’s hands to Lisa’s femininity: to desire, memory, loss, rejection, danger, and death.51

The second shot of the courtyard scene begins by revealing a second-floor window in extreme long shot from which we hear the music; the camera then moves down and back to further establish the space of the courtyard and reveal Lisa on the swing as seen through a V-shaped fork of a tree.52 This second shot thus explicitly defines two distinct spaces separated by a barrier (the second-floor window) but joined through the sound of Stefan’s music and the image of his hands at the piano. The barrier creates a disparity of awareness between Lisa and Stefan that is exploited by the narration to merge Lisa’s aural point-of-view with Stefan’s hands.

The five shots of Stefan at the piano (set-ups 2 and 3) continue to show us his hands reflected in the raised lid of the grand piano. The climactic shot of the hands (set-up 1*) occurs between two long shots of Stefan at the piano (set-up 3); these three shots appear together in a concentrated burst, embedded in the courtyard scene. There has been, however, one significant change in the shot of the hands for the climax (set-up 1*): we now see them from below rather than from above (fig. 51). The time being marked here is not simply that of obsessive recurrence, or of Lisa’s obsession with Stefan from the courtyard below, but also is ordered and developmental on a larger scale, and as we shall see, still incomplete.
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the shot of her kneeling at the piano summon to mind that earlier shot from the courtyard scene (fig. 51) which defined her wish to be near his hands. At the end of the film, then, Lisa’s delayed POV expands to include Stefan. Though strictly she is no longer an unknown woman, she is still absent for now she exists only in his memory; her POV remains fragmented. The repetition of the medium close-up of Lisa’s face at the piano in Stefan’s flashback thus suggests a fourth temporal context relevant to our interpretation of the courtyard scene: (4) the dying Lisa’s desire to narrate her story in order to make herself known and present to Stefan, and become loved by him. Like other authors, Lisa seeks to present a story objectively even though in telling the story there is no way to avoid speaking the desire that underlies the pairing of events (no matter how delayed) into narrated, causal sequences. Although her letter ends in mid-sentence (“If only . . .”), it can now be completed by Stefan – and his love affirmed through his decision to die – because the events that he is interpreting narratively through the “historical present” of Lisa’s letter already embody what must/will have happened. In this way, the courtyard scene as narrated by Lisa – especially the images of Stefan’s hands – contains a future tense.

From the preceding analysis it would seem that at least four time schemes are relevant simultaneously in the courtyard scene and that no simple ascription of objectivity, or of a character’s subjectivity, will fully account for the spectator’s response to the images accompanying Lisa’s voice-over narration. I believe that a number of narrations are operating simultaneously in the film; that is, several contexts are relevant to the interpretation of a given image, not merely the context afforded by the immediate time of the characters nor the time of the plot. In particular, I would like to suggest that the narration which produces Lisa’s delayed POV shot (fig. 53 with fig. 51) as well as other measurements of large-scale change (e.g., the two identical camera positions on the staircase) is a special case of implied authorial narration. I will call it hyperdiegetic narration. Jacques Aumont has noticed another example of such narration in the opening scene of The 39 Steps. He argues that if the spectator were to imagine shot 14 out of sequence and then juxtapose it with shot 22, he or she would see the true relationship between two men as well as appreciate the future importance of this relationship to the events of the story. The narration needs to introduce the men through an early encounter, but also needs to conceal important aspects about their relationship. Hence the shots are separated in the opening scene and their significance attenuated by other actions. Aumont remarks that since the juxtaposition of shots 14 and 22 is “diegetically unactualized” in the plot, the true significance of the event is “unreadable to the spectator.” Even though the narrative significance here is not derivable “from a simple seeing,” the articulation

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nevertheless "is effected in a directly symbolic " and purely visual way.55

The hyperdiegetic, then, stands for the barest trace of another scene, of a scene to be remembered at another time, of a past and future scene in the film (a hybrid scene), or of a scene that is evaded and remains absent. I have urged that what is deferred and finally denied in Letter from an Unknown Woman is a position for its heroine, Lisa. I believe that if the spectator wishes to understand the film's complexity as a "woman's film" within a historical context of patriarchy, one will need to give up simple answers to the problems posed by its surface narrations, and instead search for opposing, masculine discourses interwoven with feminine discourses.

Tania Modleski argues that women spectators are attracted to Letter from an Unknown Woman because it portrays a tragic situation for women: "Lisa's is the classic dilemma of what psychoanalysis calls the hysterical woman, caught between two equally alienating alternatives: either identifying with the man or being an object of his desire." Later in her argument she reverses her contention: "Closer analysis, however, reveals that Stefan is the hysteric . . . whereas Lisa adopts an altogether different relationship to time and desire which points beyond this deadly antinomy." Modleski concludes by claiming that films like Letter from an Unknown Woman actually appeal quite generally to men because they provide

a vicarious, hysterical, experience of femininity which can be more definitively laid to rest for having been "worked through." . . . And it may be that one of the appeals of such a film for women is precisely its tendency to feminize the man, to complicate and destabilize his identity.60

For Modleski Letter from an Unknown Woman is still a "woman's film," even though it is also a story of and for the male. Modleski is able to respond to the subtle conflicts among the film's narrations which are speaking differently to men and women because she believes that narrative is ultimately driven by contradictory and unconscious psychic states, by human instincts and dreams, involuntary memory, loss and nostalgia. For her, the master plot is the one specified by Freud where contradictions and reversals are both fundamental and fundamentally different for men and women.69

Robin Wood offers another response to the ambivalence elicited by the film.

The fascination of certain films depends on our (often uncomfortable) awareness of the suppressed, ghostly presence of an alternative film saying almost precisely the opposite, lurking just beneath
FICTION

FICTION AS PARTIALLY DETERMINED REFERENCE

Narrative and fiction are quite different things even if they often appear together in public. Narrative involves such processes as creating a scene of action, defining a temporal progression, and dramatizing an observer of events. Narrative is a particular way of assembling and understanding information that is best contrasted to a nonnarrative way of assembling information. Nonnarratives may be found in classifications, inventories, indexes, diagrams, dictionaries, recipes, medical statements, conference papers, job descriptions, legal contracts, and in many other places.

By contrast, "fiction," and its opposite "nonfiction," involve a quite different question, namely, how can the data that has been organized into a narrative, or nonnarrative, pattern be connected, matched, or fitted to the world and to our projects in the world? How do we find pertinent relationships between data and world? The assumption here is that our ability to understand a narrative, or nonnarrative, is distinct from our beliefs as to its truth, appropriateness, plausibility, or realism. In understanding, we make connections and construct patterns by using references; in believing, we make connections to the world, to a "referent" in the world, by using constructed patterns. We may understand a narrative, or for that matter, a sentence, without believing in it just as an argument may be valid (i.e., the relations among the premises may be logically correct) without the conclusion being true. This division between understanding and belief - between comprehending that a pattern is narrative as opposed to judging its accuracy or relevance in a world - directly raises the problem of how a text may be taken as true, if at all, in one or another interpretation and how it may have consequences for our conception of the ordinary world. A study of the fictional aspect of narrative is concerned with how we are able to learn from/through narrative, with how we come to believe in a narrative "truth" and find a value in it. In believing, we do more than believe that we comprehend; we discover a connection to our world.

A reader may interpret a text fictionally or nonfictionally, or in both ways. The analyst's task is to define what the reader is doing - what sorts of mental calculation are being made - when a portion of a text is responded to in one way rather than another. Ultimately both ways of responding (if successful) connect to the world; both are "real" in the sense that they have the power to teach us something about the world. Additionally, both fiction and nonfiction may utilize either literal or figurative representations. (For example, both a fictional character and Winston Churchill may be depicted metaphorically as a bulldog.) Thus neither truth-claims nor rhetoric can be taken as features that distinguish between fiction and nonfiction. Rather, my argument will be that the method or procedure for making decisions about assigning reference is different in each case even if the results are the same (i.e., knowledge about some condition in the world).

The problem of how a fiction is able to procure belief is seldom discussed in the field of film studies; when it is discussed, it tends to be lost within a crazy quilt of related issues involving realism, film technology, rhetoric, documentary genres, ideology, the spectator's hallucination/fascination with film, and whether style is invisible or contrived. Philosophers, however, have sharpened the issues while proposing many theories of what constitutes a fictional relationship with the world. My present purpose is not to survey alternative theories in detail but merely to illustrate the claim that narrative and fiction are distinct areas of inquiry, and to offer one theory of fiction that is consistent with my approach to narrative.

It is clear that we are influenced by, and learn from, fictional statements even though they are literally false. According to John Searle:

Fiction is much more sophisticated than lying. To someone who did not understand the separate conventions of fiction, it would seem that fiction is merely lying. What distinguishes fiction from lies is the existence of a separate set of conventions which enables the author to go through the motions of making statements which he knows to be not true even though he has no intention to deceive.

The problem, then, is to describe the "conventions" that allow an author to pretend with no intention to deceive, and a reader to learn without relying upon the pretense. An individual does not mistake a fiction for the real world; fiction is neither an "illusion" nor a "false belief." Rather, fiction seems to require that an individual connect text and world in a special way, that is, through a different type of logic than is used with, say, a verifiable proposition, inductive statement,
or axiom. Experiment, evidence, and stipulation are not relevant to establishing the truths (or falsities) of fiction. What sort of procedure, then, is relevant; that is, how does fictional reference refer?

According to Hartley Slater, fictional terms denote real things, though not determinate ones. The real thing denoted is not indeterminate in the sense that it is some curious “vague” object in a “possible” world; rather it is indeterminate in the sense that it is not yet fully specified, i.e. not controlled entirely by features of the fictional terms. For example, if “a is a picture of b” is taken as a fictional relationship between “a” and “b,” then it would be understood on the model of “g is an outfit for a gentleman” which is not an assertion that there is some nameable, actually or not actually existing gentleman the outfit was designed for (or that it was designed for every gentleman), but, instead, as leaving open which gentleman (or gentlemen) would suit it. A fiction does not determine exactly which object or objects it represents, and this openness is what distinguishes fictional reference from other sorts of reference. An element of choice is built into the text requiring the perceiver to search and exercise discrimination in assigning a reference to the fiction and in applying it to a more familiar world.

Consider as an analogy the equation, \( x + y = 1 \). Although this equation specifies a rigid interdependence among its terms, it does not determine a unique solution as does the equation, \( x - 1 = 0 \). The first equation is only “partially determined” or “incompletely determinate” and requires another function for its full solution, or several functions if additional variables are introduced. By analogy, to interpret a symbol fictionally is to operate in a precarious, intermediate zone between sets of possible references (open functions) and a specific reference (a given “solution” or “referent”). Interpreting a symbol fictionally requires that one qualify the immediacy of the symbol itself: its material presence must not imply an immediate reference, nor a simple reference to something atomic, nor indeed any reference at all, much less one that is true or false in our familiar world. Further information and calculation is required. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that prior to the approximate age of seven children assume stories to be either “real” or mere nonsense. Not until after this age do children firmly expect stories to be something “made up,” that is, something new and more complex; neither “real” in any ordinary way nor mere nonsense. Considered as a cognitive activity, fiction is a complex way of comprehending the world in which one is first required to hold open sets of variables while searching for a reasonable fit between language and lived experience, between sets of symbols and acts of the body. In appreciating a fiction, one cannot judge it piecemeal; nor can it be collapsed into a kind of comprehension whereby if it makes sense, it must be real.

How does a perceiver search for a reasonable fit between fictional language and the world? Complex predicates in a text (e.g., “Sherlock Holmes lives on Baker Street, plays the violin, and becomes irritable when his rational powers seem inadequate to a task.”) are first evaluated within a structure of knowledge (e.g., sets of schemas) already possessed by the perceiver. These complex predicates may effect changes in a schema through altering its organization, or altering the methods of its regulation and retrieval. Fiction has a major impact on the processes of sorting and matching which operate within a perceiver’s memory. For example, if our concept of a chair were suddenly to change after visiting an exhibition of contemporary art, then what was formerly true of chairs (or of “rationality” prior to a redescription under the label “Sherlock Holmes”) may now be false, and we may come to see chairs (or solutions to problems) where we saw none before.

L.B. Cebik argues that “The sentences of fiction... do not imply general truths in the sense of being evidence for them. Rather, they imply general truths in the sense of presupposing them.” That is to say, fiction moves backward to presupposition, prior belief, and knowledge rather than forward to derivation and confirmation. According to Cebik, in claiming to understand certain sentences of fiction, one is committed to the acceptance as true of another set of sentences outside of the text (that state the general truth which is presupposed). I believe that in order to understand how fiction works on us, it is necessary to understand how the mind works with knowledge. As we saw in chapters 1 and 2, knowledge is not distributed in a random fashion in a person’s mind; rather, it is organized according to its means of retrieval. Most importantly, it is represented, i.e. encoded in particular forms which are quite different from visual or auditory stimuli. I believe that Cebik’s notions of implied general truths and prior beliefs can be analyzed in terms of schemas. In short, what is “presupposed” is contained in schemas and other forms of organized knowledge.

The measure of indeterminateness built into a fictional text, then, acts to delay and expand the kinds of searching and restructuring of prior knowledge undertaken by a perceiver. In Freudian terms, incomplete textual reference could be said to function as a “disguise” necessary for slipping such fantasies as castration, the primal scene, family romance, and seduction, past the censor into conscious thought (albeit in distorted form) in much the same way that the unconscious circulates “unacceptable” desires through dream and daydream by altering their form, or “recognizes” those desires when they appear in altered form, such as in a joke that is heard. The “presuppositions” which are exposed through fictional reference are interpreted by psychoanalysis as the very “preconditions” of thought itself – the preconditions that underlie, or “drive,” the schemas and other mental structures studied by cognitive psychology. Thus indefinite reference does not mean that...
we can’t have specific and intense emotional reactions to fiction; quite the contrary, indefinite reference may facilitate such reactions. Let me summarize by offering a general characterization of fiction that takes into account a perceiver’s structure of knowledge, or “presuppositions.”

A “fiction” is neither simply false nor obviously true but initially is merely indeterminate and nonspecific. The challenge of fiction is to discover what it is about. Fictional reference is judged on a case by case basis and is ultimately decided through the filter of a perceiver’s already existing (and perhaps now reorganized) structure of knowledge, or presuppositions. In fiction we must try out descriptions (“x is a y”) until a good one is found for present purposes. By contrast, in nonfiction no initial redescription is necessary since we assume as a starting point for our interpretation that the reference is determinate, particular, and unique (“this is x: It exists as such”). In nonfiction, our purpose is to accumulate evidence to confirm a thesis or topic whereas in fiction our purpose is to discover how the text refers to what we already know. In fiction, there is always the possibility that a new referent or description which better fits the text and our presuppositions will be discovered, thus altering its application and truth value. Hence one of the values of fiction resides in its ability to explore the assumptions underlying our presuppositions and to suggest how they could be altered by us to fit, recognize, or create, new situations in the world that we deem important. In short, fiction is partially determined reference which is initially neither true nor false; its usefulness must be found and demonstrated.

This characterization stresses that fiction is a particular mental process of assigning reference. However, one should not forget that the word “fiction” may also be applied to the object that stimulates that cognitive process, or the object that is created through that process. In this respect, the word “fiction,” like the word “narrative,” may be ambiguous – designating a process and/or a product of the process.

PSYCHOLOGICALLY REAL THEORIES OF FICTION

In trying to formulate a psychologically real notion of fiction, I am trying to avoid both a theory of symbolic processes that would posit reference to the world as automatic and a matter of empirical verification, as well as a theory which would deny that the real world can serve in any way as a measure of reference. In the latter, idealist theory, meaning and reference are exclusively mental: to every list of properties, even if contradictory, there corresponds an “object,” existent or not.
knowledge. Thus despite the fact that fiction often deals in exotic subjects, a theory of fiction should be built upon a careful examination of our ordinary ways of thinking and our everyday abilities.

**FICTIONAL PICTURES**

As an illustration of the above principles, consider a photograph of an object in a fiction film; that is, a photograph interpreted fictionally in a film. We normally think of a photograph as having recorded the actual presence of an object in accordance with certain physical laws involving chemistry and optics. The object photographed seems to testify to its own existence. Nevertheless, when the photograph is construed as a fictional entity, it becomes a picture of a nonspecific object. Our interpretation is not constrained by the particularity of detail in the photograph, but acts to hold reference open while building complex predicates about what the photograph pictures. In effect, we begin to construct a nexus of labels that define some of our presuppositions about persons. A real person – an actor – who has been photographed is thus transformed into a nominal entity – a placeholder – when interpreted fictionally.

There is no contradiction here. A person in a photograph can be simultaneously both specific and (fictionally) nonspecific in the same way that a photograph of a tiger in a dictionary can be both a specific tiger and many tigers; that is, some tigers not photographed will still qualify as proper referents of the photograph even though they may have, say, different numbers of stripes. Nonspecific photographs thus also acquire a future tense; tigers not yet born may become proper referents. Of course, a photograph in a dictionary is not finally taken to be fictional because the language accompanying the photograph is overwhelmingly denotative and acts to limit and confine the range of possible referents to a specific class. By contrast, a fiction continues to open up references by freely cutting across many classes as linked and coordinate terms are themselves shown to be open.

Just as a photograph may be interpreted fictionally, so also may a word, even one which seems concrete and real. Consider the sentence, “I’m looking for a tiger.” The phrase “a tiger” is ambiguous on a simple level for we can continue by saying either “and when I find it . . .” (i.e., when I find “the” tiger), or else “and when I find one . . .” (or even, “and when I find a tame one . . . ”). I am suggesting basically that fiction asks us to respond in the latter way to statements, namely, to conduct a search on the basis of being offered a partially determined object, signalled by an indefinite article (“an” x). One might object that a photograph of a tiger seems to say, “here is the tiger.” However I believe that a fiction asks us to connect a shot to the actual animal in front of the camera but rather to move forward and backward within the overall sequence of shots and to wait before deciding significance. We are asked to judge the shot as follows: “This sequence of pictures includes a tiger; here is that tiger (the tiger).” Reference does not immediately jump outside of the shot to a specific tiger but is deferred and moves among the shots themselves (the tiger’s relation to a character; the character’s relation to an action; the action’s relation to . . . ). Thus, although we may see “the” tiger, in a larger context it remains a tiger until its significance is further defined. In my view, comprehending a fiction requires a complex realignment of what seems concrete (“the” x) into what is only partially determined (“an” x, or “a certain sort of” x). “Truth” is deferred in order to be judged within a variety of (new) nonstandard contexts. Fictive meaning is typically judged not on the basis of a sentence or a proposition, but on the basis of a discourse, a network of sentences or propositions. Fiction thus operates not between the narrow poles of nonreference and unique reference, but rather between indeterminate or multiple (cross-) reference and unique reference. The truth or falsity of fictive, or indeed nonfictive, reference is a separate issue and concerns reference in the narrow sense of “a referent” that exists uniquely in, or fails to exist in, the world. Fictive reference generally concerns the systematic mapping and exploration of a discourse through indefinite articles (as well as indefinite pronouns) which eventually may, or may not, point toward a unique referent. Fictive reference is well-illustrated by literary formulas which cue us to interpret fictionally by attaching an indefinite marker to time itself; for example, “Once upon a midnight dreary . . .” (Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven”); “One day . . .”; “A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away . . .” (Star Wars, Lucas, 1977); “Vienna About 1900” (Letter from an Unknown Woman).

Jean-Luc Godard’s Band of Outsiders (1964) illustrates the demands placed on a spectator by fictional reference. Early in the film we hear the roaring of a tiger (or a similar sound). Is there a tiger just off screen? Is a character imagining a tiger? Is the sound an aural flashforward to the tiger which will be in the story? or does the sound combine only with the music to form a metaphor suggesting a mood of violence and instability, or dehumanization? Interpreting the sound fictionally means that we cannot trust the “particularity” of the sound since which detail,
or details, of the sound are relevant will depend on defining an appropriate context; or rather, interpreting fictionally means that we cannot decide in advance what will count as a "detail." In spite of these warnings, when the/a tiger suddenly appears in a later scene we are shocked because of the improbable circumstances which lead to its appearance in a parking lot and because we do not expect a tiger to appear in a gangster film. (If the film were about a circus, we would watch and listen for "the" tigers.) The actual appearance of the tiger forces us to reevaluate previous events. For example, what seemed initially to be insignificant—a character searching for meat in a refrigerator—is now elevated to causal significance when the meat is given to the tiger. The result is that we expect the tiger to appear again as part of the story, but we are wrong; it never appears again and was, in fact, only a tiger—peripheral and ephemeral. In the context of the story, it has been converted back into a metaphor. This illustrates the way in which Band of Outsiders as a whole sets up a complex struggle between definite and indefinite reference. The spectator must hesitate and weigh multiple possibilities and wrestle with the ways in which Godard encourages, defeats, and stretches genre expectations by employing, for example, documentary techniques to treat fictional events. Godard's fiction forces us to see that photography, like language, is not unequivocal reference but may be qualified by an indefinite article.

In summary, when a film is experienced fictionally, reference is not to the profilmic event in which a set is decorated and an actor given direction, but rather to a postfilmic event in which patterns are discovered through active perceiving that affects the overall structure of our knowledge. Although the profilmic set design has a (complex) causal relationship to the postfilmic experience of a fictively construed set design, the two should not be confused because different clusters of concepts and theories are relevant to explaining each. The profilmic may be a sufficient cause for some aspects of comprehending the postfilmic but the latter is not merely a reworking of the former. Truth-values for a fiction are projected (top-down) through schemas and presuppositions and cannot be arrived at by a shortcut through causal history. The material nature of the text and its history may be relevant to, but cannot determine, reference. More important are the methods of evaluating and arranging data used by a perceiver in seeking to fit the text with a world already known, i.e. with other data in memory.

One further problem should be mentioned: if fiction may be useful to us, how do we know when to read fictively? Initially we may rely on cues and conventions in the text and interactions with our memory; ultimately, we rely on the "success" achieved in redescribing the text as a social object. Normally a fiction film includes cues which announce its "artifice." (These cues must be read nonfictionally! One must begin

somewhere.) Sets, costumes, composition, music, dramatic dialogue, and other aspects, may signal their role in a scheme of nonlinear and nonspecific reference. The simplest case is the representation of something nonexistent, such as a griffin, which signals its fictional status by an obvious dissimilarity to real things—by being judged a poor picture of either an eagle or a lion—but perhaps a good and true picture of certain yet-to-be-determined cultural presuppositions about eagle-lion qualities and their application to human problems. There are also conventions and genres, such as the romantic melodrama, and the marketing of particular texts, which may prompt a spectator to begin interpreting fictively. In addition, certain types of film editing may suggest that the space and time of a sequence of photographs is decontextualized nonspecific in spite of the apparent concreteness of the individual photographs. This suggests that there are many formal and structural aspects of a film that may encourage us to interpret fictively.

In the previous chapter, I considered how the film Letter from an Unknown Woman functions as fiction in just these sorts of way while placing women spectators in a definite relationship to a patriarchy. In the next two sections, I will analyze the film Sans Soleil which strongly challenges the very line between fiction and nonfiction by deploying incompatible and ambiguous cues to guide interpretation. The result, not surprisingly, is a dense and mystifying experience for many viewers. It becomes all the more baffling when a viewer realizes that the cues and conventions being relied upon are treated as mere devices which may themselves be authentic or counterfeit, adopted or refused. This directly raises the question of how a text—whether fiction or nonfiction—may have a referent and be true. Sans Soleil will bring us full circle: in attempting to show how narrative fiction may acquire a referent, we will suddenly discover that the referent of narrative non-fiction may not be certain. What will be illustrated is that film and its modes of reference operate finally within a social setting and are governed by consensus. In exploring a psychology of "narrative" and of "fiction," one is at the same time exploring the social dimension of signification which creates the pertinence of such a category as fiction, establishes its opposite, designs standard types of reference, specifies when reference is not to be taken as specific, and trains our faculties in the proper manipulations. Hence, in dramatizing the power of pictures and language to reorganize knowledge, a text like Sans Soleil declares the suspicion that what is newly organized may be true but only in one world.

NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION AND FILM

FICTION
NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION AND FILM

NONFICTIONAL PICTURES

I would like to consider more closely the boundary between fiction and nonfiction as well as some other boundaries that have been important in this book: narrative and nonnarrative, story world and screen, subjective and objective. As in previous chapters, I will approach these general issues by examining how various responses are being elicited from a spectator. Thus I will be using concepts that relate to the cognitive skills and psychological constraints that make comprehension possible; such concepts as top-down and bottom-up perception, procedural and declarative knowledge, and levels of narration. The notion of multiple levels in a text, for example, provides a useful way of describing complex temporal experiences like the “historical present.” As we shall see, certain nonfiction films attempt to explain the significance of a past event by seemingly reproducing the past, by making the past present for us.

Chris Marker’s Sens Soleil (Sunless, 1982) has the appearance of a nonfiction film. It is not an instructional film, news report, commercial, or political advertisement, but rather a species of nonfiction known as “documentary.” What is a “documentary”? Arthur Danto states that of all the materials available to a historian, “Something is truly . . . a document only if caused by the events it records.” A documentary film testifies to something because it has been produced by the thing itself. Similarly, the images and sounds of a film documentary are said to have a relationship so close to reality that they become proof of, or at least evidence for, the events that were in front of the camera and microphone at a past time. Though seldom stated, these ideas are commonly extended to describe the activities of the spectator of a film documentary who is supposed to be convinced that a set of causal principles similar to those governing the events on the screen are responsible for placing those events on the screen in a given order. That is, the spectator assumes in a documentary that there is a close (causal) connection between the logic of the events depicted and the logic of depicting. Or, to put it another way, the world on the screen has left its trace on film because it is closely connected to our ordinary world and to our familiar ways of depicting.

But what will count as a “close connection” and what really is a “cause”? In answering this question, I will set aside nonfiction films which are constructed using only nonnarrative principles (e.g., a film of the planet Mars made through a telescope to illustrate a scientific paper). Instead I will concentrate on the many documentary films that make use of narrative principles at least to some degree.

I have argued in chapter 1 that causality in narrative is defined through a narrative schema which arranges our knowledge under many different types of

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NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION AND FILM

Thus, as others have argued, the distinction between nonfiction and fiction is not based on truth versus falsity, nor on some process of copying/imitating as opposed to creating/fabricating, nor on the relative degree of manipulation of some pre-existent reality. Instead, I believe that the distinction is based on the social conventions and categories that specify causality for a community. More exactly, I believe that comprehending nonfictionally is dependent upon the conventions that enable us to reason about causality which, in turn, governs our understanding of the specificity of the references being made to the world of a given community.

I would like to indicate briefly how a prominent type of documentary—call it a "classical" documentary—organizes its narration so as to focus the spectator's attention on the specificity of events. This will allow a more precise description of the unusual aspects of Sans Soleil and open new issues about narrative comprehension. My description will be based on the eight levels of narration introduced in chapter 4 (see fig. 19, p. 87).

A classical documentary seeks to present an event as nonfocalized and/or externally focalized; that is, to present only its public, or inter-subjective, aspects. Characters are observed acting and speaking, or providing summaries of an event as "witnesses" or participants. Internal focalization through a character is not permitted since a mental experience is not inter-subjective. This rules out such devices as dream sequences, subjective flashbacks, and even point-of-view shots. A character may, however, narrate images of the past in voice-over. Since a character in this situation is exercising a measure of control over the images of the past, he or she is no longer merely an actor within a nonfocalized and/or externally focalized sequence of events; instead, the character has assumed a more powerful role in a higher level of narration which allows him or her to talk about events as those events are presented from another time. Nevertheless, the classical documentary seeks to minimize character voice-over as well as to minimize other, similar narrations that intervene between nonfocalized narration and the historical situation of the filming; that is, to minimize diegetic, nondiegetic, and extra-fictional narrations.

The reason is that in answering the spectator's question—"Is this narration competent and credible in reporting specific events?"—a nonfiction text relies upon an entirely different notion of authority than does fiction. In nonfiction, we begin our interpretation at the "higher" levels of narration and work downward toward the nonfocalized: We begin with a belief in a historically "real" situation and a mechanism of production—such as camera and microphone technology—and then attempt to infer the direct, and relatively unmediated, consequences of the conjunction of that situation and that production, namely, what could be known through nonfocalization. Indeed, a powerful and anonymous third-person voice-over (sometimes referred to as a "voice of God" commentary) may appear in the film to assure us (usually implicitly) of the potency of the technology and its ability to know. Another variant is the first-person, "collective" voice: "We the people." Both narrations create a pure form of the "historical present" tense. By contrast, fiction asks us to begin at the "lower" levels of narration with the mere presence of a picture or word; the direction of inference is reversed as we attempt to construct a plausible set of higher mediations with which to justify the depicted events. Thus the status of what we see in a fiction is initially tentative and contingent (i.e., a nonspecific picture) and its definition will depend upon our faith in an implied author that must be created by us; whereas in nonfiction we begin with an explicit mechanism of production and then attempt to build a faith in the accuracy of the results.

Classical nonfiction presents the historical through the nonfocalized by minimizing the presence of intervening levels, such as diegetic narration. These intervening levels are kept implicit, or else are consistent with other levels, well-motivated, and unobtrusive. In this way, classical documentary seeks to limit the range of interpretations that will be judged to be "correct." By contrast, a fiction seeks to expand the levels of narration in order to provide greater definition for its pictures and words as well as to suggest appropriate methods for converting a fictional world into one that is ordinary. (One can comprehend, say, Star Wars, without believing that its world is ordinary, and yet making it ordinary is what gives it a truth value.) Furthermore, classical fiction—the "chameleon" text—seeks to create a multiplicity of interpretations in order to accommodate what a spectator first believes to be "correct." Both classical fiction and classical nonfiction attempt to discover meanings that lie "behind" (beyond, below) events; they merely start in different places and one expands, while the other contracts, the levels of narration.

Because the classical documentary aspires to map the historical situation of the making of a film into a nonfocalized rendering of events, it is sometimes said to differ from a fiction film by its immediate power to persuade, convince, command allegiance, and solicit action from the spectator concerning a social and historical reality. According to C.G. Prado: "The difference between [fact and fiction] lies not in the contrast between referential and nonreferential language or narrative but in types of responses to narratives, in the differences among answers to the question 'What should I do?'" In the classical documentary, we are being addressed as members of a community. Stated in terms of the narrative schema presented in chapter 1, the "goal," or response to an initiating event, is usually given as social rather than personal.
NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION AND FILM

While it is true that many classical documentaries ask us to take action with respect to a social problem or political issue, I believe that the basic analytical issue is to identify the conventions that tell us that we’re supposed to react as members of a community to an “objective” social problem that is capable of rational solution.

Some of the conventions of classical documentary as indicated above are the following:

1. A rejection of internal focalization;
2. A minimizing of the number of levels of narration that intervene between the historical and the nonfocalized and/or externally focalized;
3. A rendering of intervening levels as consistent and unobtrusive; and,
4. The creation of an anonymous narration to assert (usually implicitly) a power to know through access to a privileged method or technology.

How is the spectator able to judge the presence or absence of these sorts of convention of narration? The answer to this question lies in still more localized conventions. For example, Herb Lightman advises the documentary filmmaker to avoid using reflectors in outdoor scenes since “the rather harsh quality of natural sunlight . . . has a realistic feeling to it that is desirable in documentary.” Lighting for indoor scenes, he says, should duplicate existing light sources so that the added light is not noticeable to the spectator. Lightman also says that the camera should be hidden in crowd scenes to prevent persons from looking into the lens, and that movement of the camera should “never” be unmotivated (cf. camera position 8A-B in fig. 14, chapter 3); instead, camera movement should be used only to follow the action or, rarely, to move along a static subject.4 These sorts of prescription are aimed at reducing the perceptibility of the levels of narration operating between the historical and the nonfocalized. Lightman summarizes: “By keeping himself inconspicuous, by holding his action to a simple pattern, and by avoiding obvious ‘arty’ touches, the director can produce a true documentary feeling on the screen.”4 Lightman is well aware that a “true feeling” is not necessarily the “truth.” Truth and falsity cut across both a fictional and nonfictional comprehension of narration.

Additional prescriptions for the documentary filmmaker can be found in the theories of André Bazin who advocates, for example, long takes, deep focus in on-screen space, “lateral depth of field” in the activation of off-screen space, a relatively unstructured mise-en-scène, “found” stories, camera movements that cannot keep up with the action, and camera positions that are limited by the diegetic conditions governing the events that are being represented (e.g., figs 47, 48).4 For David Alan Black, Bazin’s theory is an example of a “deductive realism” that emphasizes phenomenal reality as opposed to an “inductive realism” that begins by positing the integrity of a fictional diegesis through deferring to a spectator’s usual beliefs about a world.42 Rather than exploring the details of such Bazinian theories, the localized conventions that they sanction, and their fit with the large-scale narrational structures of the classical documentary, I will turn toward Sans Soleil and the challenge it poses to traditional nonfiction narrative.

POST-MODERNISM AND DOCUMENTARY IN SANS SOLEIL

As a first approximation, one might say that Sans Soleil appears to be a travelogue where a number of exotic places are visited (while traveling by airplane, boat, train, bus, subway, and department store escalator) and impressions of different cultures are registered in an ethnographic manner. Here are the major places we see:

Japan
Hokkaido (second largest island of Japan)
Honshu (largest island of Japan)
Tokyo
Nara
Narita International airport
Iceland
Heimaey
Africa
Guinea-Bissau
Bijagos Islands
Cape Verde Islands
Ile-de-France (the “Island of France” is a region of France including Paris)
Holland (we see a bird sanctuary)
Okinawa (largest of the Ryukyu Islands)
Itoman
San Francisco
Island of Sal (a small island in the Atlantic)

The list itself already suggests some themes of the film: island nations, isolation, concentration of culture, cities, non-Western societies, and the contrast between industrial nations and their former colonies. Stories and anecdotes that relate to these themes emerge from each place and are strung together through the overall story of a voyage. In effect, this principle of grouping stories amounts to a catalogue of stories embedded within the narration of a voyage.46

The voyage in the film covers approximately sixteen years, from 1965 to 1981. It is, however, more than a journey from a place of departure.
to a final destination. Indeed the film begins in the midst of a journey from Hokkaido to Honshu, which stirs memories of a visit to Africa. We see excerpts from the African trip during a visit to Tokyo and only much later in the film will we see Hokkaido (when memories of it have been summoned by an event in Tokyo). The various locales in the film are visited and revisited several times; and then brought back again apparently through association and memory. Only a few of the many visits we see in the film are precisely located within the sixteen-year period of traveling. Thus the geographical patterns traced in Sans Soleil are quite intricate and may be mapped in many different ways. In addition, the identity of the person who is making the trip, and the manner in which impressions are being registered, becomes progressively less certain. To make matters still more complex, the film undertakes to document the general problems of documenting a place and culture as well as to speculate about the interpretive problems being posed for a spectator by its own images and sounds.

One could at this point mount an argument that Sans Soleil is better classified as an instance of post-modernism rather than travelogue. One could begin with a list of traits associated with a post-modern aesthetics:*4

1. Lists of things and permutations, rather than a series of events in causal interaction which derive from an origin and move step by step toward a conclusion;
2. Middles without explicit beginnings or ends;
3. Inconclusiveness, indeterminacy;
4. Surface, randomness, and possibility;
5. Diversity and plurality without hierarchy;
6. Fragmentation, dissonance, admixture, layering;
7. Incongruity, rather than unity or purity;
8. Multiple media, eclecticism, pastiche, intertextuality;
9. Pop culture, stereotypes, cult of the everyday;
10. Quotation, distance;

It is possible to match many, perhaps all, of these general traits with effects produced in Sans Soleil. For instance, early in the film the traveler admits that "now only banality still interests me." Accordingly, he proceeds to investigate ordinary life in a society as experienced through popular imagination and mass media. The ordinary, however, is broken up in unexpected ways and rendered fragmentary.*5 Sudden freeze frames, television images, still photographs, and flashcuts forward or backward in time are juxtaposed with hallucinatory long takes of repetitive action and imagery altered by a video synthesizer. The spectator is assailed by a multiplicity of techniques that interrupt and disconnect time, that give space and causality an unstable existence, and that seemingly reduce our experience of time to the mere duration of imagery on the screen. The simple presence of things seems to have triumphed over causality.

But perhaps this interpretation goes too far. The film purports to be the history of a journey in which a traveler recounts the history of various places. If it is a history, then we must ask how a nonfictional narrative can survive in an environment that does not clearly delineate a "before" and an "after" sufficient to establish a causal principle which would enable image and sound to become documentary evidence. That is, how do radical shifts in time from one moment to the next in Sans Soleil, coupled with the invocation of multiple temporal contexts, affect the traditional documentary conceit that the time of a profilmic event can be mapped one to one onto a screen to produce an ordered history of events for the spectator? We will discover that Sans Soleil challenges the premises of the classical documentary and installs a new set of principles to anchor image and sound.

Consider the precredit sequence of Sans Soleil. The sequence functions both as a prologue to the story of the voyage and as a preview of how the story will be told. It consists of the following shots:

1. Fade-in written title:
   "Because I know that time is always time. And place is always and only place..."
   T.S. Eliot – Ash-Wednesday
   Fade-out.
2. Black image.
   VOICE-OVER BY A WOMAN:
   The first image he told me about was of three children on a road in Iceland in 1965.
   VOICE-OVER (cont’d):
   He said that for him it was the image of happiness and also that he had tried several times to link it to other images.
   5. Cut to: an American warplane being lowered from a flight deck into the interior of an aircraft carrier.
   VOICE-OVER (cont’d):
   But it never worked. He wrote me:
6. Cut to: black image.
   VOICE-OVER (cont’d):
   "One day I’ll have to put it all alone at the beginning
of a film with a long piece of black leader. If they don't see happiness in the picture, at least they'll see the black.”

7 Cut to: opening titles, followed by a scene on a boat traveling from Hokkaido to Honshu.

Although the presence of a cameraman is clearly evident in the handheld shot (shot 3), we will never see him nor learn his identity. Instead, an unknown woman who is never seen will read letters from him throughout the film, occasionally summarizing his words:

He described to me . . .
He contrasted . . .
He told me the story of . . .
He saw . . .
He remembered . . .
He imagined . . .
He was pleased that . . .
He didn't like to dwell on . . .
He had tried several times to . . .
Every time he came back from Africa . . .
Everything interested him . . .

She will also make comments on his letters: “He liked the fragility of those moments suspended in time — those memories whose only function is to leave behind nothing but memories.” What is striking about this procedure is that it is not always possible to distinguish the actual writing or the reading of the letters. Is it the man's or the woman's thoughts that we hear? How interpretive are the words meant to be? Whose images do we see? In this way Sans Soleil raises some of the same problems of voice-over and image found in Letter from an Unknown Woman. Both of these films establish a fundamental ambiguity between subjective and objective.

The narration is indeterminate in still other ways. The woman often reminds us that she is reading, not seeing the images that we see (hence her knowledge is limited):

One day he writes to me . . .
He writes me . . .
He used to write me . . .
He wrote me . . .
He said that . . .
He spoke to me of . . .

Moreover, the cameraman is writing about his memory of places and his memory of making a film (hence his knowledge, too, is limited):

I remember that month of January in Tokyo, or rather I remember the images I filmed of the month of January in Tokyo.

Did I write you that there are . . . ?

I think of a world where . . .
I am writing you all this from another world, a world of appearances.

He also frequently quotes other authors and texts. Thus the images we see are explicitly filtered and qualified by a number of “intervening” and supplementary memories that are only partially defined. The proliferation of these sorts of indeterminate narrations — intervening between the historical and the externally focalized — work against the aims of the classical documentary. Because the voices in the film — one heard directly and others heard second and third-hand — are rendered nonspecific (i.e., only partially determined) in the above sorts of ways, the words we hear become fictionalized. The spectator is confronted by the paradox of a fictional commentary, or commentator, alongside nonfictional images that are precise and rich in detail. This raises doubts about the overall causal situation, and hence about the genesis and logic of the images.

The problem of specificity becomes all the more acute in light of the obvious manipulation of sound and image. The hand-held camera, color shift, lack of ambient sound, and the look into the lens in the third shot juxtaposed with black leader and a confessional narration clearly announce that a self-conscious rhetoric will be at the center of the film. The question then is: of what, or which, mental or physical events do the images offer proof?

Matters are not clarified when we consider the status of the black images in the precredit sequence. Are we to understand the blackness as simply the absence of an image, a non-image that allows us to hear something? Or is the blackness instead an image that is somehow unable to show? An image that negates? A missing image? An exclusion? A forgetting? A void? A silence? All of these possibilities, and others, will be raised in various ways throughout Sans Soleil in an effort to explore the limits of understanding an image as a document. In the prologue, for example, the black image seems to provide the viewer with an opportunity to imagine his or her own image of “happiness.” But, at the same time, the black image seems to be exploiting
one of the connotations of the color of blackness as the opposite of happiness (i.e., a despair, darkness, sunlessness) and is thereby anticipating the failure of the viewer to find a suitable image. Even the presumed antithesis of happiness (shot 5) seems unable to bring happiness to mind. The prologue leaves the viewer with the idea of happiness, but without offering its documentary embodiment; instead, the viewer is allowed merely to perceive ("at least they'll see the black."). What is perceived, however, is perilously close to "nothing" and thus should alert the viewer to the fact that the film as a whole will be questioning some of the presuppositions of traditional nonfiction film, such as, the supposed primacy of the image in finding truth and proving reality. As the words we hear assume a fictive (nonspecific) aspect, the details we see become less specific, less tied to an immediate situation, and more tied to the voices in the film, more the pretext for a wide-ranging examination of preconceived ideas. Thus one of the projects of Sans Soleil will be to demonstrate the inadequacy of the epigraph (shot 1): time and place will be shown to be neither concrete nor absolute, nor even visible in certain ways.

During the prologue, the cameraman states that one day he will juxtapose the image of the three children with black leader at the beginning of a film (shot 6). Is that future film, then, the one we are now watching? Later in Sans Soleil, the cameraman returns to a discussion of the shot of the three children. He now says that filming them was his first act toward making "an imaginary film." The shot of the children is not repeated as he speaks; instead we see a series of paths in a bird sanctuary in Holland. Do these paths recall for the cameraman that road in Iceland with the children, or are the paths merely an emblem for travel and search? ("Now why this cut in time, this connection of memories?") He explains in detail the story of his "imaginary film." It involves a time traveler from the future of our planet, the year 4001. The time traveler has lost the power of forgetting so that he carries with him always the unhappiness that has been in the past. The traveler revisits sites of unhappiness in our time and finds them just as unbearable as in his memory. He takes solace only in listening to a song cycle by Moussorgski called Sans Soleil (Sunless). This music is still played in the fortieth century though its meaning has been forgotten. We never see the time traveler nor learn his name, but we do hear the music and we see a series of images of the places he is apparently visiting. We cannot recognize all these images, but some of them strongly resemble places we've seen earlier in the film and others may be near places seen earlier. As we watch these places appear again, there emerges an unmistakable sense that the cameraman himself has become the imaginary time traveler; that is, we come to believe that in telling the story the cameraman is attempting to represent his own feelings of dislocation while traveling. Or perhaps we might say that "Chris Marker" in documenting his travels has come to experience his present in terms of how he imagines it may be experienced in the future; that is, he seeks to recognize in his own activity of perceiving how his memory will in the future rework these events into a history, a causality appropriate to a future moment. In formal terms, we have already analyzed the occurrence of such a time in narrative: the historical present tense. The unknown "time traveler" is simply a device - a way of embodying the presence of a future in events being interpreted narratively in the present. I believe that in this sequence Marker is attempting to capture the fantastic time of making a narrative out of the everyday, and the wonder of finding a possible future already within the present.

The cameraman concludes by saying, "Of course I'll never make that film." This statement raises new questions about the film Sans Soleil, which does, of course, begin with the image of the three children. Are we to think that he changed his mind yet again, and did make the imaginary film - the one we are now seeing - or did he only make one similar to it? The cameraman's statement also raises questions about the shots we have just been watching which purport to be excerpts from the imaginary film, or at least to be samples of what such a film might contain. What have we really seen? Is it as if one were to bestow a certain concreteness onto hypothetical imagery, but only to say later that the gift itself was merely hypothetical. We are left wondering about the status of those views of the time traveler, some of which seem to be actual point-of-view shots: what has been their future?

Incredibly, the cameraman continues to talk about his imaginary film: "I've even given it a title, indeed the title of those Moussorgski songs - Sunless." Is Sans Soleil, then, after all, the real embodiment of the imaginary film? Or rather, in what measure is it to be thought imaginary and tentative, and not a document?

The voice-over for this segment about the "imaginary film" now ends but we continue to hear the Moussorgski music as we see a final six shots which are still-lives. The first shot lasts about fourteen seconds, and the others about three seconds each. The lack of commentary functions here as the aural equivalent of the black images in the prologue: there are no verb tenses to impose a time, measure duration, or order subtle movements in the images. The problem confronting the spectator is how to imagine the time of these final images that are offered as the final word on the imaginary film.

The locale of the six shots is not recognizable from previous shots in the film. We first see a path leading through a tunnel of trees. The wind is blowing and suddenly the light on the trees darkens noticeably as if the sun has gone behind a cloud (shot 1). Next we see a large
foreground tree and lawn (shot 2). Then we see a small interior room with a writing desk and a bright window with trees visible outside (shot 3) followed by a corner of a room with a bed covered by a white bedspread and a bright, oval mirror on the wall (shot 4). Next we see a circular, reflecting pond in the foreground with a tunnel of trees framing a bright white house in the distance (shot 5). Finally we see a close view of part of a circular piece of marble on which rain is falling. The rain has made the marble reflective (shot 6). The sequence allows the viewer to judge these shots as a series of variations on lightness, reflectivity, and circularity. But who has seen, or else who is seeing and imagining, these places, this representation of solitude, of sunlessness (cf. shot 1), of writing itself (cf. shot 3)? Is it the time traveler, the cameraman, the woman narrator, "Chris Marker," or some other person from another time and place in the film? The viewer may wonder, for example, whether the time traveler is attempting to recapture the lost meaning of the music, or whether "Chris Marker" is offering the shots as pictures that could inspire the music—a way of remembering another Moussorgski composition, *Pictures from an Exhibition*. I would suggest that the memory that is in the process of being formed for us through these six shots is expressible only through a complex imbrication of a great many possibilities and as such rivals the complexity achieved by Proust in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. A multiplicity of spatial and temporal coordinates seems to apply. What is being represented in these shots, and elsewhere in the film, is the pertinence of multiple times and the effort of memory.\[\footnote{\textsuperscript{24} Later, near the end of *Sans Soleil*, the cameraman is stirred by an event he witnesses in Japan: the Dondo-yaki, a Shinto blessing of objects that have been part of a celebration but are now debris. The blessing acknowledges a right of immortality for the objects before they are consumed by fire. This event prompts the cameraman to return to a discussion of the image of the three children. On this occasion we see the entire shot, not just the truncated version shown in the prologue. It is as if every frame of the shot has now become precious and must be acknowledged. The shot is presented in the context of footage showing what happened to that place in Iceland five years later in 1970: a volcano erupted and fiery lava obliterated the town where the three girls presumably lived. Does the image of the children now remind the cameraman that it is too late to reconstruct, or remember, the happiness that must have been in the image when it was filmed in 1965? Does the shot now stand for a belated, or lost memory—a memory that should have been recognized as it was being formed in 1965 but instead is recognized only after an act of destruction? He states, "it was as if the entire year '65 had just been covered with ashes." Paradoxically, we might say that the cameraman, in seeing the image again, was now unhappy. The appearance of the historical present tense in this formulation ("was now" unhappy), and the copresence of the antithesis of happiness, suggests the dynamism of memory that is being experienced by the cameraman and represented for the viewer. Memory is functioning independently of the desire to remember and the desire to remember happiness. The cameraman flees from his memory, but only to find another poignant memory. Early in the film we had seen a ceremony for a lost cat in Tokyo. Now he gives us the prayer: "Cat, wherever you are, peace be with you."... I think that we can now appreciate that the image of the three children—the "first image he told me about" as well as the first image we see in the film (shot 3)—is not the start of a journey, but rather, like many other images in the film, was discovered as a complex memory, and acquired its purpose, while he was traveling, or while he was assembling images of traveling. Nor is this image the final image that brings order and purpose to his journey. It is merely one image sharply etched with emotion—the result not of traveling from one place to the next, but of having been in a number of places at once, and of having remembered in different contexts. Representations from/of the past accumulate and conflict, and what perishes is the notion of a unique time and place. I would like to suggest that the film *Sans Soleil* is a cautionary tale. The cameraman is aware that in remembering images he has filmed, he may be too late in recognizing their significance and emotional value. He wishes to compensate by filming images that are "too early." Thus in filming and writing letters, "only banality" and the "ordinary" will interest him. The resulting mood in many sequences of the film might be termed one of "premature nostalgia." Further, the use of complex tenses in *Sans Soleil* (historical present, belated past, premature nostalgia) is meant to raise questions about the power of film to document absolutely only one, past time rather than to simultaneously document present and future times as well. If true, the anomalous time schemes normally created within both narrative and fiction, and associated with a hierarchy of levels of narration, will have a legitimate role to play within "documentary" filmmaking. More broadly, the insistent use of complex tenses is a way of breaking away from conventional forms of temporal articulation. If modernism makes problematic the links among things, and raises the issue of causality, one might say that the post-modernism of *Sans Soleil* never reaches the issue; instead, time is seemingly precursa or postcursa—prior, or subsequent, to a formal periodization of events. Unusual evocations of time, as in *Sans Soleil*, permanently suspend the parts that might otherwise form a causal unity of beginnings, middles, and ends in favor of surveying a field of possibilities: a multiplicity of partially realized narratives and nonnarratives competing equally.}
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A BRIEF CONCLUSION

Sans Soleil is balanced on the edge between fiction and nonfiction. There are a number of intensely subjective sequences within Sans Soleil (e.g., the bird sanctuary in Holland, the boat trip from Hokkaido, a "description of a dream" in the subterranean tunnels of Tokyo and on a train) as well as scenes about the problems of depicting the imaginary (e.g., a partial reconstruction of Hitchcock's Vertigo (1958)). These sequences are coupled with a measure of indeterminateness about person, time, and place so that both voice and the resultant dream are fictionalized. Nevertheless, there are other elements in the film that are highly specific and unique (e.g., the hand-held camera which seems to respond directly to the diegetic world, the savage death of a giraffe, visits to prominent landmarks). The blending of nonspecific and specific forces the viewer to interpret events both fictionally and nonfictionally.

Sans Soleil is also balanced precariously between narrative and non-narrative. Stories and anecdotes collected during a journey are arranged in a dramatic way to suggest the changing attitude of the traveler toward memory and history (e.g., his recognition of the significance of the children in Iceland, his discovery of various kinds of thirst). On the other hand, the appearance of complex time schemes - beyond "before" and "after," shall we say - is part of a post-modernist aesthetic which halts the careful ordering of a cause and effect chain in favor of pursuing multiple, perhaps infinite, sets of affinities among groups of objects. The result is neither catalogue, concordance, nor index, but rather something like a "hyperindex" of stories where one can begin with any world with one time, but of a world of worlds in multiple times. The relatively open, associational logic of such an arrangement of data produces an experience of time quite different from local, unidirectional cause and effect. Hence Sans Soleil becomes the experience not of a world with one time, but of a world of worlds in multiple times.

The simultaneity of fiction and nonfiction, narrative and non-narrative, permits Sans Soleil to explore some of the general forms of intelligibility available in our society. It also allows us a valuable perspective on narrative that is neither too distant nor too close to discern major features. If I were forced to use a single word to characterize a narrative organization of data, that word would be "causality." Creating time and place in a narrative is not as important as constructing a possible logic for the events that occur. Or, rather, time and place seem to be a prerequisite for our reasoning about causality and hence exist on a different level of generality than cause and effect.

If I were allowed a second word as a qualification to my description of narrative, it would be "efficacy." I believe that narrative comprehension is a way of recognizing the "causal efficacy" of an object. In understanding a story, we are imagining and tracing out several, or many, of the possibilities for the being of an object. In everyday life we make choices in light of the way, or ways, we believe the world may become. Narrative is one powerful framework that poses the connection of objects in time. It allows us to make cause and effect pairs, to connect pairs with other pairs, to construct a linked set of events. One of the purposes of a narrative is to demonstrate how certain effects that are desired may be achieved, how desire is linked to possibilities for being, how events may proceed. In this way, narrative operates to draw the future into the present.

Reasoning about cause and effect is inherent in our language and in the social consensus that produces language. Causality is not simply "out there," but a way of thinking, acting, and desiring. Consider, for example, a dictionary. Arthur Danto argues that "the dictionary encapsulates a kind of encyclopedia, in that it is part of the very meaning of certain terms in it that certain explanations are true; and we internalize a body of causal laws as we acquire our language." We may need, however, to expand the notion of "language" and "dictionary" in analyzing the causality of films. Certainly we hear an enormous number of words in Sans Soleil making and remaking causality through language. But these words also interact with a multitude of images and sounds. The images offered in the film are no less an embodiment of a desired, or feared, possible causality. It might be better, then, to expand the notion of language so that vast dictionaries composed only of pictures and pictorial sequences may be included within that library that makes possible our awareness of things, and our awareness of the causal efficacy of things. Narrative could then be seen as a psychological process that responds to our desire to know how a world, and we ourselves, may become within one or several languages.

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NOTES

1 NARRATIVE SCHEMA


4 See, e.g., the special issue of Poetics on "Narrative Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue," vol. 15, nos. 1/2 (April 1986) and Wallace Martin, Recent Theories of Narrative (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), esp. pp. 71-8. For Martin, "Any explanation that unfolds in time, with surprises during its progress and knowledge only through hindsight, is just a story, no matter how factual. What histories and biographies share with novels and romances is temporal organization." (p. 187) I will attempt to elucidate the consequences of such "temporal organization" in every chapter of this book.


NOTES TO CHAPTER 1


Ray Jackendoff claims that the conceptual structure of English verbs of predication, possession, and spatial position is actually tripartite where each class of verbs may be subdivided into ones which designate a state ("be"), a change in state ("go"), or the persistence of a state ("stay"). See Consciousness and the Computational Mind (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 152-4. Suzanne Fleischman employs a four-part distinction among predicates - states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements. Activities are general and open-ended ("sing," "build," "drive a car") while accomplishments and achievements have natural endpoints. Accomplishments ("sing a song," "build a house," "recover from illness") possess inherent duration while achievements ("recognize someone," "find or lose something," "be born or die") are punctual and instantaneous. See Tense and Narrativity: From Medieval Performance to Modern Fiction (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 20.

9 Todorov's notions of inversion and recognition closely resemble two of Aristotle's three crucial parts of a tragic plot - reversal of the situation and recognition; see Poetics, chap. 11 (the third part of a tragedy is pathos, or the scene of suffering). Peter Brooks has argued that Todorov's narrative "transformation" through five stages may also be understood as the reanimation of an initial narrative metaphor: "We start with an inactive, 'collapsed' metaphor and work through to a reactivated, transactive one, a metaphor with its difference restored through metonymic process." Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), p. 27; cf. p. 29.


11 Christian Metz, Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema, trans. by Michael
16 The concept of a narrative "transformation"

12 This example and the one following ("Roses are red") but not the analyses of them, are taken from Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (New York: Methuen, 1983), pp. 1. Gerald Prince also uses the following example ("Roses are red") but with a different approach in "Transformations of a Narrative: The Form and Functioning of Narrative" (New York: Mouton, 1982), pp. 1-2, and in "Aspects of a Grammar of Narrative," *Poetics Today*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1980), p. 49.

13 On the theory's theme of a woman being away from her family, compare a similar fate suffered by the boy who runs away in the American folk-tale, "The Gingerbread Boy."


15 I will make a distinction between the "center" of a catalogue and the "focus" of a causal chain. I will also distinguish focus from types of "localization." Other discriminations will include types of time, types of causality, "double" character motivation, a "double" causal structure, and metaphors of similarity and dissimilarity.

16 The concept of a narrative "transformation" has been understood in many ways. Gerald Prince, for example, uses a set of rewrite rules to analyze narrative in strict conformity with a transformational-generative grammar. *A Grammar of Stories: An Introduction* (New York: Mouton, 1973). Transformations have also been described in terms of an extended predicate calculus (e.g., Todorov) and in more expansive ways as intertextual, historical phenomena (e.g., the study of myth and the evolution of a genre). See also Jean Piaget's definition of transformation in *Structurism*, trans. by Charnah Maschner (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 5, 20, 36, 52.

17 On Vladimir Propp, see discussion in chapter 4.


20 Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*, p. 90.

21 For an excellent survey of the issues and methods of cognitive science and
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Note that for Prince, causality is not an essential feature of narrative: although the queen does die because of "grief" (ib), Shirley's "life of crime" (2b) does not result from her being "good." In an earlier work Prince uses a different set of criteria in defining the minimal narrative: A Grammar of Stories, p. 31. See also Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, pp. 17-19; Chatman, Story and Discourse, pp. 30-1, 45-8; and Todorov, Introduction, pp. 41-46. Gérard Genette argues that all of the following are minimal narratives: "the king died," "Pierre has come," "I walk." See Narrative Discourse Revisited, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 18-20. Perhaps one might introduce a distinction between minimal narrative and minimal story: see Prince, A Dictionary of Narratology (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 53.


31 Kendall L. Walton, "What is Abstract About the Art of Music?", The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. 46, no. 3 (Spring 1988), p. 357 (Walton's capitalization). Although Walton's project does not involve a consideration of narrative, his example illustrates how generalized the notion of it can become.

32 David C. Dowling, Jammern, Abhunsen, Marx: An Introduction to "The Political Unconscious" (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 96. Dowling likens narrative to the Kantian concepts of space and time. Dowling's claim is not that "we make up stories about the world to understand it, but the more radical claim that the world comes to us in the shape of stories" (p. 95: cf. p. 115). Also, his view of the nature of "fiction" is so broad as to simply deny that there is any special problem with fictional reference (pp. 122-4); but see chapter 7 below.


39 Miriam Crystal, Society of Mind, p. 114; Branigan, Point of View, p. 179.


41 The perceivers' ability to "fill in" data missing in the text has prompted literary theorists to examine the types of gaps that may be created in a text (e.g., diffused, focused, fluat, suppressed, temporary, permanent). See, e.g., Meir Sternberg, Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction (Balti­more: Johns Hopkins University Press 1978) and Wolfgang Iser, The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).


43 Virginia Brooks, "Film, Perception and Cognitive Psychology," Millennium
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An intermediate case between conventional narrative and a narrative generated from nonsense data is the so-called "natural narrative," or nature narrative, which tells the story of a sequence of physical events. For example: "A sudden gust of wind snaps a tree branch which falls into a pond creating a ripple that upsets the reflection of a passing cloud...". Cf. Walt Disney's The Old Mill (1935). The term "natural narrative," however, is usually applied to personal-experience anecdotes related in ordinary conversation. See note 48 below.


According to Metz, "It is not because the cinema is language that it can tell such fine stories, but rather it has become language because it has told such fine stories," Film Language, p. 47.


Cf. Mandler's discussion of the debate in the field of psychology concerning "advance organizers" that are supposed to provide information to a perceiver about how to order the information given in a text; Stories, Scripts, and Scenes, pp. 112-13.


In surveying this literature, it seems remarkable that no one has undertaken to discover what special problems of narrative comprehension may be posed to a child by filmed narratives. For example, when and how do children understand an eyeliner match, screen direction, cross-cutting, an unusual angle, off-screen space, or nondiegetic sound?


At the beginning of this chapter, I offered a (non-narrative) list of non-narrative ways of organizing data. The principles at work in narrative perception (e.g., centering and chaining), however, have counterparts in general systems of human categorization. Cf. Lakoff, Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things, pp. 92-6, 102-4.


Consider:

Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear
Fuzzy Wuzzy had no hair
Fuzzy Wuzzy wasn't fuzzy
Was he?

This verse catalogues certain phonemes to highlight a syntactic ambiguity ("Was he?") and a semantic paradox: was Fuzzy properly named? Was Wuzzy really a bear?

Notice that as one changes the "center," the list changes. If the catalogue were centered on "recipes of action X," the list would be simply "N, O, and P." Many of the classic cartoons of Chuck Jones, Tex Avery, and Fritz Freleng are constructed as simple inventories of "complicating actions" that arise in failing to achieve a goal: A tries R; A tries S; A tries T which yields the catalogue, R, S, T, with A as the "center" (e.g., Tweety Pie and Sylvester; Road Runner).

As another example of a catalogue, consider the following "story" told by a girl 2½ to 3 years old:

The cat went on the cakes.
The cat went on the car.
The cookie was in my nose.
The cookie went on the fireman's hat.
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The fireman's hat went on the bucket.
The cookie went on the carousel.
The cookie went on the puzzle.
The cookie went on the doggie.


The following "story" told by a boy 3½ years old begins as a heap and moves toward an episode:

A girl and a boy, and a mother and maybe a daddy. And then a piggy. And then a horse. And maybe a cow. And a chair. And food. And a car. Maybe a painting. Maybe a baby. Maybe a mountain stone, somebody threw a stone on a bear, and the bear's head broke right off. A big stone, this big [holds out arms]. And they didn't have glue either. They had to buy some at the store. You can't buy some in the morning. Tomorrow they're gonna buy some. Glue

(Appleebee, The Child's Concept of Story, pp. 58-9.)

57 On closure, see note 62 below.

58 In claiming that "description" portrays elements arranged in a simultaneity, one is not claiming that description itself takes time, nor that dynamic entities — such as, events, actions, and motions — are incapable of being described. On the nature of description, see, e.g., Seymour Chatman, "What Is Description in the Cinema?" Cinema Journal, vol. 23, no. 4 (Summer 1984), p. 4 ("The chief descriptive property of cinematic space is its atemporal character"). Gérard Genette, "Boundaries of Narrative," trans. by Ann Levonas, New Literary History, vol. 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1976), p. 7 ("[D]escription, because it lingers over objects and beings considered in their simultaneity and because it juxtaposes the actions themselves as scenes, seems to suspend the flow of time and to contribute to spreading out the narrative in space."). See also Philippe Hamon, "Rhetorical Status of the Description," Yale French Studies 61 (1981), pp. 1-26; Chatman, Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), chap. 3.
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state which itself had no necessary cause. A narrative ends when its cause and effect chains are judged to be totally delineated and can no longer continue nor be seen as other than uniquely determined by an initial state. This does not mean, of course, that an end must always be signalled by an explicit symmetry, or that a symmetry actually resolves in a deep sense the enigmas raised by the cause and effect chains. It means only that an explicit or implicit symmetry is a way of intimating that certain changes are complete.


65 Roland Barthes, The Semiotic Challenge, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980), p. 144 (Barthes’s emphasis); see also p. 147, and “Semantics of the Object,” pp. 179-90. For Barthes, the “proarctic” code is an amalgam of actions, consequences, gestures and behaviour which become sequences (e.g., stroll, murder, rendezvous) when and because they are given a name in the process of interpreting a text. The proarctic code is a cause and effect chain whose logic is that of the probable, of practical experience, of psychology, of culture, of history, of what is familiar: the “already-done,” “already-written,” or “already-seen.” SZS, sects 36, 56, and 86. See also Barthes, The Semiotic Challenge, “Textual Analysis of a Tale by Edgar Allan Poe,” pp. 261-93.

66 Mandler, Stories, Scripts, and Scenes, p. 26. Jackendoff claims that human comprehension makes use of “preference rule systems” which involve a weighing of evidence rather than a strict testing for necessary and sufficient conditions; pp. 143-8. See also an experiment by Keith Stenning and Lynn Michell in which a story was presented to a child exclusively in sequences of pictures. The child’s grasp of types of causal connections in the story was then measured through the use of conjunctions and adverbials when the child was required to retell the story in words and answer questions about it. “Learning How to Tell a Good Story: The Development of Content and Language in Children’s Telling of One Tale,” Discourse Processes, vol. 8, no. 3 (July-Sept. 1985), pp. 261-79.

67 Filling in blanks as well as creating blanks by taking elements out of sequence are both related to the discovery of elements that are “missing” within an implicit paradigm. In this chapter, I am limiting myself to a narrative schema; in chapter 6, I will consider the film Letter from an Unknown Woman in relation to other paradigms related to human emotions and to the social regulation of emotions.

68 Some forms of cultural knowledge (concerning, for example, going to the movies, attending a birthday party, buying groceries, making dinner, taking a trip, eating at a restaurant, visiting a doctor’s office) may be organized as sets of schemas though not necessarily as a narrative schema. See Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson, Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977).

69 Martin, Recent Theories of Narrative, pp. 127-9. Similarly, as we will see in the next chapter, a car accident in The Lady from Shanghai is not an accident considering the nature of a woman (Woman) and the circumstances of her marriage.


71 Some forms of cultural knowledge (concerning, for example, going to the movies, attending a birthday party, buying groceries, making dinner, taking a trip, eating at a restaurant, visiting a doctor’s office) may be organized as sets of schemas though not necessarily as a narrative schema. See Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson, Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977).

72 I am limiting myself to a narrative schema; in chapter 6, I will consider the film Letter from an Unknown Woman in relation to other paradigms related to human emotions and to the social regulation of emotions.

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It should be no surprise that narrative is redundant. Natural language seeks to ensure comprehensibility by being 60–70 per cent redundant. See Branigan, Point of View, pp. 31–4.

71 I will argue in chapter 4 that making a story appear "unique" to spectators who are actually interpreting it in many different ways is a characteristic of a classical, "chameleon," narrative.

2 STORY WORLD AND SCREEN

1 Rudolf Arnheim, Film as Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957; first published in 1933), p. 59; see also pp. 12, 24–29.


3 David Marr, Vision: A Computational Investigation into the Human Representation and Processing of Visual Information (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1982). According to Julian Hochberg, there is "some evidence that, at least in still pictures, perception of space is not all or none": "Representation of Motion and Space in Video and Cinematic Displays" in Handbook of Perception and Human Performance, vol. I, "Sensory Processes and Perception," ed. by Kenneth R. Boff, Lloyd Kaufman, and James P. Thomas (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986), p. 22–30. Cf. also Arnheim, Film as Art, p. 12 ("the effect of film is neither absolutely two-dimensional nor absolutely three-dimensional, but something between"). I will argue in this and later chapters that "time," too, has a variety of intermediate forms and therefore that "narrative" must be analyzed as a series of levels.

4 Kristin Thompson argues that "a film depends on materiality for its existence; out of image and sound it creates its structures, but it can never make all the physical elements of the film part of its set of smooth perceptual cues... . [E]xcess arises from the conflict between the materiality of a film and the unifying structures within it." For other views of "excess" and its relation to film and narrative, see the discussion of the work of Stephen Heath in the previous chapter and Dana Polan in chapter 5. Kristin Thompson, "The Concept of Cinematic Excess" in Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader, ed. by Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 131–2 (Thompson's emphasis); see also pp. 133–5. The concept of excess is sometimes paired with its opposite, a lack or lacuna, especially in psychoanalytic theories of narrative.

5 Noël Burch, "Carl Theodor Dreyer: The Major Phase" in Cinema: A Critical Dictionary - The Major Film-Makers, vol. 1, ed. by Richard Roud (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), pp. 288–9; Arnheim, Film as Art, pp. 26–8. For Arnheim it is the spectator of a film who is turning the pages of a picture album of postcards whereas for Metz it is the implied author. When one isolates the activity or process suggested by the metaphor (i.e., "turning" the pages), rather than the structures which are being mapped (i.e., picture postcards), the nature of the inquiry shifts from problems of declarative knowledge toward problems of procedural knowledge and "narration." On Metz's use of the metaphor, see text accompanying note 15 in chapter 4. On procedural knowledge and narration, see chapter 3.


8 Julian Hochberg, "Representation of Motion and Space in Video and Cinematic Displays," p. 22–58.


It is not immediately clear whether the distinction between bottom-up and top-down processes is coextensive with the distinction between what is on the "screen" – what perhaps may be an expression of the medium itself – and what is in the "story" – what perhaps may be translated into other media. Even a basic percept like motion is not free of top-down effects.

Hochberg argues that there are multiple mechanisms in human motion perception, each with quite different characteristics, which produce multiple modes of movement experiences. What appear as simple experiences of movement turn out to be based on elaborate and sometimes startling...
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partitions of stimuli. Further, Hochberg claims that many of the rules of film editing reduce to the problem of preventing unintentional apparent movement (ibid., pp. 22-6 through 22-8, 22-35, and 22-36, cf. Arombè, Film as Art, pp. 99-102). Indeed one may construct a general theory of film by starting with the problem of movement and slowly expanding it through its intersections with various bottom-up and top-down processes. For a unified theory of gesture, dance, camera movement, editing, development of plot, changes in point of view, and emotional effects on a spectator, see Marcia Butzel, Motion as Narration: Theory and Practice of Cinematic Choreography (forthcoming, University of Illinois Press).

One may extend the notions of "top-down" and "bottom-up", processing to cover two different approaches to research and theoretical activity. See, e.g., Zenon W. Pylyshyn, "Metaphorical Impression and the 'Top-Down' Research Strategy" in Metaphor and Thought, ed. by Andrew Ortony (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 420-36.

See also Charles Wolfe, "Voice-Over in the 'Classical' Documentary Film" (Santa Barbara: University of California, unpublished paper, 1991). I will discuss documentary film and its relationship to narrative in more detail in chapter 7.

Seymour Chatman proposes a definition of voice that is less expansive than the one offered by Bill Nichols. Chatman confines "voice" to instances of "telling," that is, to narration composed of non-iconic (unmotivated, arbitrary) signs as opposed to "showing" which utilizes ionic signs (i.e., signs based on a form of resemblance between signifier and signified). However, Chatman also argues that not even use of words constitutes a "telling" and, further, that some nonverbal signs count as "telling." For Chatman, a certain hand gesture may count as a "telling" but not a scene which contains only dialogue. See Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 111-14, 118-19, 145. "Focalization" is another example of a concept that like "voice" has become greatly confused by the attempt to model it too simply on a human activity, in this case "seeing." Difficult questions soon arise concerning who is seeing, and how literal the seeing must be. I will discuss focalization in more detail in chapter 4.


For simplicity I will consider the creation of temporal situations only through the editing of a film. Other techniques may be employed to change a temporal situation within a single shot. Note that in isolating temporal order, I am treating temporal "duration" constant (i.e., all lines are drawn the same length unless our inferences about order and duration may be separated because they have a distinct psychological basis analogous to the orientation (i.e., directionality) and extent of a space. See my "Sound and Epistemology in Film," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. 47, no. 4 (Fall 1989), esp. sect. "Two Perceptions of Time and Two Types of Perception," pp. 315-17. I discuss duration in more detail in chapter 5, section entitled "A Synthesis.")


NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

In order to apply these principles of causal reasoning to film, a perceiver must also know how objects may be represented through the materials of film as well as how spatial and temporal relations among objects might be represented through film techniques. Such questions (how can editing be used?) quickly open up to include historical questions (how has editing been used?).

Welles's "impossible" causation in The Lady from Shanghai is achieved by bringing elements that are normally noncausal into proximity. Film techniques like Bresson, Dreyer, Godard, Ozu, and Straub and Huillet achieve similar effects by separating an actual cause from its effect thereby muting connections and making (conventional) causality a problem. The power of proximity to affect our judgments of causality extends to language as well. Consider the following sentences:

1. Haydn taught counterpoint to Beethoven.
2. Haydn taught Beethoven counterpoint.

The first sentence is somewhat "weaker" than the second because it allows the inference that Beethoven may have been inattentive to his lessons. It is weaker because the words "taught" and "Beethoven" are not as proximate as in the second sentence. There are many other examples of this principle of proximity, e.g., "John is not happy" vs. "John is unhappy." "She caused him to die" vs. "She killed him." (the first sentence of each pair is weaker than the second). See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), "Closeness Is Strength of Effect," pp. 128-32.

17 For simplicity I will consider the creation of temporal situations only through the editing of a film. Other techniques may be employed to change a temporal situation within a single shot. Note that in isolating temporal order, I am treating temporal "duration" constant (i.e., all lines are drawn the same length unless our inferences about order and duration may be separated because they have a distinct psychological basis analogous to the orientation (i.e., directionality) and extent of a space. See my "Sound and Epistemology in Film," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. 47, no. 4 (Fall 1989), esp. sect. "Two Perceptions of Time and Two Types of Perception," pp. 315-17. I discuss duration in more detail in chapter 5, section entitled "A Synthesis.")

In distinction between an error and hypothesis theory of reading in Edward our reappraisal comes with shot B. Moreover, our first belief process. See the following discussion of "impossible" causation in "error" earlier. we saw B) permitting us to see the object in A. Shot A now registers the of space and causality when an object. Shot A appears to be merely another angle on the object. but revisions and reorderings of our hypotheses about space and causality as time in an entirely new setting. We now reappraise A and see it in a new Academic Press, Ouly-Sept. pp. 125-6, 129, Philosophical Rejults on Fiction pp. The experience of "continuity" may not be the most basic way of compre­ 3, I am treating Genette's concept of temporal "frequency" - how 26. To emphasize the importance of a spatial reversal lend us to move through nearby spaces by calculating new angles and distances and thereby build a cognitive map of the spaces. Jean-Pierre Oudart locates the unique nature of spatial reversals, which he says involve a "suturing" of space, on the level of the human unconscious as described by Freud. Bordwell argues that Oudart's process of suturing, however, belongs in the preconscious. Still open is the possibility that similar processes operate on both levels. See ibid., p. 421 n. 48 and Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film, esp. chap. 7, "Narration and Space," sect. "Ideal Positionality: Shot/reverse Shot," pp. 110-13. See generally Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), chap. 5, "Suture," pp. 194-236. Who, or what process, gives space and its ordering a unity in perception? For Oudart the apparent independence of space, highlighted in a reversal, must have as its counterpart the illusory identity of an experiencing ego - an absent Other. In one type of narrative theory, the Other may be inter­ preted as an "author" or "narrator." In another type of theory, the Other may be a misrecognition of the spectator himself/herself. Thus there is no reason to exclude subjective shots from the process of suturing, as does Oudart, if one accepts that spaces generated by a character are simply embedded within, and ultimately dependent upon, a non-character epistemological system. An interesting question is whether there are "temporal" sutures analogous to spatial sutures. 25. The retrospective flashforward is so anomalous that it cannot initially be interpreted by a spectator; that is, it functions at a residual, unconscious level from which the spectator can project no temporal hypotheses. Cf. the discussion of "a-b-c-a" in chapter 6. The parallel, but more common, temporal anomaly is the "retrospective flashback." For example, after an event is shown, we see a character "awaken" from a memory; we then understand the event (retrospectively) as a subjective flashback. Fragman B in figure 3 would include over-the-shoulder shots because in such: shots space is not exactly reversed, but instead includes some overlap between the two spaces. If the camera were turned on its axis exactly 180 degrees before the next shot, leaving neither an overlap nor a gap between the two spaces, the result would be a true reversal. It would be represented in figure 3 by a new line, like B, joining A but extending backwards. A true reversal is rare in classical narrative space perhaps because it may be difficult for a spectator to determine whether the new space is immediately adjacent to the old space or whether there is a gap between the spaces which is not visible (cf. A and B). This suggests that in classical narrative the most common articulation for space is a partial overlap (i.e., B and B) 27. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), chap. 5, "Space in the Classical Film," p. 59. Another way to think about the importance of a spatial reversal is to realize that it estab­ lishes an anchor line that allows us to move through nearby spaces by calculating new angles and distances and thereby build a cognitive map of the spaces. 22. Cf. Deboyah Schiffrin, "Multiple Constraints on Discourse Options: A Quan­ titative Analysis of Causal Sequences." Discourse Processes. vol. 8, no. 3 (July-Sept. 1985), pp. 281-303. Cf. also the general problem of "inversions" in stories told by children, Nancy L. Stein and Christine G. Glenn, "Children's Concept of Time: The "Story Schema" and the Developmental Psychology of Time," ed. by William J. Friedman (New York: Academic Press, 1982), pp. 261-9, 271-2, 278-9. 23. Retrospective attention by a spectator, in its widest sense, extends to revisions and reorderings of our hypotheses about space and causality as well as time. Consider three shots: X, A, and B. Shot X is a detail shot of an object. Shot A appears to be merely another angle on the object, but when linked to an establishing shot, B, turns out to be that object at a later time in an entirely new setting. We now reappraise A in a new context with B rather than with X. Action in B may preclude us from moving B backwards in time (prior to A). Nevertheless we readjust our perception of space and causality so that we may conclude that the object had been transported to the new space of B (at a time earlier than the time in which we saw B) permitting us to see the object in A. Shot A now registers the effect of an unseen cause and is within a space like space B but a moment earlier. Note that initially we need not believe shot A to be ambiguous or puzzling: our reappraisal comes with shot B. Moreover, our first belief is not an "error" in any simple way, for A is what might have been seen after X. The anomaly of shot A may be linked in more complicated ways to the narrative process. See the following discussion of "impossible" causation in The Lady from Shangai and "virtual" space in De Mabuse: the Gambler. Cf. also the distinction between an error and hypothesis theory of reading in Edward Brangan. "The Spectator and Film Space - Two Theories." Screen, vol. 22, no. 1 (1981), pp. 55-78. 24. In figure 3, I am treating Genette's concept of temporal "frequency" - how often an event occurs on the screen as compared with how often it occurs in the story - as a special case of temporal "order." Thus the screen sequence "a-b-c-a" would be analyzed by saying that "a" occurs after "c" on the screen but maps into the same position in the story as did "a," which occurred between "a" and "b" on the screen. Note also that some effects of duration (e.g., rhythm) do not normally affect story order and hence are not included in figure 3.
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28 Drawing on an analogy with Cubism, Noel Burch asserts that in certain scenes Eisenstein, Dreyer, and other filmmakers manage "to create a very unusual sort of cinematic space: It exists only in terms of the totality of shots included in the sequence; we no longer have any sense of a surrounding space endowed with independent existence from which a sequence of shots has somehow been excepted." Burch, Theory of Film Practice, p. 39 (footnote omitted).

29 What is remembered and what is overlooked in comprehending a film is not, however, a matter of chance. In chapter 1, I examined one of the major top-down mechanisms which guides perception - a narrative schema.

30 See, e.g., Karel Reisz and Gavin Millar, The Technique of Film Editing (New York: Hastings House, 2nd enlarged edn 1968), pp. 227–32; Edward Dmytryk, On Film Editing: An Introduction to the Art of Film Construction (Boston: Focal Press, 1984), pp. 27–33. See also David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Film Art: An Introduction (New York: McGraw-Hill, 3rd edn 1990), p. 226 (the narrative causality of the "cheek cut" overrides physical continuity). In this connection one should also recall that one second of continuous action on the screen is in fact normally produced by flashing each of twenty-four still photographs two or three times for a spectator. These photographs, of course, represent only certain fragments of the original action recorded by the camera. The missing action is not noticed by a spectator even though it can never appear on the screen because it was not photographed. On the perception of motion in film see, e.g., Joseph and Barbara Anderson, "Motion Perception in Motion Pictures," and Bill Nichols and Susan J.Lederman, "Flicker and Motion in Film" in The Cinematic Apparatus, ed. by Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath (New York: St Martin's Press, 1980), pp. 76-105.

31 I discuss shots that are mismatched but overlooked by a spectator in note 41 of chapter 3 (The Girl and Her Trust), note 5 of chapter 5 (Lady in the Lake), and note 43 of chapter 6 (Letter from an Unknown Woman).

32 The representation of complex temporal events suggests that the notion of "the camera" as a unique entity existing in a single time will need to be reexamined and made more sensitive to the complexity of the spectator's ongoing judgments. See chapter 5.


37 Erving Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience
For a description of the major rules of continuity editing, see Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, pp. 206-43. The recognition of spatial and temporal continuity also depends on the use of certain other techniques relating to lighting, prop management, camera movement and lenses, sound (e.g., sound-on-top, dialogue hooks, synchronous sound), etc. Continuity is also affected by top-down processes involving our knowledge of the world and our expectations of narrative coherence; see text accompanying note 30 above.


I owe this observation to Lea Jacobs and Garrett Stewart. See also Burch, "Notes," paragraphs numbered 10, 13, 23, 27, and 38.

Since the spectator is apparently looking at objects at the same time as a character, there is a tendency to describe the objects and events of a film as existing in a "present tense" for the spectator. This is highly misleading if one seeks to analyze how the experience of narrative has been created and what mental computations allow us to imagine the presence of the present. See, e.g., Edward Branigan, "Here is a Picture of No Jouney": The Negation of Images, and Methods for Analyzing the Structure of Pictorial Statements," *Wide Angle*, vol. 8, nos. 3/4 (1986), pp. 10-11. See also the discussion of the "historical present" tense in chapter 6.

Figure 8 illustrates how camera angle and character glance typically do not match. The camera angle is straight-on but the character's eyes are angled 30 degrees off right while his head is angled 30 degrees off left. Centering the character at the vanishing point of these two "diagonals" while using only horizontal and verticals elsewhere in the composition serves to visually emphasize the way in which this space (as well as the next space; see fig. 9) is constituted and give significance through a particular and intense awareness by the character. Dr. Mabuse's hypnotic powers will be such that he will be allowed to look into the camera which is to say that he will be represented as being able to disengage himself from normal, diegetic space. Shot 4 (fig. 4) illustrates this power as does shot 35 in which he stares wildly up over the camera (imaging the top of the telephone pole of shots 34 and 367). See Burch, "Notes," especially paragraphs numbered 20 and 21.


Although "persistence of vision" is no longer accepted as an explanation of motion on the screen, it is relevant to the perception of other qualities, like color and shape, which are affected by positive and negative after-images produced by changes on the screen.

I believe that the role played by top-down processes in the "integrated match" demonstrates why a gestalt form is believed to represent knowledge which is more than the sum of the "parts" of the form. What "emerges" in a gestalt form is the product of two different mental strategies - top-down and bottom-up - working to organize and manipulate data.

Notice that the integrated match (fig. 13) achieves the graphic perception of a frame within the frame in a fundamentally different manner than, say, by persistence of vision or short-term memory, the old pattern is merely superimposed on the new one (which would be possible with the "open match" of fig. 12). In the latter case, bottom-up processing from the previous shot simply meets bottom-up processing from the new shot. There is no integration of top-down and bottom-up hypotheses and no (graphic) incentive to build a story space. I will call this simple combining of bottom-up effects "graphic expressionism" since it functions much like Expressionist decor where a graphic configuration is essentially unhooked from the dynamic perception of space through editing.

Hitchcock could have achieved the simpler effect of graphic expressionism by merely pulling his camera back slightly to show a fully enclosed window pane with four bars in the point-of-view shot (fig. 9) instead of showing us two shots with two bars in each. Needless to say, Hitchcock does use graphic expressionism in his films and such instances are a favorite site for the interpretative activity of critics. See, e.g., an interpretation by William Rothman in note 99 below.

One might conjecture that through integrated matches it is possible to learn to recognize conventional story-screen articulations like the point-of-view shot because such articulations can be reached either from the top-down through an understanding of story action or from the bottom-up through an understanding of graphics that have been recognized as familiar objects (decor).

Nick Browne argues that the ambiguity of the scene is created by superimposing two ways of perceiving. His description of a shot sequence earlier in the scene could apply equally to our perception of the (doubled) frame within the frame of figures 8-9, 13.

The narrator gives us a viewpoint on the action... which, until the husband appeared, was only virtual, and which originally we could not have sustained, but are now implicated in. We are put in the position, different from any of the characters, of appreciating this ambiguity of interpretation by recognizing that the husband's suspicion, though founded on a misperception, is not entirely without foundation. As long as the husband occupies the frame, our innocent view is suspended, replaced by one that sees the couple as guilty. The husband's passing out of the frame, while confirming that what we have seen was his view, does not restore our initial innocence.


An example of Hannay's punishment of women is the story he tells Pamela on their "wedding" night. In general, Hitchcock's integration of story space with graphics (e.g., in the point-of-view shot of figs 8-9) encourages the
creation of stylistic metaphors and brings onto the screen characteristic themes of passion, desire, dread, guilt, and death, producing the ambivalence — the “pleasurable anxiety” — typical of the suspense genre.

Hitchcock's use of expressionistic mise-en-scène also encourages the spectator to search for stylistic metaphors. For example, Hannay, and the husband and wife, are later framed through the bars of a chair. This unusual camera position moves William Rothman to summon the author of such a style.

With this signature shot, the author steps forward and declares the imprisonement of these people. John [the husband] is imprisoned in his anguish, vengeful nature. Margaret [the wife] is imprisoned in her marriage and can only dream of freedom (how can she leave her husband when his anguish is too terrible for him to bear alone and when she holds herself responsible for him?). And Hannay is no more free to save Margaret than she is to release John from his curse.

Rothman's use of an imprisonment/freedom metaphor radiates outward into his descriptions and elaborate summation of the action as well as infuses his speculations and pronouncements about character thought ("locked in the "closes out her dream of freedom"); "resent those terms and rebel," etc.). Hitchcock — The Mysterious Geze (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 134-41. Nick Browne constructs a stylistic metaphor by linking pp. 38-9 ("the darkening prospect of liberty"). On expressionism, see note 57 above.


3 NARRATION

1 Griffith could have created an accelerated montage by systematically varying any of a number of parameters. The screen durations of the twenty-eight shots do not reveal a simple pattern. Similarly, although a variety of angles pattern seems to be based on whether the movement is toward screen left or right. Movement which is almost directly toward or away from the camera, have considered as neutral since Griffith uses it as a way of crossing the 180 degree axis of action, that is, as a transition between groups of shots. I have not counted the first shot after Grace rushes from the interior of the station as part of the chase sequence even though she confronts the tramps at the handcar. I have considered the next shot as the beginning of the chase because, rather than being safely behind, she takes the decisive action of jumping onto the handcar and refusing to leave without the strongbox. Grace's action has thus escalated the confrontation. Moreover, this shot ends with a near match on action as the tramps react by putting the handcar into motion in spite of Grace.

Screen duration for the seven groups was based on a projection speed of sixteen frames per second and derived from a frame count of a 16mm print of the film. The actual times in seconds were as follows: 6.7, 6.5, 16.7, 18.8, 18.8, 4.2, and 5.2. In computing the duration of the last shot of the sequence, I have used only that portion of the shot which shows the tramps jump off the handcar followed by Grace jumping off the handcar. The chase sequence ends with the following four shots: the tramp handcar and the locomotive are both in the same shot but at different times; the handcar is shown but with only the smoke of the locomotive behind it; the handcar and the locomotive appear together; the locomotive is now so close that the tramps abandon the handcar.

The time of the chase is left largely to our imagination: do the cross-cuts signify continuous time, simultaneous time, or something in between? Cf. temporal situations B, B, B, and B in figure 3 of chapter 2 which depicts several varieties of story time relationships A. The rhythmical aspects of the film are heightened by the fact that there are only nine intertitles in the first thirty-three shots.

4 The patterns on the screen in this chase scene are primarily rhythmic and directional. They act in parallel, rather than duplicating or opposing, the rhythm and direction of the story event; both screen and story patterns are completed at the same time. Cf. figures 10-13 in chapter 2 which show possible relations between two-dimensional screen and three-dimensional story spaces in representing an event in The 39 Steps. Joyce E. Hansen, however, argues that the screen does use graphic matches in an important way, and has a graphic resolution and climax: Thinking in Pictures: Dramatic Structure in D.W. Griffith's Biograph Films (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 47-52, 139, 177-8 (includes some shots from the chase sequence).

5 See David Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 157-6, 164-5. Bordwell emphasizes story "deadlines" and character "appointments" as ways for a narrative schema to map diegetic time onto screen time. See also Celia Britton, Anne Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 299 n. 9. Hugo Münsterberg argued in 1916 that film is unique among the arts in its ability to create a feeling of "omnipresence." He discusses some examples in which a certain notion of time as succession is abolished so that the spectator feels as if he or she is in several places at once and a single action "graduates in all directions." The Film: A Psychological Study: The Silent Photoplay in 1916 (New York: Dover, 1970), p. 45.

6 Christian Metz, The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema, trans. by Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 299 n. 9. Hugo Münsterberg argued in 1916 that film is unique among the arts in its ability to create a feeling of "omnipresence." He discusses some examples in which a certain notion of time as succession is abolished so that the spectator feels as if he or she is in several places at once and a single action "graduates in all directions." The Film: A Psychological Study: The Silent Photoplay in 1916 (New York: Dover, 1970), p. 45.


8 Ryle, "Knowing How and Knowing That," pp. 4-5, 11-12, 15-16. Ryle asserts that "knowing . . . a rule [of inference] is not a case of knowing an extra fact or truth; it is knowing how to move from acknowledging some
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10 In chapter 6 I will analyze a camera position like that of 3B from Letter from an Unknown Woman where a character, Lisa, secretly watches from a staircase as Stefan brings a woman to his apartment.

11 The usual form of a "split-screen" technique shows S in one panel and B in another and represents simultaneity but does not show the direct spatial relationship between the characters. It is thus intermediate between a "best possible" view (which represents simultaneity and the continuity of space between the characters) and an eyeliner match (which usually represents neither simultaneity nor direct spatial continuity). A flashback might represent direct spatial continuity without simultaneity.


13 The camera movement from position 8A to 8B in figure 14 is an example of "unnovatized" framing and is derived from examples in Antonioni's Red Desert (1964) and The Passenger (1975). On unnovatized camera movement see Branigan, Point of View, pp. 45-6.


15 There are many ways to destabilize this convention. See Branigan, Point of View, chap. 5, "The Point-of-View Shot," pp. 103-21, and also pp. 17-19, 73-5, 96-7, 172-4, 182-4. There may even be point-of-view shots in which we never see the watcher because it is invisible in some sense; p. 120 n. 13.

16 A variety of ways of representing telephone conversations that are crucial to the kind of story being told may be found in Trouble in Paradise (Lubitsch, 1932), The Man Who Knew Too Much (Hitchcock, 1934), You Only Live Once

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(Lang, 1937), His Girl Friday (Hawks, 1940), Pillow Talk (Gordon, 1959), The Misfits (Huston, 1961), The Rain People (Coppola, 1969), The Mirror (Tarkovsky, 1975), All the President's Men (Fukula, 1976), Stalker (Tarkovsky, 1979), and When Harry Met Sally... (Reiner, 1989).


18 Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film, pp. 57-61.

19 Branigan, Point of View, pp. 96, 179.


24 Grace's boyfriend is at the bottom of the pyramid of knowledge because events of the romance and crime stories mostly catch him unawares: he does not know that Grace was secretly thrilled by his kiss nor does he know about the danger posed by the traps.


The following films illustrate a range of possibilities for creating suspense, mystery, or surprise using a bomb as a narrative device: Sabotage (Hitchcock, 1936), The Wages of Fear (Clouzot, 1953), Touch of Evil (Welles, 1958), Judgment (Lester, 1974), Sorcerer (Friedkin, 1977), Outrageous Fortune (Hiller, 1987).
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and The Untouchables (De Palma, 1987).

On a spectator's wishful involvement in a film, Christian Metz remarks: "I shall say that behind any fiction there is a second fiction: the dietic events are fictional, that is the first; but everyone pretends to believe that they are true, and that the second, there is even a third: the general refusal to admit that somewhere in oneself one believes they are unanimously true." Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, p. 72. Cf. chapter 7 below on the notion of fiction and see chapters 4, 5, and 6 on psychoanalytic theories of narrative. See also Peter Wollen, "The Hermeneutic Code" in *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies* (London: Verso, 1982), pp. 40-8.


28 The story is entitled "Who is Scorpion?" and appears in Nick Fury, *Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Marvel Comics, June 1968). The writer and illustrator is Jim Steranko. Though Nick Fury had appeared in numerous earlier comics, this issue was the first to be devoted entirely to him. Lenny Lipton reproduces these sixteen panels as an example of a good storyboard in *Independent Filmmaking* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, rev. edn. 1973), pp. 378-9. The extraordinary sophistication of recent comic art is well illustrated by the *Watchmen* series (1986), the new versions of *Batman*, and in many issues of * Swamp Thing* (all from DC Comics).

29 Recall that the concept of a "narrative schema" is meant to be a concise explanation of certain remarkable facts about narrative comprehension while a "focused chain" is shorthand for a text (narration, realism, fascination) are of a different order than narrative cause and effect, and hence are not subject to the irreversible time of the plot. Barthes's catalysts are opposed to cardinal functions, or nuclei, and are analogous to the Russian formalists' notion of "free" motifs as opposed to "bound" motifs.

30 The representation of space introduces a metaphor of power and conflict. The extreme framing of panel 2 highlights a sharply recording linear perspective to create a fortress of monumental dimensions. But panel 3 shows that Nick is equally imposing: his hand reaching into the foreground is shown as three times the size of his head. A narrative schema is already at work.

31 Cf. chapter 4, p. 100 ff.

32 "Creating a "fuzzy" space has many uses and is analogous to the creation of "fuzzy" concepts and "fuzzy" causation; cf. the discussion of "double motivation" in chapter 1.

33 An alternate interpretation would be that it was not necessary for the robot to turn around to pick up the coin and that Nick came up from behind the robot (even though Nick is not seen in panel 10), then jumped in front of the robot to knock it down. Notice that in either interpretation the uniform size and spacing of the comic panels does not indicate a uniform passage of story time. As in the case with film, time cannot be determined mechanically but must be made to fit with other judgments about space and causality consistent with a narrative schema.

34 The spectator may not notice the lack of background detail because previous panels also exhibit a suppression of spatial information (e.g., panels 1, 5, 6, 10, and 11) and the suppression is connected in various ways to the causal chain (e.g., low light conditions in the story space, explanatory close-up, etc.) and thus is made to seem merely descriptive.


37 Since a catalyst literally is a chemical that is not consumed in a reaction, Barthes may have chosen the term in order to suggest that some aspects of a text (narration, realism, fascination) are of a different order than narrative cause and effect, and hence are not subject to the irreversible time of the plot. Barthes's catalysts are opposed to cardinal functions, or nuclei, and are analogous to the Russian formalists' notion of "free" motifs as opposed to "bound" motifs.


39 In some contexts it is important to distinguish between seeing something which is not present (transparency) and not seeing what is present (invisibility). However, usually I will not draw this distinction and instead will use both concepts to refer to either situation.

40 The reader typically does not notice, for example, that in panels 14, 15, and 16, the robot changes color from yellow and magenta to totally blue, and back again while Nick changes from deep blue to red and black, and then back. Nick's shadow and the door change colors in panels 12 and 14. Also background color is used freely in panels 5, 10, 11, 13, and 15.

41 The most remarkable instance in *The Girl and Her Trust* where the spectator perceives "continuity" in spite of what is present on the screen is when an event which happens only once in the story is actually shown in its entirety happening twice in consecutive shots. After the tramps have been discovered by Grace, we see them rise up from the window that they have been spying through and rush away. First they are seen leaving in the background as Grace is shown-terminated in the foreground; next, the entire action is replayed in medium shot from outside Grace's office. Incredibly, the tramps exit in different directions in the two shots! A much earlier film by Edwin Porter -- *The Life of an American Fireman* (1903) -- is more famous for its use of such a temporal duplication. The Griffith film demonstrates the extent to which such an "anomaly" may persist into later films and still not be noticed by an audience. There are many other continuity violations which are overlooked in *The Girl and Her Trust* involving mismatched action (when the hero offers Grace a sandwich), direction (in the distant telegraph office), and mise-en-scène (a
tramp is in the “wrong” corner of a window spying on the hero; the
strongbox “suddenly” appears on the front of the locomotive between Grace
and the hero). The film also includes flawless matches on action and careful
uses of an axis of action.
In chapter 6 I will examine a specific instance in which a spectator produces
a continuous action in spite of what is literally discontinuous on the screen;
see discussion of figures 49, 50 from Letter from an Unknown Woman.
42 Art films of the 1980s showed that invisible editing was no guarantee of
invisibility. See above, p. 45.
43 Williams, Max Ophuls, pp. 17-24, 35-6. Although Williams focuses on only
two films,” I think that a fair reading of his essay points to at least four
films. One could, of course, further subdivide these four films or extend
them in either direction; that is, extend them backward in time toward an
optical printer film, an edited film, a profilmic (principal photography),
a scripted film, etc., as well as forward in time toward the writing of a
review, a meeting with a friend who has a different opinion of the film, the
recognition of a place or situation from the film, etc.
44 On modularity and levels of structure in human cognition, see generally
Ray Jackendoff, Consciousness and the Computational Mind (Cambridge, Mass.:
MIT Press, 1987). See also note 35 in chapter 2 above.
45 Do we personally the microphone or the tape recorder or the loudspeaker in
the theater as an “ear”? How is listening to a diegetic world fundamentally
different from seeing a diegetic world? I examine these issues in “Sound
and Epistemology in Film,” The Theory of Film and Art Criticism, vol.
47, no. 4 (Fall 1989), pp. 311-24.

4 LEVELS OF NARRATION
1 I have added the bottom two levels and have renamed several of Lanser’s
levels consistent with my terminology; for example, Lanser’s “public” and
“private” narrators become “nondiegetic” and “diegetic” narrators. I have
also made other changes, most notably reversing Lanser’s levels of “focal­
izer” and “character” consistent with my revised definition of “focalization.”
See Susan Snieder Lanser, The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction
2 My definition of a text is meant to rule out, for example, such objects as
trees and tables, as well as a book being used to patch a hole in the roof.
3 Roland Barthes, “An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative,”
263 (Barthes’s emphases).
4 On the “biographical legend,” see David Bordwell, Ons and the Poetics of
Legend,” pp. 5-7, and The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer (Berkeley: University
authorship generally, see Theories of Authorship: A Reader, ed. by John
Caughie (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) and Stephen Crofts,
5 See my discussion of the paradoxical statement, “I am lying” in Point of
View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film
narration into “levels,” each with a nominal subject, is one way of talking
about how a text as a whole may represent a “splitting of the subject.”
6 Recall that this narrative schema organizes causal patterns in order to make
important, and make relevant, our already existing interests and activities.
Hitchcock promises such an organization and solicits our attention. Hitch­
cock’s opening statement is based upon pressing together two familiar meta­
phors: fact is stranger than fiction (but otherwise is like it), and life is (like)
a story. His opening, “And yet . . .”, inaugurates the complex interplay
between the probable and the improbable, nonfiction and fiction, non­
narrative and narrative that is held together by the metaphors.
7 See Marshall Deutelbaum, “Finding the Right Man in The Wrong Man,” in
A Hitchcock Reader, ed. by Marshall Deutelbaum and Leland Poague (Ames:
8 Initially the distant figure walks toward the camera but then stops, plants
his feet squarely, and begins to speak. The figure has not really come any
closer to us nor can we see him any better. Why has he moved at all? By
moving he has demonstrated that he is facing us directly and has emphasized
that we are being specially addressed as extra-fictional spectators. By point­
ing his gigantic shadow into the camera, he has drawn attention to himself
and demonstrated that his role will be active. Characters in the story, how­
ever, will not look directly into the camera and speak to us in this way
(addressing us as “you”). Certainly there are conventions involved here, but
more importantly the conventions are being used to draw epistemological
boundary lines within this particular text. Also, the shot permits us to
indulge in stylistic metaphors, if we wish, by, for example, relating the size
of Hitchcock’s shadow to an otherworldly power to create; or, by relating
the shadow to a presumed, and prior, “first cause” of the story who is
dimly seen as a figure that breaks the light and has the power to “shed
light” on (enlighten, illuminate) matters.
9 After the end title of The Wrong Man a final title appears:
We are grateful to Mr. Sherman Billingsley for his gracious cooperation in
permitting scenes of this picture to be photographed at the Stork Club in
New York City.
This title amounts to a final assertion by an extra-fictional narration that what
we have seen is true by virtue of being filmed on location. The Hitchcock “I”
is now hidden behind a “we.”
10 Figure 20 is taken from Ray Jackendoff, Consciousness and the Computational
in discussing David Marr’s theory of vision.
11 In chapter 6, I will analyze in detail how an implicit narration is created
from elements that are missing from the explicit narrations of Letter from an
Unknown Woman. Also relevant to the concept of implicitness is the general
issue of the separation of material and structure which is discussed in
chapter 5.
12 In chapter 2, I examined the relation of screen and story space in the context
of another sort of “perception of a misperception” that concerned a husband
spying on his wife in Hitchcock’s The 39 Steps.
13 Hitchcock qualified his dislike for The Wrong Man by saying, “But I did fancy
the opening of the picture because of my own fear of the police. I also liked
the part where the real culprit is discovered just as [Henry] Fonda is praying.
Yes, I liked that ironic coincidence.” François Truffaut, Hitchcock (New York:

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16 Some speech-act theories of fiction allow several narrations to exist simultaneously by recognizing that a text is composed of “layers” whereby an author “delegates” responsibility for making assertions to “substitute” speakers who contest one another in an environment of “simultaneous” utterances. See Marie-Laure Ryan, Fiction as a Logical, Ontological, and Illocutionary Issue.” Style, vol. 18, no. 2 (Spring 1984), esp. pp. 125–6.

17 On the integration of bottom-up and top-down perceptual processes in the opening music of The Wrong Man, compare the discussion of the “integration of bottom-up and top-down perceptual processes through grained spatial match” in The 39 Steps in chapter 2, and the discussion of the creation of an inverted pyramid of narrations in the opening of Hangover Square in chapter 5.

18 The key issue in the credit sequence of The Wrong Man concerns types of narration, and contexts of perception. Not, as Deutelbaum believes, the “temporal vagueness” of the music—which is not vague—not the “invisibility” of the shots which are perfectly clear (“Finding the Right Man in The Wrong Man”), pp. 214–15. In general, the spectator is raising hypotheses and searching for a fit, not making “mistakes” or being “misled.” The analyst’s choice of a theory of reading (by hypothesis, or by erron) leads to larger theoretical issues. See Edward Branigan, “The Spectator and Film Space—Two Theories,” Screen, vol. 22, no. 1 (1981), pp. 55–79.

19 Compare the notion of a chameleon text with the discussion of “dual causal motivation” in chapter 1. My use of the notion of a chameleon text differs from that of Robert Stam and Ella Shohat; see “Zed and Contemporary Theory: Meditation on the Chameleon Text,” Endite 17/18, vol. 9, nos. 1–2 (1997), pp. 185–6.


21 The concept of nondiegetic narration also explains why we know what happens in the story world after this particular story is finished and as a “new” story in that world is beginning. Just prior to the end title of The Wrong Man, the following title appears:

Two years later, Rose Balestrero walked out of the sanitarium—completely cured.

Today she lives happily in Florida with Manny and the two boys... and what happened seems like a nightmare to them—but it did happen...

Because of its nondiegetic position, the narration may pronounce Rose Balestrero “completely cured.” And summarize character beliefs today (“seems like a nightmare to them”). Since the new story is beginning “today,” it cannot yet be narrated and so the nondiegetic narrator must fall silent.


Is it possible for a story to have no narrator, or is the narration merely covert? This question leads to a theory’s basic grounding in rationalism or empiricism. Cf. Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, pp. 88 n. 4 and 96 n. 9 with Barthes’ Point of View, pp. 168–71. See also Dorrit Cohn, “Signposts of Fictionality: A Narratological Perspective,” Poetics Today, vol. 11, no. 4 (Winter 1990), pp. 794–8; and p. 109 above. Chapter 6 will address the issue of explicit versus implicit in the context of “objective” narrations.


24 Movies On TV, 1982–1983 Edition, ed. by Stephen H. Scheuer (New York: Bantam, 9th rev. edn 1981), p. 741. A character’s speech on thought is nonfocalized when it is rendered in a highly abbreviated form. For example, in the sentence, “Manny decided to take the train home,” no details are provided about how the decision was reached; the decision is merely reported as an action. For Genette, such speech or thought is narrated (narrated, narrativized). See Narrative Discourse, pp. 170–1. Cf. the examples discussed on pp. 168–9 above.


26 Some narrative theorists refer to the distinction between representing an event as intersubjective versus representing it as private as an opposition between “voice”—literally, whose words do we hear?—and “point of view.”

27 I am not using the concept of “identification” in its full psychological sense of “identification with.” Making the levels of narration more precise is not yet a theory of a spectator’s fascination with character and story.

28 Hitchcock has discussed the techniques he used to portray events through...
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the viewpoint of Manny. Hitchcock’s memory of some of the scenes is not entirely accurate but nonetheless is revealing about external focalization.

The whole approach is subjective. For instance, they’ve slipped on a pair of handcuffs to link him [Manny] to another prisoner. During the journey between the station house and the prison, there are different men guarding him, but since he’s ashamed, he keeps his head down, staring at his shoes, so we never show the guards. From time to time one of the handcuffs is opened, and we see a different wrist. In the same way, during the whole trip, we only show the guards’ feet, their lower legs, the floor, and the bottom parts of the doors. (Truffaut, Hitchcock, p. 239, my emphasis.)

For another example of external focalization, see p. 78 above, figs 15 and 16, panels 3-8 of Nick Fury.

29 On the various ways in which events may be externally and internally focalized through character, and on the conventions of subjectivity in film, see Brangan, Point of View, chaps 4-6.

Stephen Heath, for example, asserts that

Point of view . . . depends on an overlaying of first and third person modes. There is no radical dichotomy between subjective point-of-view shots and objective non-point-of-view shots; the latter mode is the continual basis over which the former can run in its particular organization of space, its disposition of the images. ("Narrative Space" in Questions of Cinema (New York: Macmillan, 1981), p. 48. See also pp. 51, 54.)

31 Wild Strawberries creates its effects by defining, and then subverting, a single hierarchy of narrations. However, as suggested by figure 26, narrations may be arranged in more complex ways. Depictions of memory that are more complex and radical than Wild Strawberries may be found in Life is a Dream (Ruiz, 1986), Distant Voices, Still Lives (Davies, 1986), and Sans Soleil (Marker, 1983). I will discuss the latter film in chapter 2.

32 For Genette, the sudden transgression of a boundary between two levels of the narration would be a metalepsis and is related to paraplepsis and paraplepsis (i.e., exceeding, or else withholding, information called for by the logic of a given focalization). In general, such a transgression is called an "alteration" or "infraction." See Narrative Discourse, pp. 234-7, 194-6. The permeability of narrational boundaries has been addressed by theorists in a variety of ways. David Bordwell speaks of the "degree" of communicativeness of a narration with respect to a given "range" and "depth" of knowledge. Didier Coste defines the "informative performance" of a "voice" based on a relationship between "cognitive competence" and "informative competence." Finally, William F. Edmiston analyzes Genette’s paraplepsis as a "hyper-restriction"; that is, a narration that falsely represents itself as too restrictive to convey certain important information. Presumably, the opposite case would be termed a hypo-restriction which would be applied to the situation where a nominal restriction is briefly exceeded (thus providing more information than is allowed by the given restriction). The terms proposed by Bordwell, Coste, and Edmiston give the analyst a way of comparing the source of information that is named in the text with the actual inferences that the reader is able to make.

The general problem being addressed by these terminologies concerns issues of the segmentation and large-scale form of narration, local changes in narration (e.g., intrusions, transitions), and the ways in which a given narration may be emphasized, defied, or concealed. In deciding whether to analyze a segment as the momentary transgression of a single narration (e.g., a hyper- or hypo-restriction), or instead as the alternation of two distinct narrations, the analyst will need to weigh such factors as the suddenness, duration, relevance, and saliency of a change in the information against the scope of the analysis. Note also that similar issues arise in assessing the function of a "character" in a narrative: a character may know "too little" or "too much" (e.g., by speaking more than he or she knows - dramatic irony - or by being in the perfect place at the perfect time). As Genette notes, "Narrative always says less than it knows, but it often makes known more than it says" (p. 198). Compare the issues discussed on p. 170 above; compare also the notion of a "hyperdiagnostic" narration on p. 189 above. See generally Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 57-61; Coste, Narrative as Communication (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 178-9; Edmiston, "Focalization and the First-Person Narrator: A Revision of the Theory," Poetics Today, vol. 10, no. 4 (Winter 1989), p. 741.

33 In a study of fifty-three languages representing fourteen different language stocks from all the major parts of the world, Ake Viberg found that all the verbs of perception of the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell) could be classified according to whether they indicated an activity of a subject, an experience of a subject, or the subject itself as an object to be perceived. The following is an example of these three possibilities for verbs of sight:

1 Peter looked at the birds.
2 Peter saw the birds.
3 Peter looked happy (cf.: Peter is good-looking).

An example for verbs of hearing:

1 Peter listened to the birds.
2 Peter heard the birds.
3 Peter sounded happy.

A number of important syntactic, morphological, and semantic characteristics common to all fifty-three languages can be explained using this approach. "The Verbs of Perception: A Typological Study" in Explanations for Language Universals, ed. by Brian Butterworth, Bernard Comrie, and Osten Dahl (New York: Mouton, 1984), pp. 123-62. Compare also the two, or perhaps three or four, types of verbs that state narrative predications discussed in chapter 1 above (e.g., the modes "to be," "to go," "to stay").

Reformulating this tripartite division of the verbs of perception in order to match the types of perceiving and knowing characteristic of narration would result in three sorts of subject (i.e., a subject in one of three possible narrative roles): actor, focalizer, and narrator, respectively. The reason that I treat the third case above (i.e., where a subject becomes an object to be perceived by another, unidentified subject) as analogous to narration involving a narrator, rather than narration involving an actor/agent or a focalizer, is that I interpret sentences like 3 as containing an implicit and undefined perceiver who becomes, in effect, the justification for our interpretation of the sentence as a statement about what could be seen (or heard), a perceptual judgment that has been rendered about something that has been objectified for someone (and for us). Thus:

3 Peter looked happy to someone who looked at, or saw, or could have
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looked at, or could have seen, him and consequently would have been in a position to make the judgment about him and "narrate" it for us. Positing someone as an implicit "narrator" who recounts an event, then, is shorthand for saying that we are seeing what is, or could be, seen to be. The context for the "seeing" (which need not be literal) is not being merely the judgment. For more discussion of "objective" narration, see chapter 6.

40 Lanser, and a new horizontal dotted line is drawn between each sender and receiver Genette, seems to be what I have referred and called. Status describes the speaker's right to communicate authority, competence, and credibility which the communicator is conventionally and personally allowed by a linguistic community. Stance describes the speaker's ideologial and psychological attitudes toward the message he or she is uttering. Contact describes the speaker's physical and psychological relationship to the audience. Lanser, The Narrative Act, pp. 64-77, 84-97, 145, 223-5.

41 Barthes, "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," p. 260 (Barthes's emphasis).


43 Chatman, Story and Discourse, p. 28. Chatman also says, "Narratives are communications, thus easily envisaged as the movement of arrows from left to right, from author to audience" (p. 31; and see his diagram of narrative structure on p. 267).


47 Bordwell, Narration in the Film Text, p. 62 (Bordwell's emphasis). See also n. 22 above.


50 I will readdress the question of using anthropomorphic metaphors to describe narration when we consider the holistic theories of Telotte, Sobchak, and Kawin in chapter 5 and the concept of an invisible observer


52 Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan adopts Chatman’s communication model for narrative but excludes the implied author and the implied reader from the communication situation even though she stresses that these two constructs remain essential to an analysis of a reader’s comprehension of narrative fiction. In addition, she includes the narrator and the narratee as constitutive, not just optional, elements in the communication situation; *Narrative Fiction*, pp. 2–4, 86–9. Chatman has responded with some changes to his model, *Coming to Terms*, p. 218 n. 29.


54 For note 13 above.


56 On the theoretical status of verbal descriptions of pictorial data, see especially David Alan Black, *Narrative Film and the Synoptic Tendency* (Ph.D. diss.: New York University, 1988).

57 In arguing against Genette’s theory of focalization, Mieke Bal notes that “the narrator’s point of view is not a notion, but a notion to be multiplied, a preposition to be spread out” (*The Narrating and the Focalizing*), p. 241. In my arguments I have tried to be sensitive to the nuances of such prepositions as over, at, with, through, into, in, and about. In chapters 6 and 7 I will explore the nuances of definite and indefinite articles in relation to narrative.

58 Cf. Marie-Laure Ryan, “Stacks, Frames and Boundaries, or Narrative as Computer Language,” *Poetics Today*, vol. 11, no. 4 (Winter 1990), pp. 873–99. As an example of how differing levels of representation operate in perception, consider that our perception of a visual object, say, on a motion picture screen is initially dependent on our angle of view while higher-level recognition of the ”same” object (e.g., our memory of it) is not dependent on that point of view and, moreover, may be translated into other, nonvisual epistemological schemes (and thus may be stored and retrieved in quite different formats under different ”views.” Of course, we have no awareness at all of some levels and processes of perception; for example, we lose all awareness of an image in its initially inverted, curvilinear, and tiny state within the retina. I believe that the above sorts of considerations also govern higher-level cognitive processes like narrative comprehension when it, too, is seen as multi-layered. Cf. the discussion of some remarkable facts about narrative comprehension on pp. 14–15.


60 Figure 26b is based on box diagrams showing the relationships of various narrations in Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* and Longus’s *Daphnis and Chloe*.


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64 For further discussion of ‘scene’ and ‘summary,’” see chapter 5.


66 For further discussion see chapter 6; for a fuller account of Wallace Martin’s description of four varieties of narrative theory along somewhat different lines using different terms. I add a new, fifth major type and relate his fourth type of theory to topics discussed in his chapter 7 rather than to his choice which is chapter 6; see *Recent Theories of Narrative*, pp. 107–11. Dudley Andrew proposes eight types of narrative theories in *Concepts in Film Theory*, pp. 81–8.


70 Five of Propp’s thirty-one functions touch on the manipulation of character knowledge: reconnaissance (4), delivery of information (5), deception by villain (6), recognition of hero (27), and exposure of villain (28). These five, however, seem even less important than Propp lists all 151 elements of the wonder tale. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, Appendix I, pp. 119–27 (elements 37, 41, 43, 143, 145).


72 On the general function of a “middle term” in explaining change within a three-term narrative sequence, see Danto, *Narration and Knowledge*, pp. 230–56. Danto argues that the logic of narrative is identical to the logic of any causal explanation (e.g., he says, an account of the movement of billiard balls) and is also closely related to a deductive argument. For Danto, narrative constitutes a fundamental form of knowledge and is the basis for all historical explanation. His ideas would seem to be in accord with Bordwell and Thompson’s general definition of “narrative,” chap. 7. “From Writer to Reader: Communication and Interpretation,” pp. 152–72; Horst Ruther, *The Reader’s Construction of Narrative* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981); and especially Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Recep-
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81 An exception is the Russian formalist Boris Eikhenbaum who developed a perceptual theory based on "inner speech." See note 84 below.


83 Metz, Film Language, p. 21; more fully quoted in the text above at note 15.


85 David Alan Black, Narrative Film and the Synoptic Tendency, p. 142 (Black's emphasis).


87 In deferred action, or deferred revision, sensory material stored in memory is subject always to being recalled, repressed, or drastically reinterpreted in light of new circumstances including the maturation of the organism. Through deferred action, original stimuli stored in memory may produce entirely new feelings not experienced originally (guilt, anxiety, pleasure). Effects of the "present" may not be determined, much less known, until later. The temporality of the human psyche is thus much more complex than the temporality of initial stimuli. See J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, The Language of Psycho-Analysis, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1973), "Censorship," "Deferred Action," "Phantasy," and "Secondary Revision," pp. 65-6, 111-14, 314-19, and 412.


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chaps 1, 4, 10; and Eric S. Rabkin, "Spatial Form and Plot" in Smilten and Daghistany, Spatial Form in Narrative, pp. 83, 90.

89 By contrast, Kristin Thompson argues that the unconscious level of mental processes is largely an unnecessary construct for criticism. "For the neoformalist critic, conscious processes are usually the most important ones, since it is here that the artwork can challenge most strongly our habitual ways of perceiving and thinking and can make us aware of our habitual ways of coping with the world. In a sense, for the neoformalist, the aim of original art is to put any or all of our thought processes onto this conscious level." Thompson also discusses the specific failings of psychoanalytic criticism; Breaking the Glass Armor, pp. 27-8.

90 See E. Ann Kaplan's "Introduction: From Plato's Cave to Freud's Screen" in Psychoanalysis & Cinema, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1-23. For an example of reading against the grain, see Stuart Marshall's discovery of three contradictory views of female sexuality at work in the representation of the character Adrienne Fromsett in Lady in the Lake, quoted in note 32 in chapter 5 below.

Recall in the context of a counterintuitive reading, the discussion of Alan Williams's "four films," the spectator's systematic "forgetting," and the dyad "transparency-invisibility" in chapter 3. The fact that some things have slipped from consciousness explains the attraction of such concepts as "suture" and "excess" for psychoanalytic criticism. On suture, see note 27 in chapter 2 above; on excess, see note 4 in chapter 2 above. Marshall draws on suture to explain the "failure" of Lady in the Lake: "Lady in the Lake: Identification and the Drives." Film Form, vol. 1, no. 2 (Autumn 1977), pp. 38-42.

5 SUBJЕCTIVITY


2 On indefinite time, and on the general importance of indefinite reference to fictional interpretation, see chapter 7.

3 On perfect but impossible camera framing, see camera position 5 in figure 14, chapter 3. Also relevant in describing parts of shot 1 in Hangover Square is the concept of "unmotivated" camera movement; see camera positions BA-B in figure 14.

4 Claudia Gorbman, Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 152, 158. There are minor inaccuracies in Gorbman's shot breakdown for the opening sequence of Hangover Square. David Bordwell discusses the reappearance of the credit music of Hangover Square in George's concert as well as more general issues about music and narration in The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production

5 For example, most spectators never notice that in Lady in the Lake, to be discussed below, there are at least five matches on action within an ostensibly continuous POV shot. One of the reasons that a match on action does so little damage to narrative is that in a single stroke it reinforces the prevailing continuity of a causal sequence — a motion — in a unique space and time already defined by a narrative schema.

6 The double causal structure of crime and romance discussed in chapter 1 in connection with The Girl and Her Trust is particularly evident in Lady in the Lake.

7 Julio L. Moreno, "Subjective Cinema: And the Problem of Film in the First Person," The Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television, vol. 7 (1952–3), p. 354 (Moreno's emphasis); see also p. 344.

8 Moreno, "Subjective Cinema," p. 349 (Moreno's emphasis); see also pp. 342, 357–8. On Moreno's preference for the purely visual, see pp. 346–9.


10 For a recent assessment of Bazin's theory, see Philip Rosen's "History of Image, Image of History: Subject and Ontology in Bazin" in a special issue of Hollywood Quarterly, vol. 2, no. 4 (July 1947), pp. 361–2. Brinton decides that Lady in the Lake fails because of the superiority of the human eye over the camera while John McCarten decides that it fails because of the inferiority of the human eye:

One major trouble with [Lady in the Lake] ... is its brushing aside of the facts of optometry. Substituting for the human eye, the camera constantly fails to realize the limitations of that organ, and it etches into sharp focus all kinds of scenes that the eye could never see that clearly.

(The New Yorker, vol. 22, no. 35 (Feb. 1, 1947), p. 64.)

11 Joseph P. Brinton, "Subjective Camera or Subjective Audience?" Hollywood Quarterly, vol. 2, no. 4 (July 1947), pp. 361–2. Brinton decides that Lady in the Lake fails because of the superiority of the human eye over the camera while John McCarten decides that it fails because of the inferiority of the human eye:

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(The New Yorker, vol. 22, no. 35 (Feb. 1, 1947), p. 64.)

12 Brinton, "Subjective Camera," p. 365; see also pp. 360–3. Cf. the blend of subjective and objective narration in Nick Fury, Chapter 3 above. Brinton remarks that "Scenes in the classic Cabinet of Dr Caligari [Wiene, 1919] and Last Will of Dr Mabuse [Lang, 1933], for example, express a subjective point of view in virtually every aspect of their production except the camera, and this inconsistency perhaps accounts for the difficulty with which spectators follow their narratives" (p. 365).


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14 André Gaudreault, "Narration and Monstration in the Cinema," The Journal of Film and Video, vol. 39, no. 2 (Spring 1987), pp. 31–4, and n. 12. Cf. figure 25 in chapter 4, p. 106. Gaudreault's assertion that the demonstrator does not acknowledge the fact of "quotation," raises the general issue of the "perceptibility" of narration; see, e.g., note 23 in chapter 4 above.

For Gaudreault the concept of quotation seems to involve extracting something from a context and presenting it anew (p. 33); but this seems closer to the activities of editing and telling than to showing. The relationship of language and cinema has been one of the intractable problems of contemporary film theory.

One may also wonder exactly what in film is "in present time" for Gaudreault. Is it a photograph, a shot, the experience of an image, spoken language, a performance by an actor, a fiction, a narrative enacted, or a narrative interrupted — a tableau vivant? I suggest that the film image is perhaps merely atemporal, or "open," and that time is not a property at all but a function of the descriptive method being employed by the spectator to sequence and juxtapose elements.

The theoretical status of what is "off-screen" at any given moment is a concrete test of how a theory conceives the general problem of presence and absence which, in turn, is at the center of any explanation of representational, or symbolic, activity. When can it be said that something is no longer present, not there, at an end, no longer causally effective? Is the answer: when we no longer see or hear it? Or, when we no longer believe it to be present? Or, when we no longer have sufficient justification to believe it to be present? (Note that still other answers are possible.)

A similar issue is raised in narrative theories which attempt to distinguish plot from story: when does something off-screen pass from the plot into the story? After the present shot is over? How much and what kind of arranging, selecting, emphasizing, or tampering with story events will count as "plot?" These are not easy questions to decide. Clearly, if "plot" is to be a central term in a theory and not trivial, then it will depend on a battery of other concepts (e.g., "scene") to define its scope. Again, one cannot avoid the problem of relating, on the one hand, a spectator's perception of structure to, on the other hand, a camera and the effects of material. On plot versus story, see the discussion of style-based theories of narrative in chapter 4.

15 Charles Derry, like Gaudreault, conceives film narrative as a product of "literary or verbal" narration that is operating simultaneously with a "visual" narration. Derry, however, leaves open the possibility that there may be still other sorts of narrations, and also relaxes the connection between literary narration and "telling," and between visual narration and "showing." He argues, for instance, that synchronous dialogue is shown to us, not told. "Towards a Categorization of Film Narrative," Film Reader 2 (1977), esp. pp. 114–17. Seymour Chatman makes use of the concepts of telling and showing in Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 31–4.

16 On the problems surrounding the distinction between telling and showing, see, e.g., Braniqan, Point of View, Appendix, sect. 1, "Orthodox Literary Theories of Point of View and a Fatal Distinction: Telling versus Showing," pp. 190–6; David Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), esp. pp. 77–80, and chaps 1 and 2 on mimetic and digetic theories of narration. For a defense of the distinction, see Seymour Chatman, Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and
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18 Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film, p. 188 (his emphases); and see pp. 158, 162. On the alternation of scene and summary in the traditional novel, see, e.g., Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), pp. 64-73, 93-109, 267-70.


21 I have used the opposition between scene and summary in my general definition of "narrative" in chapter 4. The above theories of time may be seen as offering particular elaborations of that opposition. Cf. also the notion of a summary with the "abstract" of a narrative schema (chapter 1) and with a "nonfocalized" level of narration (chapter 4). This illustrates that the problem of scene and summary must be solved within a theory of both declarative knowledge (i.e., story in a limited sense) and procedural knowledge (i.e., narration). The subtle interrelationships between types of knowledge and types of temporal representation may be posed in concrete terms by asking whether, or when, character narration qualifies as scene or summary.

22 Genette, Narrative Discourse, pp. 86-7 (his emphasis); see also pp. 94-5.


24 Indeed one can locate within Genette's own comments a basis for extending the conventional nature of the dramatic forms of duration in literature to music and film. Genette compares the "canonical forms of tempo" in the novel with the "canonical movements" in music (andante, allegro, presto, etc.) (cf. pp. 86-7 quoted in the text above - with pp. 94-5). Thus he seems to imply that absolute speed may no longer be the decisive criterion by which to measure effects of duration in music and film but rather relative speed becomes the criterion; that is, speed relative to particular speeds in each medium that have become conventional for certain forms of dramatic duration. The speed of the film projector, then, would be relevant to the quality of motion on the screen but would not strictly determine the experience of duration in the story world, or in film generally.

25 See note 3 in chapter 3 above.

26 Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film, p. 112 (his emphasis).


Our relationship to the physical screen in the theater as we watch any film owes much to our experience as nurtured infants and to our earliest dreams. The actual screen in the theater functions as a psychotic proscription of our dream screen, a structure constituted by the mother's breast, or a surrogate for it, and by our own ego. (p. 192.)

For an extensive bibliography on film narrative as dream, see his book, pp. 221-37, and a special issue on "Dream & Film," "Dreamworks," vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 88-93.


32 Marshall, "Lady in the Lake," pp. 44-9. According to Marshall, Lady in the Lake maintains the anxiety of the castration threat by promoting three different (and contradictory) views of female sexuality using a single character:

The suggestion that Adrienne [the heroine] is somehow involved in the murder of Lavery [a man] redresses her sexuality as problematic. It suggests the definition of her desire as Oedipally male (desiring the death of the father) and hence as phallic, or for the destruction of the object of her desire (as castrating woman), or as a contradictory complicity in the Oedipal male child's [i.e., Phillip Marlowe's] hostile identification with the father in her desire to sustain the child as phallic (according to the symbolic equation) and so hold him in the imaginary [a maternal] relation to her always short of the castration complex. (p. 49; my emphases.)


34 William Luhr, "Raymond Chandler and 'Lady in the Lake,'" "Wide Angle, vol. 6, no. 1 (1984), p. 30. The film is based on Chandler's 1943 novel which perhaps accounts for the fact that many writers incorrectly give the title of the film as "The Lady in the Lake."

35 Luhr, "Raymond Chandler," p. 33; see also p. 32.


37 Polan, Power and Paranoia, p. 12.


40 See Polan, Power and Paranoia, pp. 209, 211-12, 224. Cf. pp. 193-6 where Polan analyzes the use of the POV shot in Dark Passage. Although Polan associates Lady in the Lake only with sadism, his example of film masochism would apply equally to the camera in Lady in the Lake which comes under regular.

41 Polan, Power and Paranoia, p. 187.

42 See Polan, Power and Paranoia, pp. 209, 211-12, 224. Cf. pp. 193-6 where Polan analyzes the use of the POV shot in Dark Passage. Although Polan associates Lady in the Lake only with sadism, his example of film masochism would apply equally to the camera in Lady in the Lake which comes under regular.

43 Bill Nichols seeks to create a narrative theory by integrating theories of reception, style, psychoanalysis, and society in Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other Media (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981); see, e.g., pp. 73-80. Will Wright, by combining Vladimir Propp's analysis of narrative with Claude Lévi-Strauss's analysis of myth, is able to match three types of plots in the Western genre with the social actions and beliefs characteristic of three types of economic institution: a market economy, planned economy, and corporate economy (p. 187). Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), esp. chaps 2, 4, and 8.

44 J.P. Telotte, "The Detective as Dreamer: The Case of The Lady in the Lake," The Journal of Popular Films and Television, vol. 12, no. 1 (Spring 1984), p. 13 (my emphases); on the cultural dimension of dreaming, see also pp. 6, 8, 11, 12, 15.

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46 Roughly, the French phrase mise-en-abyme refers to the situation where an object is placed into an endless sequence of relationships with itself; for example, an object that is reflected in mirrors with mirrors indefinitely.

47 The argument of Telotte that I have outlined in the text may be found principally on pp. 8-12 of “The Detective As Dreamer.” According to Telotte, Marlowe escapes the rigid frames by becoming a “chameleon” who undergoes an almost “poetic shapeshifting.” Significantly, Telotte treats it from inanimate (door and frame) to an animate (chameleon) metaphor, signals the importance that he attaches to a protagonist’s reflection and other within that mode of comprehension that has been identified as a narrative schema. If Lady in the Lake is a dream—not private or communal—it is one organized by Telotte in a most traditional and ahistorical manner.

48 Vivian Sobchack, The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience (forthcoming, Princeton University Press; Sobchack’s emphases).


50 See generally my discussion of empiricist versus rationalist theories of narration in Point of View, pp. 168-71. For another statement of a holistic approach to film, consider the following:

In the cinema, there is always present, in the positioning of the camera and the microphone(s), a consciousness that sees and (in the sound film) hears and that coexists with what is seen or heard. Even in the silent cinema, someone is always speaking and something is always spoken. In the sound cinema, we always see and hear events through images and sounds of them. The cinema remains the phenomenological art par excellence, wedding, if indeed not collapsing, consciousness with the world. (John Belton, “Technology and Aesthetics of Film Sound” in Film Sound: Theory and Practice, ed. by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 71; Belton’s emphases.)


52 See, e.g., Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, pp. 85-90, 161-71; Branigan, Point of View, pp. 92, 120 n. 22.

53 Even if one considers only the explicit forms of narration in Lady in the Lake, one may wonder whether the sound track matches the internal focalization of the visual track. Marlowe’s voice in the film (though no other sound) is recorded in a muffled way during the POV shots but recorded naturally for his direct speeches to the audience. The distortion of Marlowe’s voice is designed to simulate the imperfect way an individual hears his or her own voice. If Marlowe were to offer an account of his experiences to us on this basis, it would amount to something like the following: “I saw her five feet away and she said . . . and then I heard myself reply . . . .” However, there are profound differences between sound and image which affect how we perceive and understand them. A muffled sound may not be the analogue of an angle of view. Of the many false statements about sound offered by theorists, perhaps the most misleading is to say that sound and image have an equal status in film. See Edward Branigan, “Sound and Epistemology in Film” The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. 47, no. 4 (Fall 1989), pp. 311-24.


57 More fully quoted above at note 11 (my emphasis). Cfr. also Chatman, Coming to Terms, p. 212 n. 10 (“Camera,” here and throughout, is syntecdochic for the whole cinematic apparatus.”).


6 OBJECTIVITY AND UNCERTAINTY


2 A shot of S in a POV structure (S, 0) prior to a shot of what is seen by S performs at least the introductory function that a tag clause does for what
is spoken directly by a character in literary discourse: "He said, ... " Removing some of the special punctuation (e.g., quotation marks, dash lines, or paragraphing) as well as the tag clauses from a written dialogue produces a series of free direct speeches which require the reader to make additional inferences — because the tag clause narrations are now implicit — but does not alter the specificity of words any more than removing most of the shots of Marlowe in *Lady in the Lake* makes the spectator doubt who he is or whether he is the subject who sees.

Note that nonverbal perceptions of a character may be represented in literary discourses as shots appearing in film are actually absent; e.g., we pretent that nothing had happened: "Here are ... in the dark." The first six words introduce the character's visual perception and derive from a more powerful narration than the representation of the perception itself in words.

The very words used by Percy Lubbock in describing Flaubert's scenic narration in *Madame Bovary* betray the essential subjective conditional mood demanded by such (diegetic) narration:

Sometimes he [Flaubert] seems to be describing what he has seen himself, places and people he has known, conversations he may have overheard, I do not mean that he is literally reminding [i.e., telling and retelling] an experience of his own, but that he writes as though he were. His description, in that case, touches only such matters as you or I might have permitted for ourselves, if we had happened to be on the spot at the moment. His object is to place the scene before us, so that we may take it in like a picture gradually unrolled or a drama enacted.

(*The Craft of Fiction* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. 65, my emphases.)

As we will discover in chapter 7, various forms of implied diegetic narration are prominent in classical documentary films in order to suggest an invisible observation of "objective facts." Cf. Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary" in *Monos and Methods*, vol. II, (1985), p. 262 ("... moments of 'pure observation' capture the social presentation of self too would have witnessed had we actually been there to see for ourselves"); "HISTORY, Myth, and Narrative in Documentary," *Film Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 1 (Fall 1987), p. 11. (What we had seen would have seemed like a what we had seen been there for ourselves"); "Where"); "Where we are going to."


5 I have modeled the description of these shots from *The Wrong Man* (in 4) on Wallace Martin's analysis of the opening sentence of Ernest Hemingway's story, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber": "It was now lunch time and they were all sitting under the double green fly of the dining tent pretending that nothing had happened." Recent Theories of Narrative (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 136-7.

6 Klé Hamburger makes a distinction between the epic present and the historical present: "tenses" even though as forms of narration they produce the same effect. The epic present combines a past tense or past progressive with an explicit or implicit present deixis; the historical present combines an explicit or implicit past deixis with a present tense or present progressive. Strictly speaking, neither one is a tense. I will use "historical present" to refer to both forms.

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7 The paradox of the historical present tense may be extended to the representation of space in a film. André Bazin likens film to the Egyptian practice of embalming the dead and to the preservation of the bodies of insects intact in pieces of amber. In a similar fashion, Roland Barthes concludes that a photograph shows "that-has-been," eliciting from the spectator: "I also will have been (will die)." This notion of a past space preserved and threatening our future, co-exists with an impression that space in film is ever-present, filled with motion, capable of being summoned again and again to happen in our present. The result is that, phenomenologically, our experience of space in film appears shifted forward in time compressing "there" with "here." André Bazin, *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* in *What Is Cinema?*, vol. I, trans. by Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 9-16. Roland Barthes, *Camere Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981), pp. 31-2; pp. 85-100. See also Garrett Stewart, "Photo-gravure: Death, Photography, and Film Narrative," *Wide Angle*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1987), pp. 11-31.

8 Peter Brooks describes the historical present tense as follows: "If the past is to be read as present, it is a curious present that we know to be past in relation to a future we know to be already in place, already in wait for us to reach it." It is my belief that what we "already must know" in order to interpret time as the historical present can be analyzed in terms of a narrative schema and of a hierarchy of levels of narration. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), p. 22; cf. p. 34.

The voice-over narration of Sans Soleil — discussed in more detail in the next chapter — occasionally makes explicit the complex time of viewing film images as (historically) present. Consider the various tense shifts in the following excerpt (my emphases):

My personal problem was more specific: how to film the ladies of Bissau? Apparently, the magical function of the eye was working against me there. It was in the market places of Bissau and Cape Verde that I could stare at them again with equality. [We see a particular woman reacting to the camera.] I see her. She saw me. She knows that I see her. She drops on her glance, but just at an angle where it is still possible to act as though it was not addressed to me — and at the end, the real glance, straight forward, that lasted a twenty-fourth of a second, the length of a film frame.

The concept of a historical present tense is one way of interpreting the "illusion of occurrence" under which a perceiver understands narrative data. See my general definition of narrative in chapter 4. One way in which film semiotics has addressed the question of the historical present is by utilizing Emile Benveniste's linguistic distinction between histoire and discourse. See, e.g., Christian Metz, "Story/Discourse (A Note on Two Kinds of Voyeurism)" in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. by Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 91-8.


10 Arthur C. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge* (including the integral text of *Analytical Philosophy of History*; New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. xii; see esp. chaps 8 and 15, "Narrative Sentences" and "Narration and
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12 It is true that my account of fiction in chapter 7 and of objective narration in the present chapter emphasizes indefinite reference as a feature shared by both fiction and narrative. Also, aspects of both fiction and narration may be analyzed with counterfactual conditionals. Moreover, establishing the "facts" in a nonfiction film seems to be related to certain "objective" narrations that attempt to establish the "facts" in a "story" world. Nevertheless, fiction and narrative as two ongoing cognitive processes should be kept distinct.

Narration involves many variables other than its degree of indefiniteness (e.g., its degree of explicitness or implicitness; its regulation of character knowledge; its creation of space; its judgmental tone). There are also many temporal schemes and levels of narration other than the complex time of the historical present of (implicit and indefinite) diegetic narration (which is only one form of "objectivity"). Some of these other types of narration (e.g., a credit sequence, first-person voice-over, character dialogue, point-of-view shot) refer in more straight forward ways, or at least in different ways, than implied diegetic narration, and they play a vital role in our comprehension of stories.

Fiction, for its part, is not associated with narration. In general, fiction addresses a more global issue: how is the perceiver able to connect a given pattern of data to the world; how is he or she to discover the "facts" in a nonfiction film seems to be related to certain "objective" narrations which, for example, arrange the mise-en-scène for optimal viewing by the spectator.


Documentary films also create types of invisible observer. See note 3 above and Dai Vaughn, "The Space Between Shots" in Movies and Methods, vol. II, ed. by Bill Nichols, p. 710. Vaughn quite rightly discusses the idea that invisible observers provide a definition of the "objectivity" of documentary film. I do not believe, however, that this means that such a convention of narration could not exist within a matrix of other narrations operating within a particular documentary film.

When we characterize our experience of a scene in terms of a feeling of moving instantaneously through space, we mean that the time of the representing of the scene is not the represented time of the scene itself. In order to talk about the time of the representing of the scene - the time of the "instantaneous" cuts - in relation to an ongoing scenic time, one is forced into such aberrant locutions as positing a camera "movement" that occurs "between the shots." This illustrates that we normally think of a scene by assigning what is explicit to the "present," leaving undefined both the past (which includes the time when the film was made) and the future (which includes the time when the significance of the scene will be known). Both of these times, however, past and future, already exist in the present of the narrative and exert an influence on our interpretation; cf. the historical present tense. Complex time means that the concept of film editing will be complex; cf. note 54 below.

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voices. The emergence of fiction in the seventeenth century. Banfield implies, may be connected to new ways of conceiving the world.

(Martin, Recent Theories of Narrative, p. 141.)

 Cf. Banfield, Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982). The freeing of a subjectivity from its physical connections would seem to be a routine effect of narrative film and goes far towards explaining why narrative film established an early dominance over competing forms of filmmaking.

16 Ann Banfield argues that free indirect discourse cannot be derived from direct discourse and that its unique grammatical features prohibit its being used as a "communicative" act.

17 I have discussed anthropomorphism in the contexts of a narrative schema, Metz's conception of an implied author, and Bordwell's critique of communication models of narrative. See pp. 16, 92 and 109 above. Cf. the holistic theories of Telotte, Sobchack, and Kawin discussed in the previous chapter.

18 See David Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 9-12, 66, 161-2, passim; Branigan, Point of View, pp. 122, 136, 158, 197, 203. 208-9. Bordwell argues that the invisible observer is an effect created by the overall construction of some films and that even when present it depends on the operation of still more powerful narrations which, for example, arrange the mise-en-scène for optimal viewing by the spectator.


Documentary films also create types of invisible observer. See note 3 above and Dai Vaughn, "The Space Between Shots" in Movies and Methods, vol. II, ed. by Bill Nichols, p. 710. Vaughn quite rightly discusses the idea that invisible observers provide a definition of the "objectivity" of documentary film. I do not believe, however, that this means that such a convention of narration could not exist within a matrix of other narrations operating within a particular documentary film.

When we characterize our experience of a scene in terms of a feeling of moving instantaneously through space, we mean that the time of the representing of the scene is not the represented time of the scene itself. In order to talk about the time of the representing of the scene - the time of the "instantaneous" cuts - in relation to an ongoing scenic time, one is forced into such aberrant locutions as positing a camera "movement" that occurs "between the shots." This illustrates that we normally think of a scene by assigning what is explicit to the "present," leaving undefined both the past (which includes the time when the film was made) and the future (which includes the time when the significance of the scene will be known). Both of these times, however, past and future, already exist in the present of the narrative and exert an influence on our interpretation; cf. the historical present tense. Complex time means that the concept of film editing will be complex; cf. note 54 below.
28 The status of these words is not clear. Except for the introductory exclamation, "Oh;" we heard Lisa utter these same words a few moments earlier in the film at the conclusion of her letter. However, the line is now spoken differently by her, in a deeper whisper. Are the words, then, to be attributed somehow to Stefan, or to Lisa at an unspecified, later time (after she stops writing)? As we shall see, this is merely one example of a more general, perplexing uncertainty in the film about what is "objective."

29 For Robert Chamblee the "emphasis" of the film is on Lisa's consciousness and "what is represented is represented largely in terms of the way Lisa describes it . . . [What we know of Stefan is mediated by Lisa]" (p. 160). Chamblee argues that it is conventional for the spectator of a letter "read by the writer rather than by the person receiving the letter." Moreover, the words that the spectator hears were spoken "at the time the letter was written" (p. 163 n. 6; Chamblee's underlining). See "Max Ophuls' Viennese Trilogy: Communications and Structures" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1981), pp. 160, 162-4, 169, 191.


31 Kaja Silverman asserts that "Lisa's narration is obedient to Stephan's [sic] desires, to his ear" and that "her voice is his mental construction." She concludes, "In the same way, what we see is what he imagines." "Dis-Embodying the Female Voice" in Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism, ed. by Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams (The American Film Institute Monograph Series vol. 3, Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1984), p. 136. See also Silverman's The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 58 (Lisa's "voice exists only in and through Stefan's consciousness.").

32 Britta Sigpen opposes the views of both Silverman and Modleski, and argues that Lisa's letter triggers an "interior bi-logue" between Lisa and Stefan:

   He "listens" . . . to what is written; we understand this as spectators to be his imagining of the source of the words, as his fantasim, and also, simultaneously, as her voice-off speaking directly to him. Thus, it is both his voice and her voice . . . Stefan does not speak, he receives the voice, desires it, and in this sense, "speaks" with it as it "inhabits" his image.

Sigpen also argues that the shot of Lisa writing her letter belongs neither to the letter nor to Stefan with the result that Lisa's voice, here, seems equally the voice as Stefan imagines it in reading and that of her writing, imagining him reading." "Sustaining Difference: The Female Voice-Off in Letter from an Unknown Woman" (Los Angeles: University of California, unpublished paper, 1990), pp. 4-5. 7 (Sigpen's emphases; footnote omitted).

33 Karel Reisz, "Ophuls and La Ronde," Sequence (Jan. 1952), p. 34.

34 See Michael Walker, "Ophuls in Hollywood," Movie nos. 20-28 (Summer 1982), p. 48 ("It's as if, in order to fulfill her fantasy, Lisa wishes Stefan to die, too."); V. F. Perkins, "Letter from an Unknown Woman," Movie nos. 29-30 (Summer 1982), p. 71 (Lisa's letter "is pointless except as an invitation to suicide, persuading Stefan to let death prove what life could not.")


36 Douglas McVay believes that Stefan's "guilt-ridden desire to make atonement" causes him to view the duel with Johann as the "perfect means of fulfillment:"

"Letter from an Unknown Woman" (Los Angeles: University of California, unpublished paper, 1990), pp. 4-5. 7 (Sigpen's emphases; footnote omitted).

37 Karel Reisz, "Ophuls and La Ronde," Sequence (Jan. 1952), p. 34.

38 See Michael Walker, "Ophuls in Hollywood," Movie nos. 20-28 (Summer 1982), p. 48 ("It's as if, in order to fulfill her fantasy, Lisa wishes Stefan to die, too."); V. F. Perkins, "Letter from an Unknown Woman," Movie nos. 29-30 (Summer 1982), p. 71 (Lisa's letter "is pointless except as an invitation to suicide, persuading Stefan to let death prove what life could not.")


36 Douglas McVay believes that Stefan's "guilt-ridden desire to make atonement" causes him to view the duel with Johann as the "perfect means of fulfillment:"
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38 Molly Haskell, From Renounce to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd edn 1987), p. 186 (Ophuls "captures the inner movement of the soul in its rare, solitary passage to tragedy and grace.").

39 See Norman Hale, "Letter from an Unknown Woman: The Dance of Time and Space," Cinemonkey, vol. 5, no. 16 (Winter 1979), p. 14 (Lisa and Stefan are "hostage to events contrived by a mysterious agent of fate. No one is to blame."). For Hale, the depictions of Lisa's subjectivity are essentially objective renderings of her world and fate. For example, her memory of Stefan bringing her home to his apartment is shown to us through "the omniscient eye" that is located above her on the staircase. Hale goes even further by arguing that subjective "memory" becomes the one objective "value" within the "futility and emptiness" of Ophuls' world: "To be able to remember is to escape the tyranny of time" (p. 14).


42 Wilson, Narration in Light, pp. 104, 106, 108, 120-1, 124. According to Wilson, "If the central personages are hopelessly blind in different ways to one another, the film, through its construction and its style, continuously affirms the possibility of a wider and more accurate perception of the human affairs that it portrays. Again and again, the film establishes a larger viewpoint which its characters do not attain" (p. 105).

Similarly, Robin Wood argues that "Ophuls' camera-work achieves a perfect balance - in terms of the spectator's involvement - between synoptic and detachment" by maintaining a "perspective between subjective narrative and objective presentation." Personal Views: Explorations in Film (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976), pp. 126-7.

Wilson believes that the representation of Lisa's subjectivity resides primarily in her spoken words not in her thoughts or mental images. Since he also believes that the show of a film must always reveal "far more information" that is being said (because showing exceeds telling), he concludes that there must exist a narration which acts independently of Lisa and Stefan (pp. 105-106). These claims plainly illustrate the close relations among film theory, narratology, and criticism.

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43 Chapter 2 (see p. 45) emphasized that because of the crucial importance of top-down cognitive processes, physical continuity (ordering) on the screen is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for a spectator's perception of spatial, temporal, or causal continuity in the narrative. The scene described in the text has continuous nondiegetic music but no voice-over.

Another significant cheat cut occurs later when Stefan first notices the 18-year-old Lisa as she sits in the snow near his apartment. He begins walking toward her. A match on action covers a large gap in space when we see Lisa in the background from over his shoulder as he draws near her.

44 Stephen Heath asserts that Letter from an Unknown Woman is about the problem of seeing and knowing, and the relationship of women to looking and being looked at; "The Question Oshima" in Ophuls, ed. by Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 1978), p. 77, and "Postscript," pp. 85-7. See also Paul Willemen; "The Ophuls Text: A Thesis," ibid., pp. 71-72. E. Ann Kaplan argues that "men do not simply look: their gaze carries with it the power of action and of possession which is lacking in the female gaze. Women receive and return a gaze, but cannot act upon it." Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera (New York: Routledge, 1983), p. 31. See generally Linda Williams, "When the Woman Looks" in Re-Vision, pp. 83-99. Lisa not only must deny having seen certain sights, but also deny having heard certain sounds: she eavesdrops on Stefan's music from the courtyard during the day and from the hall at night by opening a transom above his door.

45 The camera position on the staircase articulates knowledge in a way similar to camera position 38 in figure 14, p. 68.

46 Wilson, Narration in Light, pp. 100-4.


48 Hedges apparently argues for an interpretation that is a compromise between Wilson and Pipolo. She claims that in the second staircase shot the perspective of the third-person camera narrator and the character are fused as the spectator realizes that Lisa's alter ego also watches from that position, triumphing in her success. Yet, although able on the one hand to identify with Lisa's happiness, the spectator also identifies with the third-person narrator and knows that she is different from the others, as far as [Stefan] is concerned.

(Breaking the Frame: Film Language and the Experience of Limits (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 73 (fn. omitted.).

48 Pipolo, "The Aptness of Terminology," p. 175; cf. pp. 174, 176. Critics have also interpreted repetition in the film generically as tied to certain psychic states (e.g., romantic melodrama and conversion hysteria) and thematically as a sort of powerful, abstract narration which mimics the working of "destiny," or "fate." On the latter, see, e.g., Wood, Personal Views, pp. 130-2; on the former, see, e.g., Walker, "Ophuls in Hollywood"; Haskell, Reverence to Rape; Williams, Max Ophuls; and Tania Modleski, "Time and Desire in the Woman's Film," Cinema Journal, vol. 20, no. 3 (Spring 1984), esp. pp. 20-30. Stanley Cavell argues that the film belongs to a particular genre that dramatizes gender asymmetry in terms of women having a different relationship than men to skepticism and doubt (in the philosophical sense). Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Melodrama of the Unknown Woman" in Images in Our Souls: Cerei, Psychoanalysis, and Cinema, ed. by Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 29-31, 34-6, 40.
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49 The seven shots of Stefan at the piano were shot by Ophuls during postproduction and added to the film apparently over his objection. There were other instances of studio interference in sequences not later discussed, shots (e.g., the shots of Stefan in the audience at the opera; see note 50 below). Ophuls did, however, direct all of the shots of the film and thus had the opportunity to attempt to integrate the various materials. Even so, it should be remembered that analyzing the interactions of spectator and text cannot be reduced to analyzing the explicit "intentions" of Ophuls or other persons involved in the production. See generally Lutz Bacher's extraordinarily detailed account of the production of the film, "Max Ophuls's Universal-International Films: The Impact of Production Circumstances on a Visual Style" (Detroit, Mich.: Ph.D. diss.: Wayne State University, 1984). On the shots of Stefan at the piano, see pp. 428, 651.

50 Placing a detail shot first in a sequence marks its importance in advance; usually, however, in classical narrative a detail shot is placed later in a sequence after a context has been gradually developed that defines the significance of the detail. Hence, the more usual sequence opens with an establishing shot.

There is one extraordinary sequence in the film, however, in which Ophuls does not unequivocally locate a character in space. When Stefan notices the older Lisa at the opera ten years after her last meeting, he senses that he may know her. However, his position in the theater, and consequently the significance of his glances, is not clearly specified with respect to Lisa. We hear her say in voice-over: "Suddenly in that one moment everything was in danger, everything I thought was safe. Somewhere out there were your eyes and I knew I couldn't escape them."

51 The link between Lisa's growing awareness of her sexuality and Stefan's hands is also made explicit in the dialogue. Lisa's girlfriend complains to Lisa, but with animated delight, about a boy that the girlfriend knows: "I'm doing here, I'm going to have to do something about him if he doesn't keep his hands to himself. The things he does and right out in the street." Then Lisa looks up at Stefan's window and we cut to a long shot of Stefan at the piano (set-up 3), then to a low angle close-up of Stefan's hands (fig. 51; set-up 1*), then back to him at the piano (repeat of set-up 3) before returning to Lisa in the courtyard.

52 A question arises: are these camera movements that self-consciously frame and reframe the adolescent Lisa on the swing through a V-shaped fork of a tree to be attributed only to the older Lisa's self-consciousness in writing the letter, or are they evidence of other narrations at work in the film?

53 Strictly speaking, placing the low angle close-up of Stefan's hands as he plays the piano in the courtyard scene (fig. 51; set-up 1*) together with the higher medium close-up of Lisa's face as she watches Stefan playing the piano in the dance hall scene (fig. 53) does not create the type of discovered and delayed POV structure discussed earlier in this chapter (O, X, . . . , Xn). The reason is that the second shot here portrays a different space and does not create the type of delayed POV.
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Lucy Fischer applies De Lauretis's interpretation of Oedipal logic to Letter from an Unknown Woman:

At the moment of Stefan's comprehension of the dual nature of his attraction to women (lover as mother/mother as lover), he faces a dual (a challenge of phallic swords) with an elderly opponent worthy of his infantile hostility and fear [i.e., his Father].

(Fischer, Shot/Counter Shot, p. 106, (Fischer's emphases.) See also pp. 104-5, 107, 110.)

Two ingenious accounts of the psychosocial dimensions of Letter from an Unknown Woman begin with the premise that Lisa's Other is her (dead) father and, in general, the Father(s) of patriarchy (e.g., her stepfather, and her husband Johann). See Howard Davis, "Form and the Function of the Father: An Alternative Analysis of "Letter from an Unknown Woman" (Los Angeles: University of California, Master of Arts thesis, 1983), and "The Unconscious Subject in Letter from an Unknown Woman" (Los Angeles: University of California, unpublished paper, 1984); Donna S. Cunningham, "Dear Dad: A Daughter's Discourse in Letter from an Unknown Woman" (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, unpublished paper, 1989).

Wood, Personal Visions, pp. 129-30 (Wood's emphases). In a perceptive close analysis of the importance of narrative to narrative comprehension in the two Lanz scenes, V.F. Perkins, "Letter from an Unknown Woman," shows how Ophuls carefully balances Lisa's destructiveness with her nobility. Compare the following assertions:

Lisa's devotion here [to Stefan] is every bit as murderous as her husband's.

(p. 71)

Lisa never sees, never approaches the insight, that her predicament is related to the definitions and constraints that her society imposes on womanhood. Instead she rationalizes her servitude and naturalizes her passivity through her submission to Fate.

(p. 72)

Cf. pp. 65-6 on servitude and "alienated" labor in Lisa's society.

7 FICTION

1 On the distinction between understanding and belief, see, e.g., Michael Dummett, "Frege: Sense and Reference" in Philosophy Through Its Past, ed. by Ted Honderich (New York: Penguin, 1984), p. 447. For related distinc-

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tions, see Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin, Reconceptualizations in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), chap. 10, pp. 153-66. Goodman and Elgin argue that much broader notions of truth, certainty, and knowledge (namely, rightness, adoption, and understanding) are necessary if one is to evaluate how verbal and nonverbal symbols create worlds in all the fields of cognition.

2 For example, a text may be interpreted fictionally on a small scale but nonfictionally at a larger scale. This situation occurs in the sciences when "thought" experiments are proposed or counterfactual conditions are used to state physical laws. In the legal system, "fictions" are used to implement judicial policies and to acknowledge social truths, a social consensus. See, e.g., the concepts of "fiction of law," "legal fiction," and "constructive" in Henry Campbell Black, Black's Law Dictionary (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing, 5th edn 1979). (A fiction of law is an "assumption or supposition of law that something which is or may be false is true, or that a state of facts exists which has never really taken place." ) The legal system is also careful to protect certain commonly recognized fictions, such as political satire, precisely because they may be "true." Moreover, something which is literally, and even figuratively, false and which causes great harm may nevertheless escape a defamation suit because of social policy (e.g., under the First Amendment).


7 Slater, "Fictions," p. 146. Slater's example of searching for a gentleman to suit the clothes suggests Nelson Goodman's notion of "exemplification" as well as Goodman's criterion of rightness of fit which is developed as a standard of acceptability more general than truth or falsity (which is reserved for statements in a written or verbal language). Goodman's expansion of the notion of truth is significant in light of his strict view of fiction which treats "is a picture of" as a non-relational predicate, i.e., as an "x-picture" rather than a "picture of x." Goodman is also concerned to indicate that the standards for judging the acceptability of a representation will vary
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depending on both the type of reference (e.g., denotation, exemplification, expression) and the qualities of the notational system (e.g., disjointness, differentiation, compliance). Even so, fiction has a special relation to exemplification. See Nelson Goodman, "Ways of Worldsitting" (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), chap. 7, "On Rightness of Rendering." pp. 109-40: Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2nd edn 1976), chap. 1, sect. 5; chap. 2, sect. 4; p. 66 (fictive representation reduces to exemplification of a special kind); esp. 4, Of Mind and Other Matters (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 123-30 (five theses about fiction and three types of realism); Catherine Z. Elgin, With Reference to Reference (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), pp. 68-84.

Sister’s "outfit" for a gentleman reminds us that the notion of a "fit" is itself metaphorical and, moreover, according to Paul Kay, is one of two conflicting "folk theories of reference." See "Linguistic Competence and Folk Theories of Language: Two English Hedges" in Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society (Berkeley: Berkeley Linguistics Society, 1983), pp. 139-37. (The second folk theory of reference relies on a special group of people to stipulate authoritative definitions.) My justification for the use of the metaphor of a "fit" in a theory of fiction is presented in the text; see also note 19 below.

8 The example in the text has been taken from another context, though perhaps one not unrelated to the problem of fictional reference. See Mario Bunge, Causality and Modern Science (New York: Dover Publications 3rd rev. edn 1979), p. 8.

9 Arthur N. Applebee. The Child’s Concept of Story. Ages Two to Seventeen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). pp. 38-47, 52. Fiction as I present it relies upon rather complex cognitive operations and hence it is not surprising that the recognition of fiction is a late achievement for children. I know of no work on the developmental psychology of "fiction" or "make-believe." It seems obvious, however, that a more than so-called "basic-level categorization" will be required. On basic-level categories, see George Lakoff, Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 31-54, 199-201, 265-71, 296-7.


13 Cebik, Fictional Narrative and Truth, pp. 116, 123-4, 136-42. Cebik is responding to certain philosophical problems that arise when referring and nonreferring expressions are mixed in the same sentence. For example, a reference to Winston Churchill and London appearing in a fiction; or, an explicit generalization offered by a fictional character. The examples cited by Cebik, e.g. the temperature at which water freezes, the statement that war is hell.

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15 It might also be possible in a psychoanalytic approach to model the indeterminateness and delay characteristic of fiction on the psychic mechanism of "deferred action." On deferred action, see note 87 in chapter 4 above. For an unusual explanation of action that depends on combining psychoanalysis with narratology, see Michael Rifatere, Fictional Truth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), chap. 4. The Unconscious of Fiction," pp. 84-111. For one approach to the difference between fiction and nonfiction from a psychoanalytic standpoint, see William Guynn, A Cinema of Nonfiction (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990), chap. 5, "The Nonfiction Film and Its Spectator," pp. 215-31.

16 Cf. Jerrold Levinson, "The Place of Real Emotion in Response to Fictions," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. 48, no. 1 (Winter 1990), pp. 79-90; Jerry R. Hobbs, Literature and Cognition (Stanford, Ca.: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 1990), chap. 2, "Imagery, Fiction, and Narrative," pp. 33-40; and the J. Ang quotation in note 41, chapter 5 above. In addition, the redescription of a fictional object from one level of narration to the next may produce a variety of emotional responses to the object; see the discussion of "anomalous suspense" and "anomalous replotting" on p. 113 above.

17 In an empiricist account of language a fictional statement may be true only if it is taken as an indirect reference to sets of (false) sentences. For example, talk about Sherlock Holmes can only be true if made outside a story context and about sentences in the Holmes stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. See C.G. Prado, Making Believe: Philosophical Reflections on Fiction (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), pp. 12-14, 95-9. The empiricist account descends from Bertrand Russell’s "theory of descriptions." See his Logic and Knowledge: Essays, 1901-1950, ed. by Robert Charles Marsh (New York: Macmillan, 1956). An idealist account based on the work of Alex Meinong may be found in Terence Parsons, Nonexistent Objects (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980). For a related account based on ontological semantics (possible worlds) and a good bibliography, see Thomas G. Pavel’s Fictional Worlds (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986).


18 On the problem of "mixed" fictions. see note 13 above.

19 For an example of a cognitive theory which seeks a middle course between empiricism and idealism, see George Lakoff’s "experiential realism" in Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things, pp. 260-303. Notice that the word "see"
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is interpreted differently in these theories. "I see" may mean either "I am looking" (cf. empiricism) or "I understand" (cf. idealism). Accordingly, how we describe film "viewing" will depend on our notion of "fictional seeing" and ultimately on our theory of film, since a particular theory will make interrelated claims about the nature of fiction, narrative, film, and perception. Lakoff's description of our common sense, folk theory of "seeing" (pp. 125-30) seems to have much in common with certain philosophical views.

Gregory Currie searches for a middle course between empiricism and idealism by combining a theory of communication and intention based on the ideas of Paul Ricoeur with the notion that the reader of fiction adopts a special attitude of "make-believe." The Nature of Fiction (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1-51. On the nature of pictorial fictions, see Currie, pp. 35-42, 92-9. I discuss some of the problems of communication theories in chapter 4 above.


21 It is well to keep in mind that when we look at a photograph we must take on faith that it is a photograph; we must assume that a very great number of procedures were correctly followed, from framing and exposure through developing and printing. Recently it has become possible to use special graphics computers to shift elements from one photograph to another and to create new elements and relationships without leaving a detectable trace. See Michael W. Miller, "Creativity Fusion: High-Tech Alteration of Sights and Sounds Divides the Arts World," The Wall Street Journal, vol. 117, no. 45 (Sept. 1, 1987), pp. 1, 19.

Note that by thinking of both artworks and scientific laws as counterfactual conditionals, one preserves the notion that knowledge is not ready-made but relative to tacit conditions, hypotheses, and theories. How a photograph functions symbolically in an artwork or a scientific essay, then, is not determined by its being a photograph. On counterfactuals, see p. 268 above.

22 I will not consider the problem of how a spectator is able to construct "statements" out of visual materials nor how such "statements" and their truth values may change with time.

23 My suggestion that photographs may have a future tense should be contrasted with André Bazin's argument that photographs, like mummies, preserve the dead and Roland Barthes' view that a photograph of a tiger becomes nonfictional when interpreted as a representation of a specific kind of animal. The tiger pictured in the dictionary, of course, may actually be a house cat that has been painted and photographed close up, or merely a piece of painted cardboard, so long as we understand that what is being specified is a kind of animal. This suggests that the dictionary example may be stretched to explain how we understand some films as nonfictional even though they contain fictional devices. Consider the following argument by Hayden White:

Thus, for example, the depiction, in Richard Attenborough's film Gandhi (1982), of the anonymous South African railway conductor who pushed the young Gandhi from the train, is not a misrepresentation insofar as the player playing the role may not have possessed the physical features of the actual agent of that act. The veracity of the scene depends on the depiction of a person whose historical significance derived from the kind of act he performed at a particular time and place, which act was a function of an identifiable type of role-playing under the kinds of social conditions prevailing at a general, but specifically historical, time and place. And the same is true of the depiction of Gandhi himself in the film. Demands for a verisimilitude in film that is impossible in any medium of representation, including that of written history, stem from the confusion of historical individuals with the kinds of "characterization" of them required for discursive purposes, whether in verbal or in visual media.


Note, again, that nonfiction and fiction are a matter of the procedures by which we read and depend on the specificity of discourse and reference; they are not determined by the specifically visual and auditory (bottom-up) features of a text. Also, a reference may be specific without being true. Thus a nonfictional text that is false does not thereby become a fiction.

25 Is it possible for a fiction film to incorporate photographs which are nonfictional and/or quite specific (e.g., when a character handles a photograph within the story or the film uses freeze frames?)? See Garrett Stewart, "Photogravure: Death, Photography, and Film Narrative," Wide Angle, vol. 9, no. 1 (1987), pp. 11-31.


27 Note that an indefinite article does not make the object it modifies indefinite; it merely leaves unanswered the question "which one, or ones." of the relevant class of objects is being specified. A reference that is indefinite, or nonuseful, should not be confused with a reference that is vague, cryptic, unarticulated, implicit, or ambiguous; nor should it be confused with a reference to the inexpressible or ineffable.

Note especially that making a reference indefinite is not the same as making a reference general. An example of a general reference would be a reference to "the average consumer," or to the behavior of "an ideal gas." Another example of a general reference would be a universal statement like "all tigers are mortal," or "tigers usually fear the unknown." A narrative interpreted fictionally includes many explicit and implicit generalizations (for example, in the epilogue). These are accomplished through a sequence of indefinite (i.e., fictional), singular affirmations rather than through a sequence of particular (i.e., nonfictional) singular affirmations. This illustrates again that fiction cannot be distinguished from nonfiction on the basis of its inability to make general truth claims about a condition in the world. Fiction and nonfiction are different because they involve different cognitive procedures, different methods of constructing and construing statements about a world, not because of what results from the procedures.
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In this chapter I've associated the logic of one type of use of definite and indefinite articles with the creation of fictional reference. However, a statement may be made indefinite without the use of an indefinite article and, conversely, an indefinite article may be used in ways other than to make a statement indefinite. As just noted, definite and indefinite articles may be used to state a generalization in a fictional or nonfictional context. (Definite and indefinite articles then become equivalent: 'The tiger is a mammal,' "A tiger is a mammal," "All tigers are mammals," "Tigers are mammals.") In addition, articles may have a deictic function: "Move the vase to the table." I mention this possibility because it is often assumed that the 'camera' must-always have a deictic function, that is: must always specify a determinate piece of the world by "pointing" and "recording." However, I believe that the camera is not confined to this function and therefore film is neither essentially deictic nor is its comprehension measured only with respect to the existence of a (nonfictional) object that was once in front of the "camera."

28 In the opening title of Star Wars - "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away" - notice how the indefinite article "a" considered simply as a vowel sound spreads (poetically) through the entire phrase ("ago," "a galaxy," "away") and how the indefiniteness of time ("A long time") is extended to space ("far, far away"). If the fiction is also to be a narrative, however, the indefiniteness of time (. . . a time) must be balanced by a distinctness (once upon a . . .) that is capable of singling out the events of a unique cause-effect chain.

29 The tiger can be heard roaring after Odile, Franz, and Arthur - shown together for the first time in their car - decide to stop in order to talk. Later the roaring is heard accompanied by jazz music as Odile runs along a wall. The roaring is similar to the harsh sounds of traffic noise in the film and especially to the sound of the protagonists' car.

30 My definition of "interpreting fictively" seems to leave out the evidence that could be supplied by social and historical contexts. Walter Benjamin, for example, argues that a work of art has an "aura" that is the result of its unique form of existence and its unique place in a history and tradition. In effect, the notion of an aura is a broader conception of the "causal arrow" linking prophetic and postfilmic. Benjamin argues (sects 2 and 3) that the mechanical reproduction of art destroys the specificity of an art object. My analysis of "fiction" as nonspecific reference is not meant to bear directly on the various claims made by Benjamin. My analysis conflicts with Benjamin's claims only if one collapses such distinctions as narrative and fiction, art work and the working of art, ontology and epistemology, exchange value and use value. The "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in Illuminations, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), pp. 217-51.


32 Two types of editing within Christian Metz's eight-part "grand syntagmata-" would seem especially suited to promote nonspecific reference. First, the "bracket syntagmas" offers "typical samples" of an order of reality, or a sample that typifies a recurring event. (For example: a series of shots of destruction, bombings, and grief to illustrate the idea of "disasters of war.") Second, the "episodic sequence" offers a "symbolic summary," or conden- sation, of the successive stages of a much longer progression such that "each image stands for more than itself," rather than merely presenting an unskipped moment of the progression. (For example: in Citizen Kane (Welles, 1941) a series of brief scenes at a breakfast table spanning nine years that depict the gradual deterioration of a marriage.) Both types of editing are nonspecific, at a denotative level. See "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film" in Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema, trans. by Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 125-7, 130-2. Cf. Gérard Genette's notion of the "iterative" and "pseudo-iterative" in Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 116-17, 121-2; and see Marsha Kinder, "The Subversive Potential of the Pseudo-Iterative," Film Quarterly, vol. 43, no. 2 (Winter 1989-90), pp. 3-16.


34 William Guynn asserts that "Narrative is never absent in documentary films, even if its presence is more or less marked." A Cinema of Nonfiction (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990). p. 154.

35 Even the weaker claim that a film selects only some causal principles in order to present a mere sample of reality cannot support a theory of documentary film. Nelson Goodman has demonstrated that the significance of a sample - for instance, a tailor's cloth sample - is not determined simply by its causal history, or causal future, but by an act of (present) perceiving that makes of it a symbolic exemplification. Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2nd edn 1976), chap. 2, pp. 45-95.


37 Although Heath is not discussing the "historical present" tense, I have emphasized these words in his quote in order to suggest a connection between the representation of history and certain complex tense systems in narrative representation.


39 I am using the word "classical" in the sense of "typical," not in the sense of "nonspecific"; that is, I am not attempting to describe films in the documentary canon but rather to describe routine and standard practices used in such nonfiction films as industrial, educational, and nature documentaries.

40 Daiv Vaugghn analyzes two documentary films and shows how the traditional nature of a documentary is subverted by the use of such subjective devices as the point-of-view shot, ambiguous voice-over, and hypothetical imagery (e.g., what could, or might actually, have been seen through a battlefield periscope). "Arms and the Absent," Sight and Sound, vol. 48, no. 3 (Summer 1979), pp. 182-7. The films analyzed are Franju's Hôtel des Invalides, 1952, and Cowell's The Tribe that Hides from Man, 1970.

41 Christian Metz argues that a film's fiction effect is increased by the presence of dream sequences, voice-off commentary, and films within the film. All of these devices may be found in Tati's Jet Lag. Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier" in The Imaginary Signifier, pp. 73-4.

On the argumentative form of narrative (e.g., Eisenstein's "intellectual cinema''), see chapter 1.


46 See the discussion of the ideas of Moreno, Bazin, and Gaudreault in chapter 5. Many of Bazin's prescriptions for the documentary filmmaker must be derived from his analyses of fictional narratives. On restricted camera positions in documentary film, see, e.g., Andre Bazin, "Cinema and Exploration" in What is Cinema?, pp. 154-63. In this way, Bazin is intrigued by the extreme case in which an event being documented can not be shown at all because of the conditions governing the filming; thus the event exists only for the spectator through its absence on film. As we shall see, Chris Marker's Sans Soleil will push signs of absence even further within a documentary format.


47 Lightman notes that the convention of a "relatively unstructured" mise-en-scene rules out dramatic reenactments for a documentary film but does not rule out a painstaking search for the "perfect situation" that can be filmed in order to advance an argument. Various documentary conventions are used in the false newsreel sequence of Citiment Bane (Figs. 46, p. 175) as well as in the false documentaries The Battle of Algiers (Pontecorvo, 1966), The Holzman's Diary (McBridge, 1967), Zelig (Allen, 1983), and This Is Spinal Tap (Reiner, 1984).


49 For Greener Genette, this principle of grouping stories in Sans Soleil would be a "geographical synephrase"; Narrative Discourse, p. 85 n. 119; and see pp. 40, 29, 27. The relationship of a "catalogue" structure, and its "focus," to narrative structure was examined in chapter 1. Catalogue structures combine with indeterminate narration in Sans Soleil to attenuate the focus of cause-effect chains and weaken our sense that a sequence of events is being presented to us as nonlocalized and/or externally focalized. By simultaneously attacking both the organization of narrative (focus organized causally) and the goal of nonfiction (history focalized), Sans Soleil undermines the classic form of a documentary which acts to fuse narrative and nonfiction.


51 For example, the dream sequence on the train is multiply ambiguous. It may represent the thoughts of sleeping passengers; or, represent what the cameraman imagines about these people; or, represent how extraordinary images from Japanese television may nonetheless be found in ordinary life and become evidence of a collective dream. Indeed, what is found on the train may be evidence of a collective nightmare: on the boat trip from Hokkaido, while many of the passengers are asleep, the cameraman discovers "small fragments [of a past or future] war enshrined in everyday life."

52 An end title of the film states, "Sandor Kraza's letters were read by Alexandra Stewart." Sandor Kraza, however, is an imaginary person; hence, in reading the letters Stewart has assumed a fictional role. Extracts from her narration may be found in Chris Marker's "Sunless," Semiotext(e), vol. 4, no. 3 (1984), pp. 33-40.


55 Near the end of Sans Soleil the cameraman will refer to memory itself as a "path."

56 The cameraman's statement that he has decided to give his imaginary film the name "Sunless" marks the end of the spoken commentary in this segment of Sans Soleil. It occurs during the first half of the first shot of the final six shots of the segment. The stark Moussorgsky music features a rhythm, two-part sound similar to a heartbeat that is coordinated with the duration of each of the final six shots. In the sixth shot, the heartbeat is suspended after we hear the first part of its beat. A similar two-part sound is heard with the end titles of the film and it, too, is suspended when we reach the final title.

57 A quite different way of representing a multiplicity of times was analyzed on pp. 104ff. in Wild Strawberries.

58 I have derived the notion of a "hyperindex" from the operation of "hyper-text" computer software.

59 Danto, Narration and Knowledge, p. 348.

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