

The Role and Purpose of Film Narration

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ABSTRACT

Throughout history we can identify a great number of authors discussing the nature of narrative. From Plato's and Aristotle's original mimetic and diegetic influential theories to Gérard Genette's or Roland Barthes' essential contribution to structuralism, narrative has been studied and discussed as a fundamental process for the human mind in terms of producing and communicating meaning and expressing experience. Over the past few decades major scholars such as Bordwell, Metz, Genette, Carroll, Chatman, Eisenstein, Bal, Abbot, Tan, Smith or Branigan have produced some of the most significant contributions to the study of film narratology. Some scholars envisage narration as a means to process information. Others argue that narration can be better understood as a strategy to cue narrative comprehension. Others envisage narration as a means for emotion. This paper intends to establish that film narrative can be better understood as an act of communication through and from experience from filmmaker to an audience and vice-versa.

KEYWORDS

Film narration; narrative comprehension; communication; human experience.

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 28 December 2016

Accepted: 21 July 2017

Published: 04 August 2017

<https://dx.doi.org/10.7559/citarj.v9i2.247>

1 | INTRODUCTION: KNOWING AND TELLING

Narrative seems to appear in almost all human discourse as a means for knowing, acquiring and organizing information, and telling, communicating information to others, and therefore as an instrument for obtaining knowledge and expressing it. From this perspective, narrative can be understood as a means for the transmission and processing of information.

Edward Branigan (1992) interprets narration as the principle by which data from the screen is translated into a diegesis world that presents a particular storyline in that world. Thus, he understands narration as the principle by which information is converted from the story onto the screen (Branigan, 1992). Hence, Branigan claims that: "Film narrative is a way of understanding data under the illusion of occurrence" (Branigan, 1992, p. 115). In understanding how the spectator may receive information through a film narrative, Branigan divides the story into two different sources: diegetic and non-diegetic. Diegetic corresponds to information accessible to the characters in the story. This means information available in the time, space and casualty of the narrative. On the other hand, non-diegetic corresponds to information addressed directly only to the audience (Branigan, 1992).

Abbott (2008) has argued that this transmission process consists of representing an event or a group of events and organizing them into a particular structure. Christian Metz (1991) agreed in defining narrative as a sum of events that must be organized into a sequence. He argued that a narrative is a

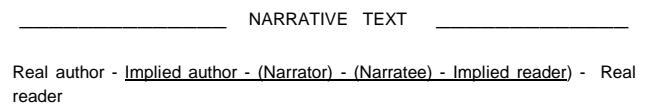
closed sequence of events where the event becomes the basic unit of the narrative. For Metz, a narrative is always a discourse because events imply subject statements made by an author. In speaking of cinema Metz also draws our attention to the fact that a narrative is always the result of a selected group of images presented in an order. They could be different images and sounds presented in a different order. Each author may choose to present an event or group of events differently and in doing so they will imply different subject statements. For this reason, Metz argues that spectators do not control the perception of the event for they did not choose the images or the order in which they appear structured. Therefore, according to Metz, audiences do not control the argument presented as a result (Metz, 1991).

For this reason, according to Mieke Bal (2009), the narrator becomes the central concept in the analysis of narrative texts. Bal argued that it is the identity of the narrator, the level and manner in which that identity appears indicated in the text, and the choices involved in this process, that delineates the specific character of the text. According to Bal, this issue is related directly to the notion of focalization: the relation between the “vision”, and therefore the agent that sees, and that which is “seen”, and therefore, perceived. Hence, focalization refers to the perspective from which narrative elements are viewed. It can be a character in the story or an outsider, a third person narrator. Bal stated that narrative perception depends on the perceiving position and that the narrator and the focalization process are the elements that determine the narrative situation. Focalization in terms of visual arts, like cinema, according to Bal, depends on the content of the photography, composition, acting, and other elements that constitute the cinematic creation (Bal, 2009) [2].

Seymour Chatman (1978) has claimed that every narrative is a structure which results of a content plane, the story, and an expression plane, the discourse. The story consists of events, which may be actions or happenings, and existents, which refer to characters and settings. Chatman, like Christian Metz, sees narrative discourse as a sequence of narrative statements. However, for Chatman, a discourse is a set of narrative statements, where statement is the basic component of the form of the expression, independent of any manifestation, and not the event like Metz had claimed. A statement, for

Chatman, can be a ballet posture, a word, an image or a character’s expression. Chatman differentiates between two types of statements: mode of existence (IS) and actions of existence (DOES). For Chatman, story as discourse is the plot and therefore the arranging of the events that constitute the story. Telling or showing a narrative consists of communication from an author to an audience. The author creates the story content and transmits that content to the audience via discourse (Chatman, 1978).

In order to illustrate this process, Chatman (1978) presents the following communication model diagram:



In every narrative, according to Chatman, there must be an author, who creates the story, but not necessarily a narrator or narratee which are means and devices for telling the story, like for instance a voice-over narration. However, to communicate the narrative, Chatman claimed that there is always an implied author and his counterpart, an implied reader. The implied author is the real author’s second self-implied version of themselves. It serves the purpose of instructing the narrative. Thus, the real author is “implied” by the reader. This means that the author is reconstructed and imagined by the reader from the narrative since the reader assumes, feels and knows that someone wrote and is telling the story. He is not the narrator but his creator and therefore the responsible for all the elements in the narrative. On the other hand, the implied reader is the counterpart of the implied author. Not the real audience, that who reads the story, but the implied “audience” and therefore the audience presupposed by the narrative itself. In communicating the story, according to Chatman, the implied author, imagined by the audience through the narrative, directs the story discourse to an implied reader, which the narrative itself implies as a second-self to the reader. The narrator and narratee remain as mere devices, that can be used by the implied author or not, in the process of communicating the story from author to audience (Chatman, 1978).

Structure in film narrative is compulsory since a film consists of a number of images and sounds that must be organized into a particular order. Film narration

must always begin with an image or sound and must end with another. Therefore, we can establish that there is no film narrative without structure. In fact, film narratives are constructed bearing that in mind. Filmmakers make narration choices assuming that their audiences will watch their films in the order they were constructed. However, can we consider that every narrative results of a content plane, the story, and an expression plane, the discourse? If so, does this mean that narration consists of communicating a story from an author to an audience? Does this entail that narratives' main purpose is to tell stories or to process information? What role do audiences play in film narration? Can we resume narration to a process of transforming data? Do audiences have no control over the perception of the narrative for they did not choose the content or the expression plane like Metz claimed?

2 | THE PURPOSE OF FILM NARRATION

David Bordwell (2008), in his very influential comprehensive study of fiction narrative, *Narration in Fiction Film*, offered a new perspective on how we should understand film narrative. He focused his main arguments in defending that the principal role of narration is to cue the audience's storyline comprehension. For this reason he summarized narrative to be: "the activity of selecting, arranging, and rendering story material in order to achieve specific time-bound effects on a perceiver" (Bordwell, 2008, p. XI). He also argued against Aristotle's and Plato's influential mimetic and diegetic theories by claiming that: "mimetic theories assign few mental properties to the spectator (...). Diegetic theories, for all their apparent concern with narrational effects, also downplay the viewer's role" (Bordwell, 2008, p. 29). According to Bordwell, these theories take the audience as a passive receiver. For this reason, he also criticizes Metz's views on the spectator's passive role. As referred above, Metz argued that the audience have no control over narrative perception for they do not choose the audiovisual content or how it appears structured. As far as Bordwell is concerned, only Eisenstein's film theories allow the viewer an active participation in the construction of the narrative. Bordwell affirms that: "The passivity of the spectator in diegetic theories generally is suggested not only by the extensive borrowing of mimetic concepts of narration but also by the use of terms like the 'position' or the 'place' of the subject.

Such metaphors lead us to conceive of the perceiver as backed into a corner by the conventions of perspective, editing, narrative point of view and psychic unity" (Bordwell, 2008, p. 29).

Bordwell believes that film theory had underestimated the important role that audiences play during narrative comprehension. He defends that a film does not position the spectator to do anything. A film cues the spectator to fulfil several comprehension operations. The most important objective of a narrative is to make sure that the audience understands the story. Thus, film narrative offers structures of information which appear divided into a narrative system and a stylistic system. These systems present the audience with cues, patterns, and gaps of information that shape and orientate the comprehension activity undertaken by the spectator. The audience by attempting to comprehend the narrative resorts to schemata, an organized cluster of knowledge and experience that guides our assumptions, inferences, associations and hypothesis-making involved in the process of executing story-constructing activities. Bordwell also argues against Chatman's theories for supporting his arguments on the classical communication model where narrative appears as a communication process from sender to receiver. According to Bordwell, this has focused theorist's interests in searching for non-character narrators, implied authors, implied readers and narratees which, in his opinion, are very difficult to find in narrative texts. He claims that, even though you might sometimes identify these elements, they normally tend to be diluted in the overall narrative process. He suggests instead that "narration is better understood as the organization of a set of cues for the construction of a story. This presupposes a perceiver, but not any sender, of a message" (Bordwell, 2008, p. 62).

The purpose of film narration could be in fact to make sure that the spectator perceives and understands the narrative content as referred by Bordwell. But then again it may not. A filmmaker could choose to create a narrative that it is not meant to be completely comprehensible. Perhaps only parts of the narrative become accessible and clear to an audience. This is the case of *Mulholland Drive* (2001) by David Lynch or Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929). Filmmakers such as Godard, Antonioni, Cocteau, Bergman, Lynch, Buñuel, Kubrick, Pasolini, Straub, Resnais or Glauber Rocha have chosen, in some of

their films, to frustrate the spectator's narrative comprehension. Thus, the purpose of film narration may not just be to tell a story or to make it comprehensible. Creating puzzle-like incomprehensible film structures may have other objectives such as provoking experiences or challenging audiences' natural mind state. Frustrating narratives may intend to make us think, see or reflect about subjects in ways we could not have imagined by ourselves in our everyday life. Thus, the role of film narration goes beyond telling a story or making it comprehensible. First and foremost a film narrative provides the spectator with an experience. It could be an intellectual, emotional, spiritual or other type of experience. Nevertheless, viewing film narrative is always going to be an experience. We may experience a classical love story like *Titanic* (Cameron, 1997) or we could experience the traumatic and confusing feeling of amnesia like in *Memento* (Nolan, 2000). Regardless of the story or discourse, film narrative always remains an experience through which we communicate and learn.

Whether filmmakers choose or not to frustrate narrative comprehension, they always mean to communicate. In fact, frustrating the narrative comprehension or making it incomprehensible might be the only strategy available for a filmmaker to communicate their point of view about a subject. For this reason I argue that film narration's main purpose is to communicate and narrative content and discourse are means to reach an end.

We should not forget that films are made so that others can watch them. Making cinema automatically implies that someone needs to view the narrative. The main objective of filmmaking is to construct a narrative so that an audience may appreciate it. This is why spectators play such a fundamental role in this communication process by undertaking narrative comprehension. In fact I believe that without the audience active participation a film narrative is just some kind of an object, a group of images and sounds with no meaning or purpose. Narration only means something when it communicates with its public. It only truly exists in the mind of the viewer for it is in their mind that communication occurs.

Thus, the purpose of film narrative is to communicate and for communication to occur a viewer must experience it. This does not necessarily entail that

film narrative must be understood, enjoyed, appreciated or otherwise.

Bordwell understands this process as the organization of a set of cues for the construction of a story. So how does Bordwell envisage the process of film narration?

3 | THE ROLE AND PROCESS OF FILM NARRATION

Within his principles of narration Bordwell distinguishes three elements: *Fabula*, *Syuzhet* and *Style*. The *fabula* can be understood as the story and incorporates the action as a chronological cause and effect sequence of events that occur within a particular time and space. The *syuzhet* can be understood as the plot and refers to the arranging and organization of the events that constitute the *fabula*. Therefore, the *syuzhet* is a dramaturgical process which consists of particular patterns of actions, scenes, turning points and plot twists. Furthermore, the *style* refers to the technical process involved in making a film and therefore it represents the use of cinematic elements such as composition, cinematography, editing or sound. According to Bordwell, narration results from the interaction between *syuzhet* and *style*. A process that consists of cuing and channeling the viewer's construction of the story (Bordwell, 2008).

Bordwell has identified four principal ways of *syuzhet*-*style* interaction. First, he referred to the case of Hollywood classical canonic narration. In this case, *style* becomes "invisible" since the classical narration uses cinematic technique as means for the *syuzhet*'s transmission of *fabula*'s events and content. The objective is that audiences are not aware of the technical elements involved in the making of the film and favor narrative content instead. Thus, *style* in classical Hollywood films becomes "invisible" and subordinated to *syuzhet*'s narrational needs. Secondly, Bordwell refers to Art Cinema narration as a mode that defines itself by opposition or deviation from Hollywood's classical mode. Art Cinema presents, unlike Hollywood, an ambiguous and subjective representation of reality taking its cue from Realist theory and literary modernism. In Art Cinema *syuzhet* and *style* will alternate their dominant positions to create ambiguous open-ended narratives and psychologically incoherent or unclear characters. Sometimes, the *style* will be put into evidence by disrupting narrative compression through jump cuts

or elliptical editing, or simply by interrupting happenings or dialogues. This kind of narrative appeared in the films of Bergman, Antonioni, Truffaut, Buñuel, Fellini or Resnais.

He also identifies early Soviet Cinema as a rhetorical form of narration. The tendency is to use *syuzhet* as both narrative and argument. Characters become social prototypes defined by their jobs, social position and actions and political views. These films presented a structure of confrontation. As a self-conscious and didactic narrative addressed directly to the audience. The *fabula* is propaganda and therefore predictable but the style is not. The style does not respect continuity of space and time. Eye lines and shots will not match and editing becomes the unifying principal element. Like in Art Cinema, due to Soviet's Cinema deviation from classical norms, style becomes more prominent than *syuzhet* (Bordwell, 2008). A fourth type of narration is named by Bordwell as Parametric Narration, in reference to Noël Burch's *Theory of Film Practice* (1981). Burch's book is a collection of a group of film articles written for *Cahiers du cinema*. The book offers a compelling and systematic study of film technique describing in detail the potential combination of cinematic elements to construct film narratives. To illustrate his arguments, Burch resorts to close readings on specific films from several authors, such as Antonioni, Renoir, Godard, Marcel Hanoun or Bresson. Overall, Noël Burch's *Theory of Film Practice* represents a powerful argument for a serialist film theory which constitutes the basics to Bordwell's arguments on Parametric Narration. The underlining argument of Burch's analysis is that *découpage*, the elements that constitute cinematic technique, can become in themselves a narrative system (Burch, 1981). This can be accomplished by establishing dialectical structures between cinematic elements. Something that to a certain extend Eisenstein, as noticed by Burch himself, had already stated in his film theories. The general premise is that stylistic structure can be organized as a form of narrative structure.

In Parametric Narration, according to Bordwell, film's stylistic devices do not fulfill *syuzhet* needs and, unlike Art Cinema narration, style does not appeal or satisfies thematic considerations. Instead, style appears organized according to a limited number of stylistic options, creating a coherent stylistic pattern by repetition and organized as a narrative structure. The spectators' role becomes to recognize the

stylistic pattern that characterizes the film. There is a dominant or subordinate shift between *syuzhet* and style that can frustrate the spectator's construction of the *fabula*. Bordwell (2008) illustrates his arguments through a gripping analysis of Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959).

Therefore, according to Bordwell's principles of narration, we could organize film narrative into two groups: the canonic "invisible" classical narrative, which is and has always been the most dominant narrative form worldwide, and all or any "other". Art Cinema, Soviet Cinema or Parametric narration find their own individual identity in their deviation and/or opposition from its classical counterpart. Bordwell's arguments are very persuasive in demonstrating that narration results in fact from *syuzhet*-style interaction. This implies that the main role of narration is to cue the audience's narrative comprehension, and, therefore, there is no apparent narrator in a film narrative sending a message but only a perceiver.

Seymour Chatman has responded to Bordwell's theories by defending that narration, nevertheless, inhabits the film. For Chatman, it makes no difference whether narration results or not from *syuzhet* and style interaction, or whether the audience participates actively or not in the construction of the narrative. There should be a responsible agent for the interaction between the film and the spectator. Chatman argues that it makes more sense to say that the audience reconstructs the narrative rather than the audience constructs it, since after all the narrative will be the result of the interaction between the film cues and the audience interpretation. (Chatman, 1990). This is something that Eisenstein had also defended in his "theme" theory. Conversely, this obviously does not mean that every viewer is going to reconstruct the narrative in the same way, and according to the filmmaker's intentions, since, in fact, it is possible that each spectator may produce a different reconstruction of the same event. However, for Chatman, in a film narrative there is always a sender, for he argues that the film narrator becomes the filmmaker's communicative instrument. His argument points to what Bal's had described as focalization in visual arts: the cinematic elements, such as audio, music, composition or photography, involved in the construction of the narrative. Chatman, hence, identifies the film narrator as being the sum of all these elements available for constructing the narrative.

The fact is that we need to take into account that a film is not organized by itself without a sender. Someone made the film in the first place. A filmmaker made the decisions involved in *syuzhet* and style interaction. So, it does not make sense to argue that there is no sender in film narration for the filmmaker is responsible for most of the decisions involved in narrative construction. On the other hand, as I have already stated, a film narrative always means to communicate something to an audience. Narration emerges from this interaction between the filmmaker and the audience. This interaction automatically suggests a sender, agent or author and a receiver or perceiver.

We should also consider that the prime source for narration is human experience. Films present audiences with subjective points of view of the world. These points of view spring from human experience. From the subjective and unique interaction between the filmmaker and the historical world they inhabit. A film narrative is as it is and not different because of the decisions implemented by a specific filmmaker. It is their individual identity and personal experience that gives shape to the narrative qualities. *Syuzhet* and style interaction result from that experience and it represents the process through which a filmmaker communicates.

Bordwells' principles of narration offer a powerful insight into the role and purpose of film narration. The fact is that a filmmaker must always implement some kind of *syuzhet* and style interaction in order to narrate and communicate. This is regardless if a narrative means or not to be comprehensible. Hence, I envisage *syuzhet* and style interaction as a necessary mean to provoke experience and to communicate and not necessarily as a vehicle to cue narrative comprehension. This is because this interaction may not serve the purpose of making narrative comprehensible. It is in fact the filmmaker who decides the purpose of this interaction. For this reason, I argue that the role of film narration varies in accordance to the filmmaker's narrative intentions.

Consequently, I need to ask whether we can in fact consider cueing narrative comprehension as the main role of narration? Do filmmakers in fact make narrative decisions bearing in mind this process? Since a film is produced to be experienced by an audience we could argue that filmmakers do consider viewers in their narrative decisions. However, does

this consideration mean that filmmakers subordinate their narrative decisions to the needs of narrative comprehension? I don't believe they do. We have to consider that filmmakers make films because in the first place it makes them happy and provides them with pleasure and satisfaction. They enjoy the creative and intellectual challenges of this medium. On the other hand, *syuzhet* and style interaction provides them with an infinite source of possibilities for artistic creation. For this reason I believe that the prime role of cinematic narration is not to cue narrative comprehension but to satisfy filmmakers' own personal needs for artistic expression. Filmmaker's narrative decisions intent first and foremost to fulfil this purpose.

4 | THE ROLE OF AUDIENCES IN FILM NARRATION

Nevertheless, filmmakers do seek confirmation from their audiences. They hope and wish that spectators and critics will regard their narration decisions as they intended. They often are positively and negatively surprised for viewers may not satisfy completely their expectations. Filmmakers intent to communicate through narrative forms. However, the outcome of that intention is highly unpredictable in most cases. Audiences, by experiencing the narrative form and content, confirm, deny or even transform the filmmaker's original expectations. This is also why film narrative only completes itself after the audience appreciates it. Before it is experienced by the audience, a film narrative remains just an intention to be something. Only after that experience narration becomes something and acquires a form of meaning in the mind of the spectator. This is the moment when communication from sender to receiver takes place. Therefore, narrative content only exists when it becomes experience. In other words, it is not a question that "I think, therefore I am" (René Descartes) but rather a question that I only am or exist when "others" recognize my existence. Thus, audiences' role first and foremost is to confirm the existence of the narrative through experience. This implies and confirms film narrative as a medium for communication from sender to receiver. It is for this reason that I argue that the most important role of film narration is to communicate.

On the other hand, even though filmmakers do construct film narratives through *syuzhet* and style interaction, audiences do not necessarily undertake

narrative comprehension following that system. We need to take into account that an audience cannot remember *how* a story is told. The spectator cannot remember all *syuzhet* and style interactions. Human memory has clear physical limitations that we cannot ignore. It requires a great deal of skill and effort to remember how a scene is shot or the lighting set-ups used throughout the film or how the sound design is applied in specific moments in the narrative. We should also consider that film narrative is always organized temporarily taking into account that the spectator has only one way to watch it. From beginning to end. Non-stop. So we cannot skip around or go back and re-watch a portion. Therefore, audiences cannot control the order or how long the narration takes to unfold. This is of capital importance for filmic construction and narrative comprehension since a film narrative is constructed taking that into account. This also increases the difficulty for the audience to remember *syuzhet* and style interactions. On the other hand, according to Branigan, narrative comprehension does not necessarily happen in the same order as the narrative unfolds (Branigan, 1992). Thus, the structure or discourse do not entirely determine how audiences select, organize, and process the information contained in the narrative. It is also for this reason that I regard that the purpose of *syuzhet* and style interaction is not to cue narrative comprehension but to satisfy filmmakers' own personal needs for artistic expression. From this perspective, this interaction serves as a reference guide for the filmmaker to construct film narratives and to produce art. Hence, Bordwell's principles of narration provide a powerful instrument for the researcher to study film narrative and to understand and deconstruct how filmmakers communicate.

Furthermore, audiences, by experiencing the narrative, not only confirm its existence but also confirm the filmmaker's narrative intentions. Spectators through experience confirm whether filmmakers managed to communicate successfully via *syuzhet* and style interactions. This depends on whether viewers' experience may correspond to the filmmaker's expectations. The public may or may not interpret the narrative content or form as the filmmaker intended. Thus, audiences' experience also serves to confirm whether the filmmaker succeed to satisfy their overall intentions. Therefore, the spectator's role in film narration reaffirms and consolidates narrative's purpose to communicate.

5 | CONCLUSION

We may in fact consider narration as a means for knowing and telling, and therefore an instrument for obtaining knowledge and expressing it. However, it is very unlikely that we can translate all narrative content and experience into data. This would suggest that narration and human experience can be fully understood or explained through rational activity. This is not possible since human experience embodies other dimensions. We feel and we may not be able to explain what we feel. We might not be able to translate what we feel into information that can be processed and understood intellectually. However, we can learn about what we feel through experience.

Tan has argued that experiencing intense and abundant emotions is what most audiences seek from traditional canonical fiction film narratives (Tan, 2011). This indeed may be the case for some "traditional" audiences. However, we cannot regard producing or feeling emotions as the main focus of film narration. In fact, first and foremost, emotions emerge and result from narrative experience. It is the experience of the narrative that provokes the emotion during the act of communication.

Greg Smith, instead, claims that film's narratives "extend an invitation" to audiences to feel in particular ways (Smith, 2014). Viewers may accept or reject that invitation but narrative cannot provide emotions without the viewer's full commitment. The fact is that films do not make viewers feel anything. Film narratives provide an experience that may provoke an emotion but audiences are free to engage emotionally or not with the narrative content as they may wish. In some cases different spectators may have contradictory emotional responses to the same narrative content. A viewer may feel horror or disgust in relation to a certain action or event while other viewer may be indifferent or classify the same event as comical. This is why I argue that, feeling or emotion in narration remain an intention to communicate.

Tan asserts that the central emotional mechanism in film viewing is "interest" since interest incite us to investigate the film content and discover more information about the diegetic world it presents (Tan, 2011). The "curiosity theory" developed by Noël Carroll about the horror genre has also many similarities with Tan's interest one (Carroll, 1990). One of the central problems with Carroll's concept of

erotetic narration is the difficulty of explaining why viewers might watch a film repeatedly. The fact is that spectators may watch the same narrative content several times and still feel the same emotions. This is regardless if they have already satisfied their interest or curiosity needs for they already know how the narrative unfolds. Thus, a spectator may still laugh or feel embarrassed at the same narrative event even though they have already experienced it.

Furthermore, we should also consider that film narration is experienced by audiences as if it is happening now and not as if it has already been. Therefore, a viewer may even know the narrative content by heart and they can still experience narration as if it is happening at the very moment they are watching it. Film narration manages to seduce the spectator to “forget or disregard” that they are watching a film for it provokes an experience when it communicates. This fact in my opinion reinforces my theory that film narrative can be better understood as a means to communicate through and from experience.

On the other hand, narration can communicate aspects of what we feel. A film narrative can evoke abstract dimensions of human experience which don't necessarily translate into data or need to be understood or explained. However, they do need to be experienced. We should also consider that we cannot deconstruct cinema or a shot composition into pure data or into basic units of information like phonemes. Eisenstein and Metz had tried and failed to do so. This is because even though cinema communicates it is not a language. Every image is an enunciation and every film narrative, through *syuzhet* and style interaction, constructs its own language. Cinema can communicate like a language without being one. Film narration and human experience do process information during narrative construction and during narrative comprehension. However, narrative and experience embody other elements apart from data that cannot be processed rationally. In this context, defining or understanding what “information or data” means or entails is as complex and subjective as explaining the transmission of personal experience through narrative forms.

This may suggest that narrative can be regarded as a strategy for making our personal life experience understood by others and therefore a tool for perceiving and processing experience. However, a

filmmaker may choose to create a narrative that challenges human cognition and it is not accessible for rational purposes. Therefore, the role of narration varies in accordance to the filmmaker's narrative intentions. It could be telling a story or making it comprehensible or it may not. The narrative objective could be producing an experience that I cannot explain but I can experience. An experience through which I can learn something new or different about myself or about my life because it communicates. However, an experience that cannot be or does not need to be understood or processed rationally or emotionally to communicate. Thus, film narration only needs to provoke experience to communicate. This is why, I argue that the principal role of narration is to communicate something and somehow through and from experience.

However, in order to communicate, film narrative needs an audience. It is in the act of communication between the filmmaker and the audience that narrative arises and acquires some form of meaning. This is why I argue that film narratives only complete themselves after the audience experience them. Before the viewer's experience, the narrative remains an intention to become something. Only after that experience, when it communicates, it becomes something in the mind of the spectator. For this reason, I envisage *syuzhet* and style interaction as a note of intentions from the filmmaker to the audience. The note of intentions refers to what the filmmaker intends to communicate to the audience. The audience, by experiencing the narrative, may confirm, deny or even transform the filmmaker's original narrative intentions. That which the narrative becomes may or may not satisfy the filmmakers' expectations.

Thus, narration becomes part of those who experience it. For this reason, I also argue that narrative comprehension can also transform or condition the filmmaker's original views on its own creation. The viewer may reveal new meaning about the narrative to the filmmaker. This may challenge how the creator looks upon their own creation. Thus, the spectator's experience may also provoke changes on the filmmaker's experience. It is for this reason that I consider that film narrative can be better understood as an act of communication through and from experience from filmmaker to an audience and vice versa.

Over the past few decades most research on film narrative has been dedicated to the study of fiction film narrative from the point of view of the spectator and not from the point of view of the creator. By that I mean undertaking research on film narration during the pre-production, production and post-production stages and from the point of view of the filmmaker. This means having access, on the one hand, to all the raw material available for narrative construction. And on the other, to all the decisions involved and implemented by the filmmaker during all stages of film production. From the original idea until the film is completed and presented to an audience. Then, the next logical step would be to undertake research on narrative comprehension and in relation to the filmmaker original narrative intentions. I do believe that this research would contribute greatly to further our understanding of the purpose and processes involved in film narration.

ENDNOTES

[1] Plato (1991) originally developed the concept of *Mimesis* (Book III) and *Diegesis* (Book X). *Mimesis* would refer to a perfect imitation. *Diegesis* would refer to an imperfect imitation.

Aristotle (2000), in *Poetics*, retakes Plato's *Mimesis* and *Diegesis* to define the aesthetics of Tragedy.

[2] Focalization is a concept already introduced by Gérard Genette (1988) to describe the perspective or point of view through which a narrative might be disclosed to a reader or to an audience.

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Carlos Ruiz Carmona is an Award winning Spanish documentary filmmaker born in Barcelona and formed in London in the areas of Film Production, Directing, Editing, Screenwriting and Cinematography.

Master's degree in Film History and Criticism at the University of East London.

Ph. Doctor in Science and Technology of Arts, specializing in Cinema and Audiovisual: Documentary by the Portuguese Catholic University of Porto. His thesis focused the research on the process of narrative construction in documentary,

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