

Film form and narrative

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■ Film form and narrative

INTRODUCTION: THE ACT OF VIEWING

The experience of watching films – particularly in the cinema – is an intense one. We are sitting in near-darkness, in rows of seats directed towards a screen, separated from one another, but sharing an experience with the rest of the audience. We are viewing large images – allowing a closeness to the figures on the screen not afforded in everyday life, and often seeing things that we do not usually see. There is a co-ordinated, concentrated and often loud soundtrack, further directing our attention if it threatens to wander. It is small wonder that the viewers of the Lumière Brothers' took evasive action as that train first pulled into the station. Elvis Presley is alleged to have been concerned with the script of his first movie. He was required to hit a woman, and that was 'against his nature'. He could not be convinced that what occurred on screen did not actually have to take place. Yet we are ultimately aware of the fantasy nature of what we see – Edward G. Robinson went on to make many more films after the 'end of Little Rico' in *Little Caesar*² without provoking doubts or outcry among his fans. What occurs is a process of 'suspension of disbelief' whereby we seem to accept temporarily the reality of what appears in front of us, while having the capacity to switch off this belief at a moment's notice, if someone talks to us or the celluloid breaks.³

It is this capacity to switch on and off, rather than the poorer quality of the visual image, that accounts for the reduced potency of a horror film when watched at home with the remote control at hand. It is not the fidelity of image and sound that creates the illusion of reality for us. The early viewers of film accepted the shades of grey that appear in a black and white film. Viewing these films today, we find it hard to accept the illusion of films made in a period with different technical standards – the **noise** gets in the way. The mere recording of events in front of the camera – and the use, for instance, of everyday speech by non-actors in a **drama-documentary** – often appears strange to us. The 'illusory reality' of **mainstream** cinema is created for us by a number of devices, involving the use of camera, microphone and lighting. These devices are not fixed – a 'correct' way of recording the truth – but conventions developed over a hundred years of cinema. These are ingrained in us as viewers – and we can feel disturbed or cheated if these conventions are broken. If we are 'duped' by this – we are willingly duped. We participate in this process of suspension of disbelief as a price for the pleasures we get from film viewing – including that of 'surviving' being scared by a horror movie.

However, our role in this process is not merely a passive one. We work actively at making sense of the individual scenes and particularly at predicting the story. To do so we retain an awareness of the conventions of film and are able to retain a critical distance from what we see. I would maintain this is not a capacity possessed solely by 'film students', but rather is integral to the act of viewing.

noise

In the film industry, it refers to any barrier to successful communication.

drama-documentary

Any format which attempts to re-create historical or typical events using performers, whether actors or not.

mainstream

Feature-length narrative films created for entertainment and profit. Mainstream is usually associated with 'Hollywood', regardless of where the film is made.

□ CASE STUDY 1: *ROBOCOP*

The process of making sense of a movie is initially produced at the beginning of a film when we are first drawn into its world. We will explore the film *RoboCop*⁴ to see how this process works. This film operates in an area between that of comic strip construction – a recently deceased policeman transformed into an indestructible robot – and the environment of police precinct work. This is a form recognisable from both TV fictions and news programmes, of an uncontrollable urban area and a political climate of privatisation. For the film to 'work' there is a need to absorb the impossible into the all too probable. The film's popular and critical acceptability suggests that this has worked.

After an initial aerial shot showing a modern, sky-scrapered city, with the film title (maybe suggesting that this could be any modern city), we are presented with a sixteen picture grid – dominated by images of urban violence, followed by a shot of a male and female facing directly to the camera. Before they start talking, a voice-over addresses the unseen TV audience, which in effect is us, the viewers of the film; 'This is Media – you give us three minutes – we give you the world.'

We are aware that this is a TV news item. Apart from TV lights and the studio backdrop – there is a direct address to the audience. In doing so the shot acknowledges the presence of a camera and by implication an audience. As a strategy, this has been denied to mainstream fictional cinema, since the early days. Although this is not an identifiable TV station, and we are viewing a fictional film, the film-maker presumes our capacity to read the **conventions**. This first news item, a nuclear threat in the besieged white city-state of Pretoria, suggests a future, but not too far future, scenario; the second, a jokey news item on the Star Wars Initiative, suggests a comic element – but also a world without clear moral values. A commercial for artificial hearts follows. On first viewing we cannot place these. However we 'trust' the narrative to make sense of them, as it does with the construction of the artificial policeman within the corrupt environment. Nothing in a mainstream narrative is there by accident.

The final item relates directly to the narrative of the film: the killing of three policemen, the taking over of policing by a private corporation and the introduction of two villains – the corporate boss Jones, in an insensitive interview, and the crime boss Boddicker, through a soft focus newspaper shot. The TV introduction is not only an economical introduction to the narrative but authenticates the reality of the situation. It also places us at a distance from those in authority.

The next scene – in the police precinct – is constructed with long moving shots using Steadicam,⁵ overlapping dialogue and a high level of verbal violence, all familiar as the style of TV police series such as *NYPD Blues*. However, the futurist nature of the scene is implied by the unremarked upon unisex locker room. There is a newcomer to the precinct, who is seen taking the place of a murdered policeman. We read this through his action in taking over a locker and replacing the name. He joins up with a partner, Lewis, who in a stock scene, subverted by her gender, proves herself in a fight. The two ascend in the car to the 'real world', he driving the car, she blowing her bubblegum in his face.

The film cuts, without an **establishing shot**, to the inside of an ascending lift in the corporation building, suggesting a link organisationally if not physically between the two buildings. The locations show similarities, but also contrasts.

Uniforms are worn in both buildings – the dark blue bullet-proofing of the police and the mid-grey of the 'suits', the walls are predominantly single coloured, a grubby light green at the precinct and light grey at the corporation building, clutter at the precinct,

conventions

Conventions are established procedures within a particular form which are identifiable by both the producer and the reader. The implication of the idea of conventions is that a form does not naturally mean anything, but it is an agreement between producer and user.

reading a film

Although films are viewed and heard, the concept of 'reading' a film implies an active process of making sense of what we are experiencing.

establishing shot

A shot using distant framing, allowing the viewer to see the spatial relations between characters and the set.

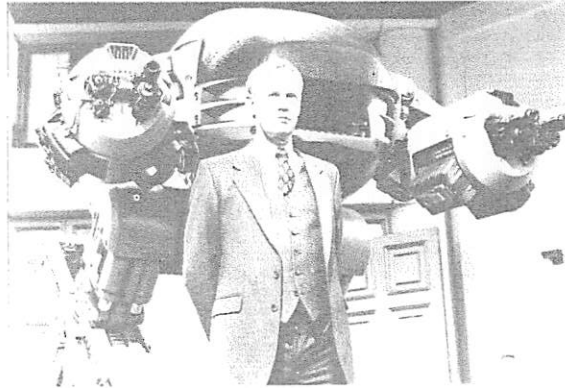
space at the corporation, a blackboard at the precinct and a high-tech bank of TV screens at the corporation.

The focus of this scene, used widely in the marketing of the film, is the presentation by Jones of a robot 'Future of Law Enforcement, ED, 209'. This robot is shot predominantly from below, indeed from ground level, initially dominating the frame of the open doors leading from the boardroom, with corresponding **high angle** shots of the terrified executives. The robot's movements are heavy, metallic and jerky – and are accompanied by a high volume soundtrack. Its appearance with large bulky 'legs' and 'arms' suggests something subhuman – particularly when compared later with the human-based RoboCop. The crude mechanical 209 proceeds to destroy a junior executive in a demonstration of its power, failing to recognise that he has disarmed. This reflects the attitude of corporation, 'It's life in the Big City.'

The first few minutes of the film have established its **reality** – part drawn from contemporary images, such as the boardroom, but with an invented technology like the robot inserted in it. However, the construction of this reality is not just through a selection of the world outside, but rather through the judicious use of existing images and conventions that have already been **mediated** through film – or other related forms. We understand the film through our experiences and comparisons with other films or media products. These in turn assure the film of its authenticity. We believe in the world of *RoboCop* because it has been validated by a spoof of recognisable TV news programmes. We can 'place' the film as we can identify both the images and the way they are presented from images and representations with which we are already familiar.

The reading of film

RoboCop rests therefore on a number of cultural readings of the content by the viewer, but also on a reading of the film and its conventions. It is relatively easy for us to read such a film; it has been made recently, and for people like ourselves, and there is general



• Plate 4.1 *RoboCop* (Paul Verhoeven, US 1987)
ED 209, the future of law enforcement

high angle

A shot from a camera held above characters or object, looking down at them.

reality

The concept of the 'real' is problematic in cinema, and is part of the focus of this chapter. The concept is generally used in two different ways.

First, the extent to which a film attempts to mimic reality so that a fictional film can appear indistinguishable from documentary.

Second, the film can establish its own world, and can by consistently using the same conventions establish the credibility of this world. In this later sense a science fiction film such as *RoboCop* can be as realistic as a film in a contemporary and recognisable world such as *Sleepless in Seattle*.

mediation

A key concept in film and media theory, it implies that there are always structures, whether human or technological, between an object and the viewer, involving inevitably a partial and selective view.

agreement among members of the audience as to what it is about, what is happening. The reading of an early film, made a hundred years ago, appears on first sight to be easier. The language of the films of Lumière and Méliès⁸ appears simpler – the visual equivalent of children's picture-books – and it is tempting to regard the early film-makers and their audiences with condescension. The conception of a 'Primitive Mode of Representation'⁷ (Noel Burch), applied to the first two decades of film-making, encourages us to read these as the first faltering steps to the irresistible final product of the modern Hollywood movie.

Although the first extant movies are documentary records of either public or private events, such as the Lumières' home movie of feeding a baby or the reconstruction of events as in Edison's early boxing Kinetoscope⁸ pictures, the normal format soon became fictional narrative. The earliest films are the so-called 'tableau' films, including most of the work of Georges Méliès. These films are characterised by a succession of scenes recorded in long shot square on to the action. Each scene begins with a cut to a black and is replaced by another scene in a different (later) time and place. Characters walk on and off either from the side of the frame, or alternatively through 'stage doors' in the frame, like the 'crew' walking into the space ship in Méliès' *Voyage to the Moon*. These films draw strongly on a theatrical tradition. They appear to be shot from the 'best seat in the stalls', and represent a series of scenes, albeit short ones, without the need to wait for the scene to be shifted.

Such films can still be enjoyed as 'spectacle' – the special effects, the hard painted colour, the sets and costumes. These are connected by a narrative linking each shot to the whole, and usually each shot to the next one, by a pattern of cause and effect. However, the narrative is hard to follow for the contemporary viewer. This is in part due to the absence of **close-up** or identification with character. However, in a number of instances Méliès relies upon our knowledge of the narrative. *Ali Baba* (1905 Méliès from the BFI early cinema video) depends on the audience's pre-knowledge of the story. The individual tableau appears to be operating as illustrations of the narrative rather than driving it.

The shift to a cinematic narrative and formal structure occurs fairly swiftly, so that by the mid-1910s most films are recognisable to a contemporary audience as fiction films. While there may be some dispute about who 'invented' the language of film – with most accounts ascribing to D.W. Griffith⁹ a major role – it is generally accepted that changes that had occurred by the end of the decade make the films of the late silent period resemble modern films more than the 'primitive' cinema.

□ CASE STUDY 2: BEGINNING OF KEATON'S FILM THE GENERAL¹⁰

This is an example of the **Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR)** (Burch), that is, despite being a silent film it has a complex narrative structure based on identification with character.

The credits prioritise Keaton as both star and co-director. It starts with a little establishing place, 'Marietta Ga' and time '1861' a device that continued into the sound era. This is followed by an establishing long panning shot of the train, cutting to a medium shot to identify Johnny Gray (Keaton) as driver and continuing to track forward to identify 'The General' – the name of the train. It then cuts ahead to the arrival of the train in the station.

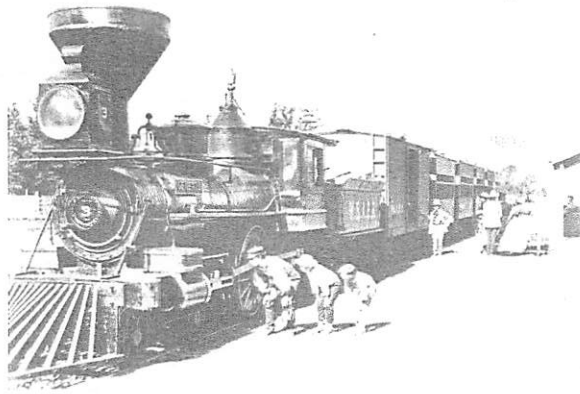
close-up

Normally defined as a shot of the head from the neck up.

IMR

The Institutional Mode of Representation is a broad categorisation of systems of film form and narrative characterising mainstream cinema from around 1915 onwards. It was perceived as replacing the Primitive Mode of Representation (a set of

conventions used in early film between 1895 and 1905) as a gradual process in the first twenty years of cinema.



• Plate 4.2 *The General* (Buster Keaton, US 1925)
Johnny Grey (Keaton) and admirers

There is then a reverse shot of the other side of the train. As Johnny descends he is admired by two children and checks with a colleague the time of the arrival of the train (implying the high status of the job and his proficiency).

This is followed by an inter title – 'There were 2 loves in his life his engine and . . . ' – and a cut to a close-up of a portrait of a young woman which he has in his cab.¹¹ Keaton walks off towards frame right. The following fade to black implies a different place or time and cuts to Annabelle (Marion Mack) who is identifiable as the woman in the portrait. She is looking away to frame right, the opposite direction from Johnny and receives a look from an unseen admirer(?) (The viewer can read that this is not Johnny.)

Keaton is discovered walking from left to right followed by the two children (the same direction as he left the previous frame and the same direction as the train). Annabelle hides and deceives him by following the children (parallel to her deception of him with the admirer). She ends the joke and invites him in, with the children following. This creates a 'family', but not a real one and Johnny has to tell them to leave. (This parallels her trick on him and suggests a similarity between them – they are a 'proper couple'.) He gives her a picture of himself standing in front of the train (a parallel of her portrait, but significantly different: he is a driver and *The General*).

There is a cut to an older man in a different room who, after looking off frame to the right, moves into the sitting room and a younger man enters from the door (right). The exchange that followed is 'in depth' and in a different plane to the 'lovers'. The first speech title appears announcing the war and the wish to enlist. After the two men leave we get a subjective shot from Annabelle to Johnny, who is left alone and uncomfortably framed from the sofa (due to her absence they are no longer a couple).

As he leaves to try to enlist we are shown his awkwardness and inexperience; she kisses him and he tries to hide his embarrassment, he waves to an imaginary person over her shoulder and falls over.

There is no fade to black before the recruiting office scene, thus implying the speed of the action. This scene is largely in long shot. After his initial rejection, we pull away from Keaton and discover the reason for it. We know why he has been rejected; he doesn't. However, he remains the centre of the narrative and we identify with him in his attempts to make sense of his rejection. For instance, he is placed next to a very much taller man in the queue and we realise before him(?) that he would consider this the reason for his rejection. We also admire and identify with his attempts to trick his way in (there is a slightly strange cut where he appears on opposite sides of the frame in consecutive shots taken from the same angle thus breaking the 30° rule¹² and thus confusing us as to where he actually is).

In the following scene there is a false 'eye-line'¹³ match from Johnny sitting on the side of the engine to Annabelle looking from the gate (we 'know' this is false from the journey Keaton takes to get to the house early in the film). His absence is stressed by the arrival of her father and brother who have enlisted and are where Johnny ought to be (both physically and in the narrative).

In the final scene she accuses him of not trying to enlist and therefore being a coward. We know (because we have seen it) that this is untrue. Our identification with the unjustly treated Johnny is therefore complete. In the final shot the train accidentally takes him away, establishing that he is not in control. The dilemma is set and we know, first, he must regain control, second, he must prove to be a hero and, third, he must gain the love of Annabelle.

This sequence, although not cinematically complex, shows a strong sense of narrative and **identification** and is **economically presented**. All elements are used to develop our knowledge of the narrative, including the use of **mise-en-scène** (the photographs), Keaton's body language, framing of shots and the continuity of editing. There even appears to be a **modernist** editing with a false cut. Although we cannot assume that the contemporary audience would read all into the sequence that we have done, any more than a modern audience would, to make sense of the sequence does presume an understanding of film language. It is also a 'self-contained text' in that it is possible to understand the film without any previous knowledge of, for instance, the American Civil War. This contrasts to Méliès tableaux films like *Ali Baba* which do not make sense without a pre-knowledge of the narrative.

CINEMATIC CODES

With the addition of sound to film in 1927, the 'message' coming from film was relatively complete – strange experiments like 'sensorama' or the 'smellies' not withstanding. In normal film viewing we experience simultaneously a number of codes: visual, sound and the codes controlling the linking of one sound or image to another. The division of the components we use in reading film are relatively arbitrary, but it will help in analysis to theoretically separate them.

MISE-EN-SCÈNE

This term derived from the French, literally 'having been put into the scene', is used to describe those visual aspects that appear within a single shot. The term has been used

Identification

The process of identification allows us to place ourselves in the position of particular characters, either throughout or at specific moments in a movie. The devices involved include subjectivity of viewpoint (we see the world through their eyes, a shared knowledge, we know what and only what they know), and a sharing in their moral world, largely through narrative construction.

economic presentation

All the components are designed to help us read the narrative. An examination of the first few minutes of almost any mainstream fictional film will reveal a considerable amount of information about characters, their social situation and their motivation.

modernist

Any device which undercuts the invisible telling of the story. A modernist device draws attention to itself and makes us aware of the construction of the narrative. It would be unclear in this instance whether the device is a consciously modernist one or a primitive one which unconsciously draws attention to itself.

differently by writers about film – some limiting it to those elements that are needed by the camera – objects, movements, lighting, shadow, colour and so on – while others have included the art of recording itself, the focusing of shots and the movement of the camera. In the former sense *mise-en-scène* is limited to some kind of 'pro-filmic event'; those elements that are there before we start filming. In documentary films such events are perceived to have a 'real world' existence and hence appear not to be 'encoded', or at any rate only coded to the extent that the elements in the real world are. For instance, we may only expect certain categories of people with appropriate dress to be found in a hospital theatre. Not surprisingly, early cinema either used pre-existing events – the workers leaving a factory¹⁴ – or alternatively it constructed events, such as the early boxing scenes used by Edison in his Kinetoscope showings. Subsequent developments involved the use of theatrical performance, vaudeville turns, even performances of plays, albeit silent and much condensed. This history, however, reinforced a 'common-sense' notion that filming was solely the recording of reality or theatrical performance.

The concept of *mise-en-scène* was developed by those theorists interested in issues of authorship, in the role of participants, and particularly directors in constructing the meaning of film.¹⁵ During the classic period of the Hollywood studio the control of the director was limited to those processes that were recorded during shooting. The overall narrative was clearly established, and the script would be written before the director was even engaged.

Similarly the editing of the film, and the post-dubbing of the soundtrack, were taken out of the control of the director, sometimes involving a re-cut to meet the needs of the studio, or the responses of an audience at a preview. It was therefore the capacity to control what happened on the set, and the way this was recorded by the camera, which was the sign of filmic art as displayed by the director. The quality of a director's work could be read through his style, his control over the *mise-en-scène*.

SETTING

In the context of studio shooting, the predominant form in the 1920s–1940s, all elements in front of the camera were controlled and chosen; even if sometimes the director took over a set, already existing on the back-lot, an inheritance maybe from a more highly budgeted film. While settings are usually perceived as a signifier of authenticity, the place where the events are happening, they are nevertheless a constructed setting for action. This becomes clear if we examine the different 'look' of the West in films such as *Shane*, *My Darling Clementine*, and *Johnny Guitar*, *A Fistful of Dollars* and *The Unforgiven*. Although each of these is recognisable as 'the West', they emphasise different kinds of settings: the wilderness, the small town and the large ranch.

Most viewers have no concept of the nature of the historic West against which the images the films are to be judged, although films have been defined as more realistic at particular moments in time. The landscape and settings of a western are probably better read against the conventions of the western.

Jim Kitses in *Horizons West*¹⁶ describes the western in terms of the opposing focus of wilderness and civilisation, 'the contrasting images of Garden and Desert'. These oppositions permeate through the themes of the western, the definition of characters and the status of particular settings and locations. The Starrett homestead in George Stevens' *Shane* is presented as an isolated place, overlooked on one side by the mountains, from where Shane comes and where he goes, with the town, a scene of danger and evil, on the other.



• Plate 4.3 *Shane* (George Stevens, US 1953)
A romantic view of the west

The setting can also function to place the performers. In *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* the characters are enclosed in a two-dimensional set, with expressionist 'lighting' pointed over the backdrop and the stage. The setting constantly suggests danger and paranoia which is revealed, at the end of the film, to be a relocation of the interior world inhabited by the 'crazy' narrator. Similarly in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, George Bailey (James Stewart), on the point of suicide, is taken by his guardian angel away from the middle American world, where he has grown up with its model estate that he has helped to build, to a neon-lit 'modernist' rebuilt town which would have existed but for his help. Similarly, in *Blade Runner* Ridley Scott invents a futurist location that does not exist anywhere – a dystopia¹⁷ that we can recognise, possibly as much from other films as from extensions of a contemporary inner-city location.

Locations can not only be recognised and help us to place the characters within a film, but can also through the film itself create their own space and meaning. In Douglas Sirk's *All that Heaven Allows*, the principal action takes place in a family house, lived in by a family whose father is dead before the film begins. While we learn little directly



• Plate 4.4 *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, US 1954)
A darker view of the west

about this man, his presence lives on in the house, his trophies over the mantelpiece. The house with its oppressive lighting becomes almost the 'tomb' in which his widow – Cary (Jane Wyman) – is obliged to live out the rest of her life. The main room is divided up by screens. These divide Cary from her children, and particularly the son. Throughout the film he resists any attempt to change the house from the way it was when the father lived, and most particularly resents the presence of other men in the house. However, after he decides to leave it is the house, and the implied memory of the father, that 'gets in the way' of a new relationship with his mother.



• Plate 4.5 *All that Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, US 1956)
The father still dominates the home even after his death

PROPS

Films are also dependent on 'props' as a device for conveying meaning. In a familiar sense, props are definers of genre – particularly weapons in 'action' genres, or the arcane paraphernalia of the horror films – garlic and crosses. However, props can also become unique signifiers of meaning in a particular film. While all scenes are constructed around a number of props – to make the sequence 'look right' – by the use of close-up, and dialogue, our attention can be drawn to particular objects. This in itself suggests the significance of particular objects – we know that such objects will be of importance in the narrative. In Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* a lighter changes hands from Guy, the 'innocent' tennis player, with a wife he would rather be rid of, to Bruno, the plausible psychotic whom he meets on the train. The lighter is decorated with crossed tennis rackets, and the initials of Guy and his lover. The crossed rackets signify a number of



• Plate 4.6 *Strangers on a Train* (Alfred Hitchcock, US 1951)
A significant icon

'crossings' within the movie, the initial 'crossed lovers', the offer of an exchange of murders by Bruno, the choices offered to Guy in the initial exchange, and so on. However, the lighter remains the significant 'icon' throughout the movie; it represents Bruno's threat to expose Guy if he does not keep his side of the bargain, its temporary loss delays Bruno's attempt to frame Guy, and its presence in the dying Bruno's hand at the end of the movie releases Guy from the hold that is upon him.

Props can also be used to 'anchor'¹⁸ characters into particular meanings. In the complexities of possible ways in which an individual character may be read an object may be used to clarify meaning. While Hannibal Lecter in *Silence of the Lambs* may appear increasingly civilised, even charming, in relation to his fellow inmates and guards, the danger from his mouth, whether in terms of his speech or more obviously in his capacity to bite, is exemplified by the face guard placed over him when he is being transported. The significance of this guard is that it denies the viewer full access to him in the way that we are permitted in the earlier exchanges through the reinforced glass.

In *Godfather 1* the entire film is suffused with props relating to family life. At the key moment when the Corleone family 'go to the mattresses' to prepare for the shoot out, the domestic world, exemplified by the cooking of a pasta sauce, is taken over by the men, exemplifying the contradiction of these family-centred and very traditional men who are prepared to murder to preserve family honour.

COSTUME

Costume is a variant of the prop, but of course tightly connected to character. Minor characters are often primarily identified on the basis of costume, which uses the codes of everyday life, such as uniforms, or the cinematic codes, say the wearing of white and black, to signify virtue and villainy in the early westerns. Subtle changes in the costume of a single character can be used to signify changes of status, attitude and even the passing of time. In many 1930s gangster movies such as *The Roaring Twenties* and *Scarface*, the rise of the gangster, and his increasing separation both from his roots or from 'acceptable society', are exemplified by a change into clothes that are signifiers of affluence, if not taste. In *Mildred Pierce* we see the process in reverse. Our initial viewing of Mildred Pierce is as a smart, rich and powerful woman in a fur coat. In the first flashback we are introduced to the same character wearing an apron, in a clearly suburban domestic setting. We are presented with an 'after and before', raising for us not only the dominant issue of the storyline at the moment – who killed Mildred's husband – but also the more complex issue of how this transformation has taken place.

Costume can also be used to signify mismatches. We bring to a costume a series of expectations, which are then subverted by the action. The 'false policeman' is regularly used as a plot device – either simply a robbery device, as in *The Wrong Arm of the Law*, or alternatively in films such as *The Godfather* where police act or speak in ways that we deem to be inappropriate.

A further example of mismatch is cross-dressing, usually a male in female clothing. Normally such devices are humorous: *Some Like it Hot* and *Tootsie*, where our expectations of appropriate behaviour and that of the male characters in the film, given the signifying props, are a mismatch with our knowledge of the gender of the character. In *The Crying Game* our knowledge is at least problematic, and the mismatch only appears retrospectively.

In *Desperately Seeking Susan*, rather than using a uniform, Roberta, a suburban housewife with aspirations to a more exciting lifestyle, acquires a jacket belonging to Susan, a woman with bohemian and underworld connections. This distinctive jacket, allegedly previously worn by Jimi Hendrix, allows Roberta to be 'misread' by other characters as Susan, but equally allows the viewer to place her in her aspirational world.

PERFORMANCE AND MOVEMENT

Probably the richest source of mise-en-scène is the performance of actors. While there is more to consider in performance, it may help to consider the performer – whether human or animal – as an object for the cameras' gaze. As with costume there is a strong coded element in the facial expressions and body positions held by performers. These codes, broadly referred to as 'body language', are of course part of everyday life. While there are cultural and temporal variations in body language, due to our familiarity



• Plate 4.7 *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, US 1945)
Joan Crawford translated from housewife (above) to businesswoman (right)

with Hollywood the body language of American film has become almost universally understood. Indeed one of the consequences of the spread of film has been the global penetration of particular aspects of language such as the 'thumbs up' sign.

The presentation of characters by actors using body language is a key element in the creation of a 'performance'. It is perhaps significant that the much-vaunted performances of recent years – Dustin Hoffman in *Rain Man*, Tom Hanks in *Forrest Gump* – have been characterised by bodily styles, conventionally associated with marginal figures in society. Again body movements can be used to express both change of emotion and change of time. In *Citizen Kane*, the decline of Kane can be identified from the animated young man to the almost robotic, lumbering figure who smashes up his second wife's room when she threatens to leave him.

While early film was often dependent on the kind of exaggerated body movements that in the theatre were recognisable from the upper gallery, with the development of the close-up, meaning can often be expressed by the slightest movement, whether the



• Plate 4.8 *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, US 1945)

wringing of hands in D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* or the maintenance of facial expressions to be observed in almost any contemporary film. In an acting master-class, Michael Caine, that most minimalist of screen actors, ably demonstrates what can be conveyed by the flickering of the eye, the raising of the eyebrows or the turning of the lip.

Finally, and briefly, the performer, and particularly the 'star' brings to the film a meaning derived merely from their presence. While some performers such as Jennifer Jason Leigh deliberately appear to present themselves differently in the films that they make, the majority operate with a high degree of consistency both in terms of appearance and type, a consistency which will usually be reinforced in terms of non-filmic appearances. As such, stars will bring in with them a level of expectation and an implied meaning from their previous films. This becomes obvious when performers attempt to take parts that move away from type, often with disastrous effect at the box office. It may be useful therefore to consider the (known) performer as part of the language of film, having a meaning that can be stretched and reused, but only to a limited extent.

'PUTTING INTO THE SCENE'

Having assembled other components of our shots, the next procedure involves a process of recording these elements. However, such a distinction between content and form is an artificial one, in that we have already had to have recourse to concepts of close-up in order to describe individual constituents. Nevertheless, it is helpful to separate the processes, and hence those codes that characterise them from the codes of the objects themselves. While the latter are related to wider cultural artefacts and the meanings they have – like the meanings of ways of dressing – the former can be either perceived as strictly cinematic codes, or at any rate strongly related to the codes of other representational forms, painting, drawing and of course photography.

LIGHTING

Lighting of film is the first of the 'invisible' codes of cinema. While there are apparent sources of light within a shot, the lighting of a shot is off camera, and even with an outside location is used to guarantee that the light level is adequate both to produce a sufficient level for recording and also to highlight particular aspects of the image. This activity is not separate from the shooting of the film, but is integral to it – and hence the term 'lighting cameraman', which is applied to the principal operator within the camera crew.

Whereas early cinema relied on a relatively flat field of action, with the development of faster film stock it became possible and indeed desirable to establish a source of depth in the action. This, coupled with a small aperture lens, has enabled the camera to record over a number of fields of action. The French theorist André Bazin¹⁹ argued that such a form of shooting was both more 'realist' in the sense that the shots closely resemble the capacity of the eye to recognise objects across a wide depth (or at least to rapidly adjust focus to do so) and also more 'dramatic' in allowing the viewer the capacity to choose, within a given shot, where to direct attention. In practice, deep focus shots and, in particular, a number of shots in *Citizen Kane*, such as the attempted suicide of Susanne Alexander, with a close-up of the sleeping draught and the distance shot of Kane breaking in through the door, allow little choice of attention. The planes of action are immediately joined as Kane rushes to the bed.

Lighting involves choices of level and direction of light. Classic Hollywood lighting involves a strong level of lighting on the main objects of a shot with fill lighting designed to eliminate shadows. The set is then back lit to enable those elements at the front of the set to be distanced from that which appears at the back, to give an illusion of diversion. However, lighting is also characterised by its absence.

Light and shade can be used to direct our attention to a particular part of the frame. This is most usually done by the movement of characters through a variously lit set. A more dramatic variant can be seen in Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West*. In an early scene in the trading post a mysterious character, 'Harmonica' (Charles Bronson), is identified as present only through his characteristic theme music. He is dramatically exposed by 'Cheyenne' (Jason Robards) who propels an oil lamp on a horizontal wire across the room, producing a **low-key image** of Harmonica. This, the first meeting of these characters, who maintain an ambiguous relationship to one another, is both sudden, the characters revealed from out of the dark, and is followed by the flashing on and off of the light as a 'consequence' of the swinging of the oil lamp.

Sometimes, however, lighting can be used as a characteristic of the style of a whole film or over a number of scenes – rather than just a specific light to light a specific

set. The classic realist film is usually characterised by a full lighting effect – high key lighting – seemingly as a device to ensure that we see all the money that has been spent on constructing the effect. However, widespread use of shadows can be used to convey their own meaning. The use of reflective light scenes, and the often apparently dominant use of shadows, originated in German Expressionist cinema, but was incorporated into a Hollywood style of lighting in the 1940s and 1950s which later became known as **film noir**. This was largely to be found in films within the detective/thriller genre, and was characterised by a world of threat and danger, but also one where characters' motivations were hidden from one another, and by implication from the viewer. Lighting effects usually appear to be 'motivated', in that they come from sources, like table lamps, that are in the shot. In an early scene in *Mildred Pierce*, the leading character Mildred 'frames' an old acquaintance Wally for a murder that she appears to have committed. The scene commences in a nightclub where the low level of lighting together with Mildred's wide-brimmed hat creates shots in which the face is half in shadow, with the eyes in particular in darkness. Later, returning to the beach house, where the murder was committed, the interior is a kaleidoscope of lighting from the low table lights and the seeming dappled effect on the ceiling which is implicitly caused by reflections from the sea. It is within this scene that Wally is apparently trapped by the shadows that cut across him at every turn. The style of film noir is one of few formal characteristics that have come to be widely recognised, and indeed it survives into contemporary films such as John Dahl's *The Last Seduction*. This perhaps can be in part explained through its seeming difference from the visual effects of realist film, usually fully 'high key' lighting and its connection with a particular genre. The style of film noir is linked in an obvious way with themes of paranoia and alienation and other characteristics such as *l'emme fatale*, a woman who is not what she immediately appears to be. In this instance the use of lighting enables the knowing viewer to be one step ahead of the protagonists within the film.

CAMERA AND CAMERA MOVEMENT

Having created the pro-filmic event and lit it, the next set of choices surround the positioning of the camera. Early cinema was largely characterised by a steadily held camera, at least as steady as hand-cranking permitted, and by the predominant use of the long shot incorporating all the action. Technological developments up to the Steadicam, permitted greater flexibility and choice, both of movement and angle, as well as offering the option of different ratios with the variety of wide scene formats operating since the 1950s. This 'progression' has not necessarily been continuous, particularly at the point of the introduction of sound when the cameras were initially installed within sound-proofed booths. However, the 'language' of the camera had to be both developed by film-makers and 'learnt' by the audience.

Drawing primarily from the already existing art forms of photography and theatre, the camera was held static, with movement being derived from the actors in front of a scene. The camera was placed in the 'best seat in the stalls', square on to the action, with actors moving in and out of the shot as if from the 'wings'. The development of alternative camera positions and movements evolved in the first decade of the century. Probably the best introduction to this process and its effects can be gleaned from Noel Burch's *Correction Please* which combines early cinematic footage with a period narrative, progressively filmed using a range of methods. Within the capacities of focus the camera is able to move anywhere from the extreme close-up to the use of wide-screen

film noir

A term developed by French film critics in the postwar period to describe a number of films produced in the 1940s. It has subsequently become a marketing device used to describe films with some of the lighting and narrative conventions of the period.

low-key image

Light from a single source producing light and shade.



• Plate 4.9 *The Last Seduction* (John Dahl, US 1994)
The style of film noir survives in contemporary films

shots limited to pairs of eyes, as in the final shoot-out in *Once Upon a Time in the West*, to the extreme long-shot of the field hospital in *Gone with the Wind*. The close-up has a particular place in the development of film, however, permitting us to 'know intimately' the faces of leading characters, and hence by implication to read their thoughts and feelings. This operates without needing to use either the knowing subtitle of the early cinema, or even the voice of the narrator to take us into the character.

It is also necessary to decide on the angle of the shot²⁰ and the relative height of the camera to the object being filmed – a low-angle shot looking up to the object or a high-angle shot looking down. Conventional accounts suggest that low-angle shots imply the power of the object – usually a human figure – and a high-angle shot its weakness. Such a rule can be seen to operate in many exchanges between characters – such as those between Kane and Suzanne Alexander in *Citizen Kane*, as she pieces together her jigsaw puzzle and he looks down on her. However, such rules cannot be applied to read off automatically the meaning of an individual shot. After the assault by the birds on the Brenner household in Hitchcock's *The Birds*, there is a tracking shot of the three members of the family taken from a very low angle. The suggestion is of their dominance; the birds have indeed disappeared, yet the anxious look on their faces and their isolation from one another suggest an alternative meaning. Our experience throughout the film suggests that danger comes from above – and indeed we are soon

to discover that the birds have broken into the house and are waiting in an upstairs room.

While the camera is normally held level, it can also be tilted to one side. Such a shot is read as an indication of instability, that either of the characters, or of the situation that the shot is recording. In an early scene in Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* there are a series of shots on the staircase where James Dean's family are rowing. The shots are sharply tilted – an effect exaggerated by the cinemascope screen.

While shots are classically in sharp focus, a soft focus can be used either to enhance the romantic effect of a scene or alternatively to expose the incapacity of a character to register the world around him.

Finally, the camera is able to move. The earliest moving shots were dependent on the movement of objects – cars or trains – so shots mimic the experience of viewing. Similarly pans (horizontal movements) and tilts appear to reproduce eye movements and are motivated by the action that is occurring. Shots can also be developed to reproduce the movements of the characters within the set, originally using rails, hence the tracking shot, or in a more liberated way using a hand-held or a Steadicam camera, walking the action. These shots give a strong sense of identity and place. For instance, in Scorsese's *Goodfellas*, when Henry displays his power by entering a popular restaurant through a side entrance and impresses both his girlfriend and us, by his capacity to walk through the back passages, and the kitchen, acknowledged only by the most important figures.

While such shots are perceived as naturalistic, and replicate the natural movements of the eye, the use of the crane moves beyond this to display a degree of control by the director of the world of the film. Such shots are in positions and involve movements that are inaccessible to us on a day-to-day basis. Crane shots can take us from the wide panorama of a scene to focus in on the object of our attention. In Hitchcock's *Marnie* a crane shot at a party takes us from Marnie's point of view on the landing above the expansive entrance hall of her husband's mansion to a close-up of her previous employer, Strutt, who has the potential to expose her earlier misdeeds. While this shot bears no relationship to any possible human movement towards Strutt, it reflects the sense of powerlessness and inevitability felt by Marnie at that moment. The crane can also be used to dramatically reveal what has previously been hidden. In *Once Upon a Time in the West* there is a connection between Harmonica and the villain Frank, although this is not known by Frank. Only at the moment of death is this link established. In a flashback, Harmonica is revealed as a boy in close-up, with the camera craning back first to reveal his elder brother standing on his shoulders, and then literally suspended by a noose from a ruined archway in the desert, waiting for the boy to weaken and plunge the brother to his death, and finally Frank laughing. A similar effect is produced in John Carpenter's *Halloween* where, following a lengthy Steadicam shot from behind a mask where the 'camera' searches through a house and discovers and kills two lovers, the mask is removed revealing a small boy. The camera cranes back and upwards stressing both the vulnerability of the child and the judgement of the local community.

While there has been a concentration in the preceding pages on some of the more obvious effects of the camera, the predominant style of Hollywood film-making is the use of a camera which is largely invisible, with a predominance of shots within the medium distance, 'le shot American', using very slight variations from the horizontal shot, and involving limited camera movement, usually motivated by the action or the interest of the characters. Yet every shot is selected from a range of possibilities, even when it continues to appear to be the 'natural', the only, one.

EDITING

Having established the codes contributing to our understanding of the single shot, we can now look at the combination of shots which construct a film flowing over time. While most of the characteristics of film shot are related to codes developed in still photography, the joining of strips of films is specific to cinema, and as such has been seen as the component that is the essence of cinematic art. The Soviet film-maker Lev Kuleshov²² engaged in a number of 'experiments' linking shots and 'proving' that with adept editing it was possible to create alternative readings of the same facial expression – or to bring together cuts occurring in completely different locations. However, notions of the essential nature of film are certainly unfashionable and probably unhelpful in any attempt to read the meaning into sequences of film.

Historically, the first editing was between scenes, with individual extreme long shots recording a self-contained sequence at a particular time and place followed by a cut to black. This device, drawing on the theatrical black-out, could easily be read by the early audiences, although for a contemporary audience a pre-existing knowledge of the storyline seems necessary in order to understand the narrative flow (see pp. 115–16). In the first twenty years of cinema a 'vocabulary' of linking devices between scenes was established and largely attributed to D.W. Griffith. In particular, this involved the distinction between 'slower' devices: the fade to and from black and the dissolve between the image and the cut. While the fade implied a change of scene and the change of time, the cut was used within a scene or, in the case of cross-cut²³ editing, signified that two events although separated by space were happening simultaneously. This device was used particularly by Griffith to build up suspense in the rescue scene in *The Birth of a Nation*. Other devices such as the 'wipe', 'push off', the 'turn over', while popular in the 1920s and revised as a relatively simple technique of the TV vision mixer, have largely been reduced to comic effects. The revival of linking devices by French New Wave directors such as Truffaut in *Tirez sur la pianiste* extended the use of the devices, in particular the use of the dissolve within a sequence to suggest the passing of time. The fade to black, which after time becomes almost an invisible device, was replaced by a dissolve to white, drawing attention to the uncertain status of the narrative in *Last Year in Marienbad*, and to other colours with specific emotional readings. However, the inventiveness of the New Wave directors, far from creating a universal language of the linking device, gave a number of alternative readings that had to be anchored through the *mise-en-scène*. The passing of time, for instance, would normally be doubly signified by use of *mise-en-scène*, the movement of characters, facial expressions, consumption of food and drink or even the movement of the hands of the clock. New Wave directors felt free to ignore these conventions if the viewer was able to identify the passing of time through what was happening in the narrative.

While the linking devices described above have the function of signifying to the viewer the discontinuity of the action – the change of time and place – the major development in film editing has been to minimise the sense of disruption. Unlike studio TV, film is shot with considerable breaks, with changes of set, positioning and lighting. As a consequence film-makers are rarely able to record more than two–three minutes of usable stock in the course of a full working day. Those separate shots designed to be in the 'ideal' viewing place, for instance, a close-up on the speaker, have the potential to disrupt the viewers' attention. A system of conventions governing editing developed in the first two decades of cinema (although there were some changes following the introduction of sound) and these have become known as the 'rules of continuity editing'. A

full account can be found in Karl Reisz and Gavin Millar's *The Technique of Film Editing*, but also can be traced in any beginner's guide to film editing. The intention of the rules is to produce a system to tell a story in such a way as to set out the action of the narrative and its position in space and time so that it is clear to the viewer, but also unobtrusive. In particular, the storytelling should do nothing to draw attention to itself, the apparatus of cinema, in the physical sense of equipment, but also so that strategies employed should appear to be 'transparent' to the viewers, in the sense that they would not be aware of their existence.

These rules can be briefly summarised as follows. A scene will normally start with an 'establishing shot', a long shot which enables the spectator to orientate her- or himself to the space of the scene, the position of the performers and objects, as well as reorientating from the previous scene with a different space. All subsequent shots can therefore be 'read' within the space already established. Such a shot, a 'master shot', can of course be reintroduced in particular moments in the scene, whether to re-establish the space or to show significant movements of characters.

The 180° rule involves an imaginary line along the action of the scene, between actors involved in a conversation or the direction of a chase. The 'rule' dictates that this line should be clearly established and that consecutive shots should not be taken from opposite sides of the line. The consequence of this is the establishment of a common background space (either implicitly or explicitly) in static shots, and a clarity of direction of movement when, for instance, characters are running towards or away from one another. An extension of this is the principle of the 'eye-line match'. A shot of a scene looking at something off-screen is then followed by the object or person being looked at. Neither shot includes the viewer and the object, but on the basis of the established space we presume their relationship.

The 30° rule proposes that a successive shot on the same area involves at least a 30° change of angle, or at any rate a substantial change of viewpoint. Although this involves a reorientation for the viewer, it does not involve the noticeable 'jump' of objects on the screen, which would produce a 'jump-cut'. Again assuming the establishment of the narrative's space the viewer is able to place the action.

Finally, the movement of actors and the reframing of the camera is so arranged and planned that the movement of the camera does not 'draw attention to itself'. This involves, for instance, the cut on action, so that the cut anticipates the movement to be made, a long shot of a character standing up say, or a cut to the person talking. The cut both takes the viewer where she/he as reader of the narrative wishes to be, and implies the control of the film-maker over the narrative. The cut appears to be 'motivated' by the need to tell the story.

This style of editing, including as it does decisions on the placement of camera and characters, is integral to the Hollywood classical realist text, a film that 'effaces all signs of the text's production and the achievement of a invisibility of process'. As such it is very hard to cite examples of the operation of the rules, or indeed to be aware of them when they are happening, although there is a full account of a scene in the *Maltese Falcon* in Bordwell and Thompson's *Film Art*.²³ However, we are made aware of these conventions when they are broken or in any way subverted. It is not unusual to commence a sequence with a close-up. In the post-sequence scene in Scorsese's *Goodfellas* we have an extreme close-up of the adolescent Henry before the reverse shot and pan reveals the gangsters across the road as the object of his gaze. Henry's voice-over stresses this boy's eye view of the action, 'They were able to stay up all night playing cards', rather than an objective narrative viewpoint. The initial close-up thus reinforces the subjective reading of the action

before it is presented to us. The 180° was perhaps most forcibly broken in John Ford's *Stagecoach* as the Indians attack the coach, seemingly riding from both directions. However, the strength of the narrative line, and the clear visual distinction between the Indians and the cavalry present us with no problems in identifying narrative space. In *Who's That Knocking at My Door?*,²⁴ the concluding dialogue between Harvey Keitel and Zina Bethune, the breaking of an 'impossible' relationship, again breaks the 180° rule as the camera plays on the invisible line. The effort is disturbing, but only reflects the concern we have about how to 'place' ourselves emotionally in the sequence. The jump-cut was used widely by the French New Wave directors, notably Jean-Luc Godard in *A Bout de souffle*. The device used within conversations and during car journeys has the consequence of producing an ellipsis – the reduction of time spent on a sequence. Such a process is a necessary part of feature film narrative – films rarely operate in 'real time', equating the time of the action with what we see on the screen. However, the usual form of continuity editing hides this process by making the sequences within say a car journey appear continuous. It is not that Godard's use of the jump-cut makes the film's narrative incomprehensible, – but rather it draws attention to the process of selection that has taken place.

While continuity editing dominates classic narrative, other strategies have been used – and were perhaps more formally developed in the silent era before the requirements of continuity in both sound and image restricted, at least temporarily, the expressiveness of successive images. The 'montage' sequence entailed a number of shots over a period of time to demonstrate a process of change. In *Citizen Kane*, the disintegration of Kane's first marriage is shown in a scene of breakfast, with the couple eating in silence hiding behind rival newspapers. A similar device is used in *The Godfather* where a sequence of killings occurs in different locations, while the baptism of Michael Corleone's child is taking place. In the sequence the soundtrack of the church service is held over the images, not only contrasting the pious words of the protagonists with their actions, but also establishing the contemporaneity of the action.

An alternative form of editing is the so-called 'non-diegetic insert'²⁵ which involves a symbolic shot not involved with the time and place of the narrative to comment or express the action in some alternative way. Eisenstein in *Strike* uses the image of a bull in a slaughterhouse to represent the killing of strikers by the mounted soldiers. The primacy of realist narrative has made this kind of device less prevalent in 'Hollywood'²⁶ cinema, although such coded inserts proved useful as devices to circumscribe censorship in earlier eras. Hitchcock used the clichéd train entering the tunnel as an expression of the consummation of Roger Thornhill's marriage at the end of *North by North West*. The irony, however, is that they are on the train and the shot is an expression of narrative space. In *Goodbye Columbus*, the 'seduction' of the daughter in the attic is similarly expressed by an abrupt cut to the carving of roast meat at the family lunch.

The cutting of film stock can also be expressive in itself. While the speed of cutting appears, particularly in dialogue sequences, to be determined by the pro-filmic event, the meaning of action sequences can be determined by editing. The length of a shot is in part determined by the amount of information within it. However, rapid or slow cutting can convey meaning in itself. Rapid cutting reflects the degree of excitement with a sequence, and cutting speeds can be accelerated to convey mood, so that the viewing of individual shots becomes almost subliminal. Perhaps most famously, the *Psycho* shower scene exemplifies the use of rapid and highly fragmented images to present a climactic moment. The viewer, including the original American film censor, may often claim to see things that were not originally there.



• Plate 4.10 *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, US 1960)
Highly fragmented images

SOUND

The final element in constructing the 'image' of a film is the soundtrack. Sound as an integral part of a film only developed after 1927. While films were rarely seen in silence (they were sometimes accompanied by a speaker, a piano, organ or small orchestra) the nature of the sound was rarely in the control of the originators of the film and certainly not for all showings of the film. Unlike other innovations, colour and wide screen for instance, sound, once introduced, became a virtually universal format in a very short period of time. Ed Buscombe argues that the speed of this innovation arose from the need for a more realistic narrative. Certainly, while Warner Brothers saw music as being the appealing part of sound, it was the talking element that attracted the first audiences. The role of the soundtrack was seen as one of reproducing the sounds that would normally be associated with the images, whether the unenunciated words in almost any 'silent movie' or the silent but ringing alarm in Porter's *Life of an American Fireman*. In this sense sound is perceived as diegetic, arising from objects in a scene either inside the frame, or logically related outside the frame – say for instance, the sound of knocking on a door heard within a house.

However, it would be unwise to assume that a soundtrack can merely be read off from the visual image. Soundtracks are equally 'sound images', constructed and selected in much the same way as the visual image is created. Components on the soundtrack may be simulated at the moment of shooting, but rarely except in a documentary is the soundtrack laid down at the same time. With the development of sound mixing the quality of the track is constructed over a period of time, whether the sound is diegetic or a music track laid over the top of it. A visual image tends to be simplified, Bazin's theory of deep

focus notwithstanding – the eye tends to take in different aspects of the image sequentially, whether within or between shots. The ear, by contrast, is able to absorb a number of distinct sound sources simultaneously. Early sound films tended to display a relatively unilateral soundtrack – with dialogue, sound effects and music operating successively. Sound effects, in particular, were only included because they were integral to the narrative (in much the same way as visual effects). By the 1960s, Robert Altman, in particular, was developing soundtracks using the mixing devices available for music sound recording to produce dialogue where individuals interrupted or spoke over other actors (overlapping dialogue), but which also used locations such as the mess-hall in *MASH*, where conversations could be picked up apparently at random. The logical extension of this were sequences in *Pret-à-Porter*, when, using multi-camera and microphones, the sound and image appear to be collected almost randomly on the set.

Sound can be used to reinforce the continuity of the action. While the image is fragmented by the cuts from one shot to another which we 'know' can hide temporal ellipsis, a character not shown crossing a room for instance, an unbroken soundtrack signifies a continuity of time. This is perhaps best illustrated by an example that deceives the spectator. In an early scene in Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, Charlie (Harvey Keitel) climbs on the stage to perform with an exotic dancer. The soundtrack playing the Rolling Stones' 'Tell me, (you're coming back)' appears to be running continuously, and yet Charlie appears in consecutive shots to be on the stage and then to be in the audience viewing the dancer, thus challenging the 'reality status' of one of the shots. Our understanding of the narrative certainly suggests on subsequent viewings that the first part is Charlie's fantasy.

Sound also has a continuity role in establishing links across scenes. Orson Welles, drawing from his radio experience, used sound to bridge between sequences. In *Citizen Kane*, Welles uses Thatcher's 'Merry Christmas' as a bridge between Kane's boyhood greeting and adulthood. Such extravagant devices do not, however, disguise transitions in the way of continuity editing, but rather celebrate it. More commonly soundtracks marginally precede the visual image as a preparation for what we are about to see. Sound can also access experiences not immediately evident to the viewer. In *Psycho*, Marion Crane 'remembers', while driving along, the demands of her boss to deposit the money which she has purloined. More problematically she also 'hears' the discovery of the theft of the money and the reaction of her boss and the man she has robbed. The latter sound must at the moment of hearing be a projection of the sound which she could not in reality possibly hear, as she dies before the office is opened.

Sound can also be used to direct us into the past through the use of the voice-over as in *Mildred Pierce*, where Mildred takes us back on three occasions as part of her confession in the police station. Voice-overs, while seemingly a useful device to accelerate storytelling, to comment on the action and to admit us into the thoughts of the protagonists in the way of a novelist, are rarely used in feature films and even then sparingly. A flashback sequence once introduced is normally allowed to return to a conventional mode in which the visual narrative is dominant. Martin Scorsese maintains a voice-over throughout *Goodfellas*, in keeping with its presentation as a 'true life' filmic representation of the life of a sub-Mafia wise guy. Yet the voice-over narrative appears often to be contradicted by the visual narrative, at the very least suggesting Henry's explanation and indeed control of the narrative is partial. At one stage he even loses control of the voice-over, which is taken over by his wife.

A predominant form of sound, and indeed the original function of soundtracks, is the use of non-diegetic music. Primarily music is used to inform the audience of appro-

priate emotional responses or, having established a response, to enhance it. The emotional pull of music and its high level of connotative meaning allow these processes to operate almost subliminally. While the impact of the *Psycho* shower scene can be attributed to the rapid cutting described on pp. 108–9, it can equally be attributed to Bernard Herrmann's 'shrieking strings', not least because they are a magnified reprise of Marion Crane's growing hysteria as she drives the car in the heavy rain. With the general denial of the use of voice-over to provide 'inner thoughts', and given the stress on the surface reality of the classic realist film, music appears to give us direct access to the emotions of the characters.

Music also plays the role of 'confirming' the emotional response of the spectator, seemingly leading us to a particular way of seeing a sequence, or at any rate editing a 'preferred reading' of the image. As such it can be seen as a way of anchoring meaning, eliminating ambiguities of response. In this sense music is often seen to be a final track. Indeed the adding of the sound on to a pre-existing image and diegetic soundtrack, whether Miles Davis improvising to *Lift to the Scaffold* or a 'classical' orchestra playing a carefully choreographed score, is the more common method of construction. However, music, whether the final soundtrack or similar music, may be used at the editing state as a rhythmic device to inform the pace of the cutting. Sergio Leone describes the cast and crew of *Once Upon a Time in the West*, 'throughout the shooting schedules, listening to the recording [Morricone's score] acting with the music, following its rhythms and suffering its aggravating qualities, which grind the nerve'.

Sound effects are normally perceived as part of the narrative realism, authenticating the images and informing the narrative attention. At the beginning of *Mildred Pierce* we hear the gunshots while viewing the exterior of the beach house, only to cut to the consequential dying body of the victim. The denial of the image of the murderer, either at the moment of shooting or the subsequent reaction shot, is a key to the remaining narrative when the murderer is revealed. Increasingly, sound effects have come to be used to evoke mood. Peripheral sound can be used to establish the wider environment. Hospital or police precinct movies will normally feature telephone rings, not as a cue to the protagonist lifting the receiver and furthering the narrative, but to create other unseen and unrecorded narratives occurring at the same time, or simply to invoke the busyness of the location. David Lynch in *Eraserhead* extends this to a non-specific industrial background sound, permeating a number of interior domestic scenes and establishing without elaborate visual images the quality of the environment. The distinction between non-diegetic music and sound effects can become blurred with the electronic production of both. At the beginning of *Nightmare on Elm Street* we are presented with a dream sequence involving a chase among the furnaces. What sounds to be modernist horror film mood music also includes human sighs, muffled screams and the mechanical sounds relating to the working of furnaces, all integrated into a seamless music/soundtrack, and only loosely linked to the visual images.

Music may also be used to identify character, for example, themes associated with particular performers in *Once Upon a Time in the West* and *Dr Zhivago*, locations and time. In *Goodfellas*, Scorsese uses an elaborate soundtrack with some forty-two tracks, a mixture of American commercial ballads and rock music, Italian opera and traditional songs. The music is used to contrast the Italian-American from the American-Italian and to identify age distinctions between the protagonists. It is also used to delineate the time of the action in a movie telling a story with a twenty-five year time span, but using only limited changes in the appearance of the characters.

NARRATIVE

Throughout our consideration of the components and coding that make up film, there has been explicit the idea of a **narrative**; that films have a primary function of telling a story. The images are organised and are made sense of around this function. This is particularly true of the feature film, which is developed, given a 'treatment' in terms of its plot line, and this is perceived as being what a film is 'about'. However, documentaries and TV news 'stories' show many characteristics of film narrative. Equally the cinema has often drawn its plots and, to some extent, its storytelling strategies from literature, most notably the novel. Work on film narrative has therefore often drawn from work on other media, notably literary criticism expressing an interest in the similarities and differences in the ways stories are told in various media.

At the simplest level, narrative analysis is concerned with the extent to which those things that we see make sense. It is assumed that those elements that we see cohere in some way, that they are part of a whole. While all elements of an image will not be of equal importance, and indeed one aspect of the detection narrative is the attempt to determine the important components, the 'clues' as against the 'red herrings', there is a supposition that if a film draws attention to something, it will have a consequence in the development of the story. In *North by Northwest*, Roger Thornhill lights a cigarette for Eve Kendall, using a personalised match-book 'ROT'. The significance of this artefact is marked by a conversation – 'what does the "O" stand for?', 'nothing' – signifying a man with nothing at the centre. Yet at the level of the story – the match-book re-emerges at the end when Thornhill uses the matches to alert Eve of his presence in the villain VanDamm's house. In general terms all that is of significance in the narrative has a subsequent consequence. Narrative develops on the basis of a chain of cause and effect. An event happens and is shown to have (likely) consequences. As experienced film-goers, we learn to expect and anticipate this chain, or any rate to recognise the causal links when they are made. At the simplest level these links are consecutive, the effect from one cause becoming the cause of the next link, as for instance the succession of trials facing Indiana Jones in the search for the holy grail in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. However, the example from *North by Northwest* illustrates that causal links can operate over a longer period with other plot devices intervening.

Narrative involves the viewer in making sense of what is seen, asking questions of what we see and anticipating the answers. In particular, narrative invites us to ask both what is going to happen next and when and how will it all end. It operates on the tension between our anticipation of likely outcomes drawn from genre conventions and the capacity to surprise or frustrate our expectations. Some sixty minutes into *Dirty Harry* we appear to have the final link of the cause/effect chain as Inspector Callaghan arrests the serial killer Scorpio after a chase across a football field. Yet the force entailed in the arrest becomes, in turn, the cause of Scorpio's release, and the beginning of a new cause and effect chain leading to an apprehension from which Scorpio can never be released.

While film narrative can be viewed as a number of cause and effect links, it may also be perceived in terms of larger structures incorporating the entire film. Todorov sees the start of narrative as a point of stable equilibrium, where everything is satisfied, calm and normal. This is disrupted by some kind of force which creates a state of disequilibrium. It is only possible to re-create equilibrium through action directed against the disruption. However, the consequence of this reaction is to change the world of the narrative and/or the characters so that the final state of equilibrium is not the same as the initial state. Although this analysis is a simplified one, it is a useful starting-point – delineating the differences between individual films or genres.



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• Plate 4.11 *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, US 1958)
A disruptive act

The initial equilibrium state of the film is often very brief, little more than an establishing shot, or at most an establishing sequence. Our expectation of narrative disruption, together with our capacity to 'read' the equilibrium state rapidly, has led to shorter and shorter equilibrium sequences. The beginning of *Jaws* involves a brief scene of teenagers on a beach enjoying a night-time party before two of their number engage in a swim dramatically interrupted by the shark attack. Horror films, in particular, have become increasingly characterised by immediate disruption, as for instance in the dream sequence at the beginning of *Nightmare on Elm Street* referred to on p. 111. Even when they return to a temporary equilibrium, the girl wakes up, this is an unstable state capable of easy disruption. *Vertigo* commences with a particularly disruptive act, a chase across the rooftops,

culminating in Scottie's loss of nerve and consequent retirement from the police force. If there is a stable equilibrium state, it is implicit and occurs before the movie begins.

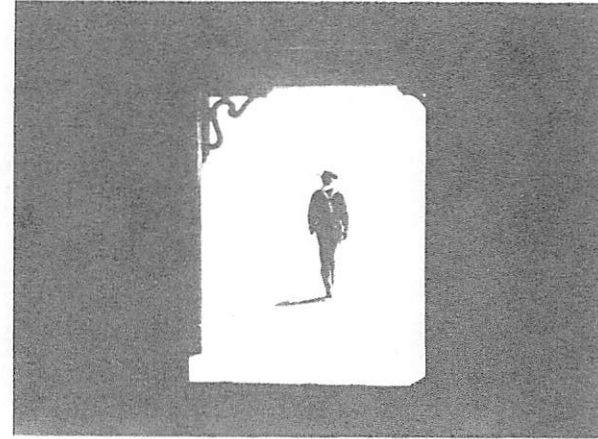
Initial equilibrium states are also particularly unstable in melodrama. It is clear from the beginning of the flashback sequence in *Mildred Pierce*, in effect the beginning of the narrative, that this is not a harmonious family setting, despite the iconography of the mother baking cakes and wearing an apron. The nature of Mildred's relationship with Vida suggests that trouble is in store, quite apart from the somewhat incongruous image of Joan Crawford as a petit bourgeois housewife. As a consequence the seeming cause of the disruption, Bert's decision to leave the family, is in no way an unexpected disruption to a stable state.

Equally in the 'romance' genre, the initial equilibrium is signified by an absence or a 'lack' (of a partner) by one, Richard Gere in *Pretty Woman*, or two, Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan in *When Harry Met Sally*. The initial equilibrium is perceived as integrally unstable to be resolved within the movies, and the 'disruption' involving the first meeting of the characters, usually disharmoniously, in which the misunderstandings of motive are the beginning of the resolution.

Disruptions similarly are variable, although they tend to be genre specific. Action genres are often disrupted by an external threat or raid, for instance the raid of the Indians in *The Searchers*, or the arrival of the vengeful Max Cady in *Cape Fear*. The leading characters may be forced to disrupt their normal lifestyle due to a chance experience – for example, Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis viewing the St Valentine's Day massacre in *Some Like It Hot*. Within the genres the disruption may be equally important to the characters and their drive towards some particular goal. Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* is not so much driven into disequilibrium by external events, his meetings with Betsy, the appearance of Iris and Sport in his cab, as by his determined drive to transform the world.

The actions to restore equilibrium, of course, become the narrative drive of the movie. Such re-equilibrating processes are resisted, whether by the protagonists or by chance events. The pleasure associated with conventional narrative is, at least in part, related to our recognition of the strategies employed to delay the pleasure. Opposition to equilibrium can be attributed to the 'villain', a function within the narrative, and the stronger the 'villain', the greater the pleasure in the triumph of the 'hero'. This will often involve a number of moments where there appears to be a temporary equilibrium – involving the seeming defeat of the hero, the 'cliff-hanger', or more rarely of the villain. Since the 1970s the horror film has developed the temporary equilibrium state of the defeat of the villain at the end of the movie, only for him to reappear in subsequent movies (for example, the Hammer *Dracula* series and *Halloween*, *Friday 13th*). The struggle to resolve, while usually explicit in say the revenge movie, in other genres may be present and obvious to the viewer, but not to the protagonists. In the romantic comedy (*Bringing up Baby*, *What's Up Doc*, *When Harry Met Sally*) the resistance to an early resolution comes from the characters themselves who are unaware of the mutual attraction (of opposites) that is 'obvious' to the viewer.

The final resolution again differs between films. There is a drive towards the 'happy ending' – we assume that Hugh Grant and Andie MacDowell will end *Four Weddings and a Funeral* in domesticity rather than death. Films often end with an 'establishing' long shot which is similar to the one with which they began – even where this involves other characters with no place in the new equilibrium 'riding off into the sunset' (*Shane*, *The Searchers*). Occasionally such an ending appears ironic, the conflicts within the movie are seen as ultimately unresolvable in the way that conventional narrative demands. At the end of *All that Heaven Allows* a relationship between Rock Hudson and Jane Wyman,



• Plate 4.12 *The Searchers* (John Ford, US 1956)
No place in the new equilibrium

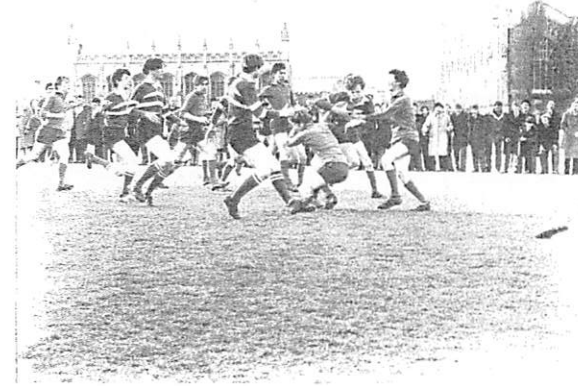
separated by age and class and resisted by family and community, is allowed to develop, but at the cost of a fractured leg. However, the film ends with a kitsch shot of a baby deer playing in the snow, suggesting that the resolution is no more than the false harmony of a traditional Christmas card. The 'happy ending' of *Taxi Driver* similarly strains belief. The European art movie and American 'independent' cinema, while ending with a resolution, is more often associated with character development and a recognition by protagonists of the inevitability of an unsatisfactory state of affairs.

A more elaborate analysis of narrative structure has been associated with the work of Vladimir Propp. Drawing on an analysis of Russian folk-tales, he concluded that regardless of individual differences in terms of plot, characters and setting, they would share common structural features. There were the functions of particular characters: 'the villain', 'the donor', 'the helper', 'the princess', 'her father', 'the dispatcher', 'the hero' and 'the false hero'. There were also thirty-one narrative units descriptive of particular action, for instance: 'a member of a family leaves home', 'a prohibition or rule is imposed on the hero', 'this prohibition is broken', etc. The characters were seen as stable elements from story to story, despite individual variations of appearance or idiosyncrasies of personality. The narrative units were sufficient to describe all of the stories, although not all units appear in all of the stories, but when they do appear they are in the prescribed order. While it might appear that such narrative structures are specific to a given genre or culture, the model has proved adaptable to Hollywood movies, such as *Sunset Boulevard*, *Kiss Me Deadly* and *North by Northwest*. They inevitably had to be 'translated' from the original. For instance, in Peter Wollen's article on *North by Northwest*, Eve Kendall, a double agent, becomes a princess. However, the accounts do have a degree of credibility, and at the very least have the function of making the analysis of

a narrative 'strange'. The very force of narrative often makes it difficult for even the trained viewer to stand back and observe what is really going on.

The Proppian analysis does, however, depend on the existence of a single narrative operating in a linear way. The examples chosen to illustrate the analysis are characterised by a strong central story-line – although one of them, *Sunset Boulevard*, does have a framing device. Even mainstream movies have tended to develop a system of subplotting, often with a 'romantic' subject subservient to the action plot. While this is recognised within Propp – the resolution involves a wedding as a result of the success the hero has had in the action plot – the main plot and the subplot often exist in a state of tension. Police movies have increasingly stressed a tension between the demands of the job, the successful solution of a crime and the satisfaction of the hero's romantic and domestic needs. The very principle of a linear narrative is being increasingly challenged – and not merely outside the mainstream. Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* combines a number of short stories, but with many of the characters appearing in more than one story, who have, in Proppian terms, alternative character functions. Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* extends this, using three stories with overlapping characters, but also inserts the final resolution – Bruce Willis with girlfriend riding off on his motor bike, the final moment in the time of the narrative – around two-thirds of the way through the film. *Pulp Fiction* does not conform to mainstream narrative structure, and it is only comprehensible because we as viewers hold on to an understanding of narrative and formal conventions through our experience of the mainstream.

Todorov and Propp's work stresses the simplicity of film narratives which are media specific. In particular, the classic realist text appears to narrate itself. Despite the example of *Goodfellas* quoted on p. 110, the film does not usually appear to have a narrator, an 'I' who tells the story. Novels can either have a 'teller', a character or observer within the text, or an author, who by implication has privileged access to some of the characters. Similarly, in much television news or documentary coverage there is either a voice over or a presenter who operates as the authoritative voice. In the absence of a presenter, the narrative itself is seen as the embodiment of the truth of what is happening, no matter how far-fetched.



• Plate 4.13 *If...* (Lindsay Anderson, UK 1968)
A mixture of filmic styles



• Plate 4.14 *If...* (Lindsay Anderson, UK 1968)
Do we believe what we see?

□ CASE STUDY 3: *IF* – AN ALTERNATIVE TEXT

This chapter began with an account of a movie, *RoboCop*, clearly within the mainstream Hollywood tradition. Although originating from within American cinema, the codes, conventions and narrative patterns have come to dominate entertainment cinema and fictional TV the world over. However, the forms and conventions are by no means static, but are affected by cross-cultural, cross-media and technological influences or even by the impact of particular talented directors with their own style. There are also films which are constructed to work against the conventions, either for artistic or political reasons.

In 1968, Lindsay Anderson, after working in the subsidised theatre, as a film critic and producing both documentaries and 'social realist' fiction films, made *If*. It was financed by a major studio, Paramount, who at that stage were interested in investing in British film-makers. Although based on an existing book, *Crusaders* by David Sherwin, it is nevertheless a highly personal film using for its locations and backdrop Anderson's own public school background. Furthermore, the film draws upon Anderson's interest in Brechtian theatre, and is an attempt to explore the 'alienation effect' in a cinematic setting. The film,

however, was targeted at a commercial audience, and rested upon the understandings of a mainstream audience. Far from producing a detached, analytical spectator, the film produced in its contemporary audiences an involved and committed response.

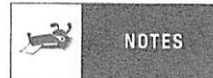
There are two immediately strange devices, disturbing for a viewer inbred in realist text. The film is divided up into sections, each with a heading rather like the chapter heading of a book. Since the coming of sound such disruption is rarely to be seen except as a comic effect. More speciously, however, the film stock changes from colour to black and white at frequent intervals within the film. Normally these changes are between scenes, but sometimes occur within sequences. Such shifts provoke a need in the viewer to explain, possibly to discover the 'code'. Anderson's explanation at the time was simply that of budgetary constraints, not enough money to film in colour throughout. Whatever the status of that explanation, the consequence is to foreground the process of film production throughout the film.

I would like to briefly consider the sequence 'Ritual and romance' that occurs about halfway through the film. The sequence in plot terms involves the transgression of school rules – not to attend the house rugby match, to escape out of bounds, to steal a motor bike and to meet a young woman in a transport café.

The sequence involves an approximate balance of colour and black and white shots, but also a mixture of filmic styles. Although narrative cinema has involved a range of stylistic practices, a Frank Tashlin/Jerry Lewis comedy, spaghetti westerns, British drama-documentary, there is normally a characteristic unity of style within a film. However, even within this sequence we get a black and white documentary realist sequence in the school chapel, predominantly long shot; an accurate slow-motion sequence with a boy performing on parallel bars from the admiring gaze of his lover; a colour sequence of a performance on a motor bike by three characters to popular music; a long shot 'candid camera' sequence; as well as sequences filmed with conventional narrative strategies involving continuity editing and eyeline matches. There are also variable uses of sound, a variety of microphone positions sometimes giving 'tight' sound designed to clearly pick up dialogue, but elsewhere a distant and echoey sound as if from a documentary. Music is fragmented and inter-cut with silence. Sound is overlaid from one scene to another in such a way as to draw attention to itself – yet at the same time the narrative appears to be constructed along a conventional cause and effect chain. The rebels are instructed to attend the game; cut to the game, and they are not there; cut to the town where they are seen drifting, cut to motor cycle shop where they steal a bike; cut to the open road where they escape; and cut to the transport café. The transport café scene commences with narrative continuity. They continue to behave in the boorish and chauvinist way we have learnt to expect from the narrative so far. The female waitress responds by slapping the face of Travis as a response to his advances. He turns to the juke box on which he plays or maybe does not the African mass which he has on his record-player back at school. In the following sequence the waitress appears to make her own animal advances and after a jump-cut they appear naked play/fighting/loving on the café floor. They then appear fully clothed and, unfazed by their experience, resume drinking the still warm cup of tea.

This scene problematises the 'reality status' of what we see. Do we accept the truth of what appears in front of us despite both the improbability and the continuity breaks, or do we read the sexual encounter as 'only a fantasy'? However, if we attempt to read this as a fantasy then the status of the rest of the scene is thrown into question. Given that there is no consequence from the theft of the bike is this also a fantasy, despite its realistic depiction? If this scene is a fantasy how do we read the subsequent scenes

where the young woman appears within the school setting? While the sequence subverts the process of the classic realist narrative, it is none the less only comprehensible on the basis of our knowledge of this process.



- 1 Auguste and Louis Lumière are credited with developing a lightweight movie camera and a system of projecting moving images on the screen. They gave their first public projection of single-shot films on 28th December 1895.
- 2 Warner Brothers 1929.
- 3 For a full account of the process of viewing film and its parallels with the process of dreaming, see John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video*, London: Routledge, 1982; chapter on 'cinema as image and sound'.
- 4 Directed by Paul Verhoeven, it is available as a Virgin video.
- 5 A technical development from the late 1970s which permits the use of a camera held by hand and walks with the action, but with the steadiness of a camera moving on rails.
- 6 Georges Méliès, a pioneer of film, developed short narrative films as an entertainment within magic shows.
- 7 See Noel Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1973; also the film *Correction Please* and the accompanying booklet, published by the Arts Council of Great Britain, which reconstructs the development of film language in the first decade of the century.
- 8 Thomas Edison developed a peepshow system of viewing moving pictures which predated the Lumière system of projection.
- 9 Griffith directed about 400 single reel (eleven-minute) films between 1908 and 1913 and subsequently developed the full-length feature film with *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).
- 10 *The General* (1925), directed by Buster Keaton. Available on video.
- 11 This title would seem to suggest an external narrative commentary – a 'primitive' device that was destined to disappear, though see *Goodfellas* on p. 110. In the IMR the narrator is absent – the story 'tells itself'.
- 12 See section on editing, pp. 105–9.
- 13 See section on editing, pp. 105–9.
- 14 One of the original Lumière shorts.
- 15 There are a number of examples of work relating to mise-en-scène, particularly by those critics involved in *Movie* magazine. One example that may be accessible is Victor Perkins, 'The Cinema of Nicholas Ray', I.F. Cameron (ed.), *Movie Reader*, London: November Books, 1972.
- 16 Jim Kitses, *Horizons West*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1969.
- 17 A world of the future where everything has gone wrong.
- 18 The concept of anchorage was developed by Roland Barthes and has been particularly used to show the way that captions are used in magazines to limit the choice of meanings of a particular photographic image.
- 19 See André Bazin, *What is Cinema*, vol. 1: *Ontology and Language*, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1958. There are also a number of summaries of Bazin on realism, for instance, Andrew Tudor, *Theories of Film*, London: Secker & Warburg for the BFI, 1974.
- 20 For a straightforward account of the 'grammar' of film shots see John Izod's *Reading the Screen: An Introduction to Film Studies*, Harlow: Longman and Beirut: York Press, 1984.

- 21 Lev Kuleshov (1899–1970) attempted to prove that the meanings of shots could be changed by altering the juxtaposition of shots. This involved a close-up of an actor playing a prisoner, which was then linked to two different shots: a bowl of soup and the open door of freedom. The audience were said to be convinced that the actor's expression was different even though the same shot was used.
- 22 For an account of cross-cut editing and parallel editing in the early cinema see D. Bordwell, J. Staiger and K. Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, London; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.
- 23 K. Bordwell and K. Thompson, *Film Art*, New York: Knopf, 1990.
- 24 *Who's That Knocking at My Door?* directed by Martin Scorsese was released under a number of titles between 1965 and 1970. The reference is to the 1969 version.
- 25 Diegesis refers to the world of the narrative. In this sense anything that is not 'happening' within the story, whether an image or a sound used as a commentary of what is going on, is 'non-diegetic'. See below for the use of non-diegetic music.
- 26 Quotation marks around Hollywood are often used to indicate commercial American cinema which is not necessarily produced at a particular geographical location.



FURTHER READING

Bordwell, K. and Thompson, K., *Film Art*, New York: Knopf, 1990, is probably the most comprehensive text, with a wide range of examples.

Bordwell, D., Staiger, J. and Thompson, K., *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, London: Routledge, 1985, an encyclopaedic and scholastic look at the development of film and narrative in Hollywood. Its wide set of references to films of the first fifty years of cinema is daunting but stimulating.

Cook, D., *History of Narrative Film*, New York: Norton, 1991, fluctuates from detailed analysis of particular 'significant' films to lists of films outside Hollywood mainstream.

Ellis, J., *Visible Fictions*, London: Routledge, 1982, a provocative account of film and TV which requires a full read rather than dipping in.

Three introductory texts of increasing level of difficulty.

Turner, G., *Film as Social Practice*, London: Routledge, 1988.

Andrew, D., *Concepts in Film Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Lapsley, R. and Westlake, M., *Film Theory: An Introduction*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.



FURTHER VIEWING

In a sense almost any viewing would be applicable to work on this chapter. Nevertheless, the 'non-obtrusiveness' of much of mainstream cinema creates difficulties in observing the processes whereby meaning is created. This suggests that initial work on form and narrative is perhaps most productive with work characterised by 'excess'.

At the risk of appearing to be an unreconstructed auteurist, this might suggest the work of the following directors as a possible way in: Altman, Argento, Bertolucci, Bresson, Coen brothers, Fuller, Hitchcock, Jamusch, Lynch, Minelli, Murnau, Ophuls, Powell and Pressburger, Ray, Scorsese, Sirk, Sternberg, Tarantino, Vidor and Welles.

A more austere approach would extend this list to include perhaps more self-consciously 'modernist' directors: Anderson, Bunuel, Eisenstein, Godard, Oshima, Potter, Resnais and Straub.

Chapter 5

Genre, star and auteur: an approach to Hollywood cinema

Patrick Phillips*

■ Introduction

- Case study Part 1: *New York, New York*

■ Genre

- Case study Part 2: The problematic musical – *New York, New York* as genre film

■ Stars

- Case study Part 3: *New York, New York* – clash of the stars

■ Auteur

- Case study Part 4: Scorsese and *New York, New York*

■ Film, audience, dialogue

■ Notes

■ Further viewing