Time and Film Style

by

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Declaration

This thesis is submitted in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I confirm that the material contained within is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university, nor has it been published in any other form.

Abstract

This thesis proposes that the temporality of the moving image is not just its basic condition, but also an alterable stylistic parameter. By analysing three broad stylistic categories of cinema - Classical Continuity-editing, Montage, and Long Take - it is demonstrated that the time of a sequence or shot operates as an active element within the formal fabric of the work. Beyond this, it shows that these film styles may in fact be defined by the characteristic ways in which they treat time.

Methodologically, it adapts concepts from the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze, Henri Bergson and Hans Georg Gadamer, fusing them with close textual analysis to allow the theory to grow around the practical instance of its object. One of the primary goals is to establish a critical idiom capable of dealing appropriately and sympathetically with this neglected aspect of film aesthetics, to uncover a suitable vocabulary for talking about the expressive use of time in cinema.

This study contributes to the existing body of research on cinematic time (which is primarily concerned with ontology and ideology) by addressing the distinct lack of critical and theoretical work that engages with the temporality of cinema at the microscopic level of the moment to moment passage of a scene, that is, the temporal stylistics of cinema.

Introduction

> One cannot conceive of a cinematic work with no sense of time passing through the shot, but one can easily imagine a film with no actors, music, décor or even editing.
>
> - Andrei Tarkovsky[1]

When theorists or critics talk about time within the context of the study of film they tend to focus on a limited set of possibilities. They usually refer either to the relationship between the running time of the film and the time of the film world, or to the ontological condition of cinema as a time-based art. What is seldom, if ever, discussed is the way in which the very temporality of the moving image may become part of the formal fabric of the artwork, the fact that the presentation of time is a powerful and constitutive stylistic tool in and of itself.

In this thesis I will seek to address the distinct lack of critical and theoretical work that engages with the temporality of cinema at the microscopic level of the moment to moment passage of a scene. The manipulation of time at this level is a vastly under-appreciated and under-theorised formal parameter that saturates the stylistic fabric of every film, irrespective of style. More than this, I will demonstrate that a film style is to a large extent defined by its characteristic mode of presenting time.

Talking about time in terms of film style is often difficult. We currently lack a terminology capable of dealing effectively and sympathetically with the temporality of

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[1] Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 113.

the moving image. This deficiency results in the use of often inadequate and sometimes misleading spatial terms. Detail, clarity and understanding are sacrificed for convenience, and these ways of talking and thinking about the moving image become ingrained over time. It can often prove difficult to describe accurately what is happening in a sequence without lapsing into the language of the spatial, but I have striven throughout this study to find appropriately expressive ways of communicating the complex qualities possible of cinematic time.

The Limits of Perception

This study is primarily phenomenological, in that it takes the experience of watching a film as its central object. Cinema is built upon an illusion, but it is by no means an a priori illusion (if such a thing even makes sense), that is, one that needed to be discovered. Like most illusions it needed to be invented, to be fashioned according to the context in which it was intended to fit and the object it was intended to achieve. It is an illusion tailored to the limits of human perception. Silent film recording and projection speeds ranged between 16 and 24 frames per second[2]. 16 frames per second is neither an arbitrary nor a necessary number - it is just fast enough to fool a human. Any slower and movement begins to look jerky and unnatural, and faster speeds (50 or 50,000 frames per second – it doesn't really matter) become redundant because we do not possess a temporal or visual acuity capable of registering such temporal resolution. 24 frames per second was finally settled upon as a standard once a standard was necessitated by the introduction of a soundtrack on the celluloid strip.

This belief about the basis of film need not be fundamentally altered by the incursion of the digital upon cinema. The dominant process at the heart of the digital is

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[2] Kevin Brownlow, 'Silent Films – What Was the Right Speed?' in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: BFI, 1990)

simulation. At a fundamental level the digital is different from the analogue, but on the surface it mimics those analogue processes. It too is based on an illusion. The material base, if we can call it that, of the digital is a flow of binary data. If we zoom in close enough to the surface of the digital it reveals itself to be made up of a series of ones and zeros, a series of states, either on or off. Yet the distance from which we view the series is usually far enough away to allow the longer variations in the series to simulate the surface of the analogue. As we withdraw from a viewpoint that reveals the sharp edges and right angles of the digital, the shape becomes more rounded, its edges soften and it comes more and more to resemble the true curve of the analogue. From a certain point far enough away the two are indistinguishable – the simulation is complete, the illusion successful.

Both cinema and the digital trade upon illusions. Both break the unwieldy continuity of the real or the analogue down into discrete, manageable sections, that are then put back together in such a way that a human can't tell the difference between the two. The immense weight of the analogue is replaced by the comparative lightness of the digital. In both cases what we see obscures what is there.

Confining our discussion of the digital to its use in cinema (in terms of digital effects, digital recording and digital distribution) we see that time remains a commonality between the old and the new. Digital technology furnishes new ways of visualizing time, but these are still just effects, and the celluloid cinema already had its own means of visualizing time in strange ways (time-lapse films have been produced

since 1898[3], slow motion since 1904[4]). Digital manipulations of time essentially build upon what was already possible. Time, therefore, offers a bridge over a rift that currently causes much confusion and consternation amongst critics and theorists. Cinema, both pre and post digital, presents recorded time, filtered through the stylistic concerns of the filmmaker. Were we to focus our inquiry on the experience of the viewer the illusion at the heart of both processes would be seen to fade well into the background, allowing the impression of recorded time to become the basis for the production of audiovisual stories, spectacles and worlds.

This study is relevant, then, to contemporary debates about the nature and impact of digital cinema in that it almost entirely ignores the issue throughout. The descriptions I give and conclusions I draw should apply equally well to both celluloid and digital cinema. The phenomenal product of both technologies is the audiovisual manifestation of recorded time. Optical and digital effects operate within this context, producing sometimes wildly differing results, yet without fundamentally altering the context itself. Similarly the fact that filmmakers are increasingly using digital formats for recording and distribution doesn't stop the end product from continuing to be an audiovisual moving image with a prescribed duration. And if it does then we are talking about something that might as well have a name of its own, other than cinema.

Technological advances may alter or enlarge the field of possibility for a medium, but these kinds of changes seldom warrant the proclamations of essence-

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[3] David Lavery, "'No More Unexplored Countries': The Early Promise and Disappointing Career of Time-Lapse Photography," *Film Studies*, no. 9 (Winter 2006): 2.

[4] The Austrian priest August Musger invented and patented a slow-motion apparatus in 1904, but his patent lapsed in 1914. In the meantime a cruder but more effective method of achieving slow-motion was found in the technique of 'overcranking' – simply turning the handle on handcranked cameras faster than the normal rate. See: Schubin, Mark, 'Moving Slowly to the Next Miracle' at http://www.uemedia.net/CPC/cinematographer/ article_16644.shtml accessed 21-07-08; and Rosenbaum, Ron, 'From Slo-Mo to No-Mo: Errol Morris and the strange power of superslow motion.' at http://www.slate.com/id/ 2188624/pagenum/all accessed 21-07-08.

shaking, cataclysmic change that the incursion of the digital seems to have provoked. Indeed we might benefit from the perspective offered by examples of technological advances from the history of other art forms. The discovery of a means of synthesizing ultramarine blue pigment from a mixture of sulphur and other common substances by Jean Baptiste Guimet in 1824 resulted in a rapid transformation within the world of painting[5]. One of the most expensive pigments, which up until then could only be produced by grinding semi-precious stones, was now widely available and cheap. Suddenly there was a lot more blue in paintings. An advance in the technology available to artists has a profound effect on the art they produce, but it doesn't necessarily change the art itself fundamentally. Painting is still painting. And indeed painting is still painting whether one uses oil, acrylic or watercolour, on canvas, paper, a wall, or a piece of wood. I would go so far as to say that the term 'painting', as it is understood to refer to an art form amongst others such as music and sculpture, can include: graffiti; pastel sketches; and even silk screen printing. Likewise, the introduction of the digital manifests itself within the art produced by filmmakers, but it does not fundamentally change the nature of the art form. Agreement with this statement depends upon whether one considers the celluloid stock or the temporal audiovisual image to be the substantial basis of cinema. This study sides strongly with the latter opinion.

Attitudes & Assumptions

What can the study of cinematic time offer us? For one thing, it will provide us with a terminology for talking about time that is specific to film, and a way of talking about film that is specific to its temporal dimension. It will also engender an increased

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[5] Philip Ball, *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 235-247 and Ashok Roy, *Artists' Pigments: A Handbook of Their History and Characteristics Volume 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 56-57.

sensitivity to the modulation of time through film style, and the ways in which this modulation may transmit meaning and affect just as effectively as any element of the mise-en-scène, performance, or cinematography. What's more, it provides an increased understanding of those very elements, as each of these parameters cannot be fully comprehended outside of the particular kind of duration characteristic of cinema.

As I have already stated, time is a neglected element of film style. This pattern of neglect rests upon a set of explicit and implicit conceptions and assumptions regarding the relationship between time and film. Sometimes these conceptions are useful, sometimes they are as useful as they are limiting, and sometimes they are just limiting. This study will operate, to some extent, as a corrective, reinstating the primacy of time in relation to certain stylistic configurations, and also opening up the possibility for seeing others as rooted in the temporality of cinema.

I will now delineate the main assumptions about the relationship between time and film that can be identified in the basic discourse of contemporary film analysis and criticism. In an effort to determine the most prevalent and fundamental concepts of time as it applies to film style I have surveyed a range of introductory film studies text books. Admittedly, these books necessarily provide a somewhat simplified portrayal of the main issues in film studies. Nevertheless, the very fact that they aim to uncontentiously present the state of contemporary thought about film form, history and criticism makes them an invaluable resource in respect of the present inquiry.

Some of these books focus more on film form than others, but all of them contain at least one section that deals with the temporal axis of film directly. These sections provide us with indications of the way that the temporality of film is placed within the conventionally conceived structure of film form. They also contain a fairly consistent set of beliefs and tendencies, which may be described as follows:

1. Filmic time is manipulated predominantly through editing. The stylisation of the temporal dimension of film is often reduced to rhythm, which arises from the speed and pattern of cuts in a sequence of shots.

2. When the stylistic force of rhythms created within the shot is recognised it is usually attributed to distinct, rhythmic movements within the frame. Bordwell and Thompson begin their discussion of time in *Film Art: An Introduction* with the assertion that "Within the confines of the shot's duration, the director can control the rhythm of time as it unfolds."[6] Unfortunately, this progressive stance is quickly clarified to refer only to distinct rhythmic movements within the shot, such as "the flashing of a neon sign or the steady rocking of a ship."[7] This leads us directly to the next tendency…

3. Change within a shot is reduced to the changing relative positions of discrete objects. The frame in duration is implicitly understood as a system of discrete components in dynamic relationships. This conception is extremely prevalent, and one of the main contributors to the extensive spatialisation of time in thought about film. Later in this study I will challenge this notion by drawing on the work of the French philosopher Henri Bergson and his particular understanding of duration or 'durée'.

Several of these textbooks describe in detail the ways in which the co-ordinates of the shot may alter during its course. James Monaco, in *How to Read a Film*, separates the static, pictorial elements of the shot from those factors that influence the 'diachronic

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[6] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, Seventh Edition. (New York: McGraw-Hill), 217.

[7] Ibid.

shot.'[8] Yet each of the factors of the diachronic shot – camera distance, focus, angle, tracking, point of view – is found to express its temporality as a spatial transformation. A shifting camera angle or a change of focus occurs over time, but it is understood here as a delayed changeover between states. State A changes into state B. The potency at the core of the movement, its instability during the delayed moment of change, goes mostly unacknowledged. So pulling focus shifts the point of attention from one region of the frame to another. One camera angle tracks and rolls until it becomes another camera angle.

According to Bergson, duration is indeed characterised by transformation, but this transformation is of the whole from one moment to the next. In the case of most of these introductory texts, transformation within the shot is consistently understood as changing relations between either the camera and the object, or objects with each other. Moreover, these objects are discretely packaged as consistent, stable things. Continuous movement is broken down into a series of states, a series of static relationships between the components of a closed system.

In *Film: An Introduction*, William Phillips also describes the change that occurs over time in terms of the transformation of spatial relations. He writes: "Camera movement during filming usually changes the distances and angles from the subject and thus changes the impact of images."[9] He presents camera movement as predominantly used to reveal different portions of the scene's space, and to control the order in which viewers perceive different pieces of information. This displays both the tendency to split time into a series of states, as well as the tendency to conceive of the moving camera as a function relating to the spatial composition of the scene.

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[8] James Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, Third Edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 195.

[9] William Phillips, *Film: An Introduction* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 1999), 110.

4. The previous tendency underlies the common practice of analysing the still frame in film studies. Many of these text books tend to split the components of film form into the categories of spatial and temporal. These aspects are kept well apart having sections or chapters to themselves. The visual, imagistic aspects of the film are almost always categorised as being spatial properties, those which can be analysed by looking at a still frame, a cross-section of the film taken at any moment during its running time. Analysis of a still frame's composition is performed much as one would for a picture or a photograph, and those properties that fall within the spatial category are considered to closely resemble, in both form and function, those properties in the arts of painting and photography. James Monaco makes explicit claim for such equivalence:

> …all the codes that operate within the frame, without regard to the chronological axis of film, are shared with the other pictorial arts. The number and range of these codes is great, and they have been developed and refined in painting, sculpture and photography over the course of thousands of years. Basic texts in the visual arts examine the three determinants of colour, line, and form, and certainly each of the visual codes of film fits within one of these rubrics.[10]

The fact that each of the components colour, line and form is temporalised, and so each is in a continual, yet singular, process of change, is not usually considered. To a large extent, the dynamic qualities of rhythm and movement are considered to be separate from the static qualities of 'colour, line and form.'

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[10] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 183.

Close textual analysis of the still frame may be seen as a necessary evil – it provides us with a specific kind of insight into the composition of the frame at a given moment, and it can reveal much about the scene as a whole, but it may also be considered something of an aberration. It is an excerpt from a continuum. Seen from a perspective subject to the tendencies listed above, this would appear to be an appropriate and adequately sympathetic approach to analysing a section of the film in detail. If the shot in duration is implicitly considered to be a series of states, then the excerpt is, while only one of many states of affairs, an indicative cross-section of the film. However, were we to assume the position that the continuum is singular, indivisible without modification, and that it is the very temporality of the image that characterises cinema, then the still frame excerpt must be considered an object different in kind to the cinematic image.

These four assumptions and attitudes represent the most readily identifiable instances of the tacit spatialization of time within film studies. However, this propensity is extremely prevalent and variegated. It manifests itself in a variety of attitudes, assumptions and approaches. The theorists and critics who are subject to these tendencies should not themselves be blamed, as these tendencies stem from widespread and ingrained understandings about how we as humans interact with the world around us. Nor are these attitudes confined to the consumer side of the equation. Filmmakers are of course just as liable to be subject to these ingrained conceptions as viewers. But the films themselves have no thoughts on the subject, and this is where the potential for difference slips in. Cinema is necessarily temporal, so whether the filmmaker consciously intends it or not a film's time is characterised by varying qualities and speeds of flow. By analysing these aesthetic qualities we can identify how and why

certain passages affect us in certain ways. The temporal quality of a sequence is usually the product of an accumulation of the effects of performance, lighting, mise-en-scène, cinematography and editing as they apply within a section of duration. Therefore it is less an esoteric, hidden, or unintended quality, than an often unconsidered aspect of the total audiovisual sequence. Looking at the stylistic use of time offers us a new perspective on familiar filmic constructions.

Time and Film Styles

As a way of structuring this study, as well as of delineating and refining the corpus, I have chosen to look at three prominent film styles: the continuity style of classical Hollywood cinema; the montage style of soviet cinema, music video and some contemporary popular and art cinema; and the long take style identifiable in the work of both American and European directors. I have devoted a chapter to each style, and each of these chapters offers a description and analysis of the temporality of that particular style. The main purpose in each case will be to identify and examine some of the ways in which filmmakers have utilised the time dimension of the moving image within the formal and thematic composition of the work.

It should be noted that these stylistic categories are not proposed as definitive or absolute. It will become clear once we begin to look at the films themselves that these categories shade into one another at points. Nor are the observations I make about the use of time in specific films intended as general rules for that category. What I am describing in this study are tendencies rather than rules. This thesis will deal in spectrums and gradients rather than clearly defined classes and sets. This approach harmonises with the notions of flux and continuum elaborated within.

During the course of this study I will adopt and employ concepts and approaches originated by the philosophers Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze and Hans Georg Gadamer. I have not dealt with the validity or implications of their claims in such detail as would be necessary were this a study of their theories. Rather, I have used and adapted their concepts in a context specific and pragmatic way. I have rather borrowed some of their ideas and applied them where they prove useful to my own argument. Therefore, I have engaged in a discussion of their philosophies only to the extent to which they serve my current purpose, which is an attempt to understand the relationship between time and film style. My readings of these philosophers are grounded in the work of contemporary interpreters: in the case of Henri Bergson I have relied upon Keith Ansell Pearson; my understanding of Deleuze's philosophy of film is guided by D. N. Rodowick; and the work of Chris Lawn undergirds my reading of Gadamer.

Throughout there will be a noticeable back and forth movement between the specific and the general, between instance and theory, that reaches its most pronounced form in the final chapter. This constant movement allows for a particular relationship between description and extrapolation. By 'description' I mean the close textual analysis of specific film sequences, and by 'extrapolation' I mean the creation/ elaboration of theoretical paradigms that can elucidate these specific instances. This back and forth movement follows the model of the hermeneutic circle (which plays a vital role in chapter four) thereby initiating a productive relationship between observer and object, wherein each necessarily shapes the other during the process of engagement.

Such an approach permits one to sidestep the necessity of designing a theory and then testing it against real-world examples of its object (in fact it is the antithesis of this model). While the impartiality of the theorist, and the absence of prejudice from the theorist's work, is accepted as an impossibility, this should not preclude the endeavour

toward openness and sensitivity in dealing with the variety of one's object, and the idea that a theory might emerge afterwards, or indeed during, as the product of this kind of engagement. In this sense I have tried to wear a Rawlsian 'veil of ignorance'[11] while responding to the samples elaborated upon later in this study, as opposed to coming to them armed with a particular 'approach' or method. This is not to say that I don't have a particular motive for using certain films at certain times - but the rationale has more to do with the effective use of space and the form of the thesis.

Therefore my aim has been to allow the theory to gradually emerge as much as possible from the analysis of the practical instance of the object. Sometimes the sequences examined are presented as indicative examples, sometimes they are limit cases, but they are always treated as individual, distinct specimens. The objective of this approach is not to establish a general rule, but rather to gradually establish the shape of the theory and then construct a theory that fits.

Each of the first three chapters also contains a key point in the overarching discussion of the relationship between time and film. The chapter on continuity editing contains a description of the temporal status of the filmic fictional world and the filtering mechanism of film style. It also introduces the notion of the three layers of temporality that characterise the film-viewing experience. The montage chapter presents an attempt to unravel the tangled temporality of a film consisting of a sequence of disparate visual fragments (each bearing the impression of a time and place), edited without concern for continuity, and played before an audience. The long take chapter includes the proposal of a definition of cinema as a moving image with fixed duration, that nevertheless evades the criticisms routinely levelled at medium essentialism.

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[11] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11.

The final chapter proposes and demonstrates a new mode of critical discussion capable of engaging appropriately and productively with the idea of time as an element of film style. This section draws heavily on the theory and practice of Andrei Tarkovsky, as well as Hans Georg Gadamer's work on hermeneutical understanding. It attempts to move beyond the descriptive/diagnostic processes of the previous chapters to demonstrate how we might go about analysing and critically discussing works that deliberately engage with the temporal dimension of the audiovisual moving-image. This work is grounded in an extended analysis of a long section from Tarkovsky's *Mirror* (1975).

It is appropriate that this project should end with Tarkovsky, as it originally began with him. His conceptualisation of film as 'imprinted' or 'captured' time, filmmaking as 'sculpting in time', and the intriguing notion of 'time-pressure' are what led me to begin thinking critically about the significance of temporality within cinema, as well as its acute neglect within discussions of film style. His assertion that time could be modulated not just through the rhythms and tempos of editing, but also within the single shot, is for me a momentous step in the progress toward the recognition of time as an important aspect of film style.

Time and Film Theory: Review of the Literature

I have already mentioned introductory film studies texts that describe the rules of editing and continuity, as well as the variety of structural relationships possible between the running time of the film and the time represented as having passed within the film world (between the time of the syuzhet and the time of the fabula). Apart from

these standard subjects the existing work on time in film studies centres around 3
distinct themes.

The Tense of the Image

One approach to the relationship between time and cinema exists in the ongoing
discourse concerning the tense of the cinematic image. In her article "About Time:
Theorizing Adaptation, Temporality, and Tense"[12] Sarah Cardwell draws together many
of the strands of this argument, negotiating the history of this thorny subject as it has
evolved predominantly within the field of adaptation studies. As she demonstrates,
much of the discourse clusters around the question of whether cinema is capable of
producing tenses other than the present.

She begins with a seminal quote from George Bluestone which states that while
literature is capable of three tenses (past, present and future), cinema can only ever
show us the present.[13] This view has held sway, she argues, since Bluestone suggested it
roughly forty years ago. And indeed it is largely compelling. Let us take for example the
film flashback and the issue of subjective distortions of the past. The classical form of
the flashback sees a rememberer begin to explain/confess/reveal, followed by a dissolve
into the past of the film world. This portion of the film has been clearly indicated as the
memory of a character and as such should be subject to suspicion – at least, it cannot be
taken as entirely reliable. Yet we intuitively feel it to be and usually accept it as such. If
it turns out not to be authentic we are prone to feel as if we have been cheated, as if the
film has done something that is beyond the rules of the game. Viewers often respond
badly, as in the adverse reaction that the misleading flashback in *Stage Fright*

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[12] Sarah Cardwell, "About Time: Theorizing Adaptation, Temporality, and Tense," *Literature/
Film Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2003): 82 - 92.

[13] Ibid., 82

(Hitchcock, 1950) seems to incite. The fact that we see the past directly, in a way that is interchangeable with our mode of viewing the present, makes it very difficult to accept it as anything other than a reliable representation of what happened in the past. Whereas literature has ways of constantly insisting upon the tense of what is happening, film only has the signalling mechanism of the flashback, which, once we have flashed back to the past (and as Maureen Turim points out, it really does occur in a flash[14]) ceases to make itself felt[15].

However, Cardwell manages to construct a convincing argument for the idea that the filmic image is essentially tenseless, though this really only applies to the 'dislocated image.'[16] By this she means a shot taken out of context, extracted from the usual framing conditions of narrative film. When combined with other shots within a narrative structure, and with the addition of sound (particularly dialogue), it becomes possible to produce a wide range of tenses. For her, the use of signalling and various visual and auditory markers succeeds in tensing the moving image. Implicit in this understanding is a conception of the film viewing experience as a movement between the whole and the part. While viewing a film we are neither entirely caught up in the moment, in the present instant of the image onscreen, nor are we entirely distanced enough to be able to view the film as a whole work, the structural indicators of which tell us when everything is happening. This movement between whole and part in the reading of a work is a central part of Hans Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic theory of the encounter with an artwork. This conception, and its implication for our understanding of

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[14] Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film* (London: Routledge, 1989), 4.

[15] I exclude here examples of the flashback where visual markers such as mist or smoke remain onscreen throughout the flashback. This tenses the image by convention, but is a relativlely exceptional case.

[16] Cardwell, "About Time," 88.

the temporality of the act of watching a film, will surface again in this study's final chapter.

As Cardwell points out, the characteristic 'presentness' of filmic time may be modulated into various other tenses once the framework of narrative film is applied. Michel Chion also points to the binding/temporalising force of sound on the film image in his book *Audio-Vision*.[17] For him the soundtrack plays an essential role in binding and controlling the temporality of a sequence of shots. It covers over the edits, binding multiple shots together into a coherent sequence, and it performs a 'vectorising' function, endowing shots with temporal direction.

Cardwell also identifies a central flaw in much work that has attempted to engage with the temporal ontology of cinema. She cites a vagueness of terminology, and a subsequent conflation of the different time-layers of the viewing experience. In relation to Bruce Kawin's work on the subject specifically, she writes:

> Kawin moves from talking about the essence of the film image
> ("every frame… portrays the present) to the temporal experience of
> reading or viewing, and then elides the distinction between narrative
> time ("the 'then' of the story") and the distinctive temporal features of
> the film image ("the 'now' of the screen"). Kawin also neglects to
> differentiate grammatical tense from real-life or narrative time.[18]

These two issues (the precision of terminology and the distinction of time-layers) will be of central importance throughout this study.

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[17] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

[18] Cardwell, "About Time," 86.

In *Image and Mind*[19] Gregory Currie argues less for the tenselessness of the image than for the fact that the descriptive categories of past, present and future cannot be applied to narrative film in the same way that they can to language or literary fiction. Earlier he has, while discussing the relationship between time and cinema, come to the conclusion that "film is a distinctively temporal art in that temporal properties are used to represent temporal properties."[20] For him, cinema is fundamentally a temporal art form because of its "capacity for the automorphic representation of temporal relations between events in the fictions it presents."[21] It is precisely because of the directness of the presentation of temporal properties that cinema is incapable of representing pastness in the same way as a novel. Rather cinema's structural temporality (the relationship between events or scenes) consists in the representation of fictional events "as standing in tenseless relations of priority and co-occurrence."[22] Therefore when we see a flashback sequence we are not viewing something that can be called the past, but rather something that is known to have happened before that which we have already seen.

While I am reluctant to shed all connotations of 'pastness' (as I believe they can and do play a vital role in the affective impact of certain images, of both the flashback and non-flashback variety), Currie's claim about the directness of the representational relationship between pro-filmic time and the time of the moving image is compelling. It seems obvious that the time on the screen is not the very same time as that of the temporal event recorded by the camera, yet it can be said to maintain strong elements of identity. How do we account for this strange connection?

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[19] Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy, and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

[20] Currie, *Image and Mind*, 198.

[21] Ibid., 218.

[22] Ibid.

It is difficult to argue for time as a substance that can be literally captured and stored, but we do tend to respond to narrative film sequences as if they have their own time, one that is distinct from, or at least not entirely identical with, the time of the viewing space. The time of the film image often feels as if it is abstracted from the context in which we see it, as if it were a block of time from another time. Perhaps this simultaneous absence and presence of the onscreen time, this enveloping of one time within another, is at the root of much of the disagreement regarding the tense of the film image. In chapter one I will, building upon a theoretical perspective originally developed by Béla Balázs, define three distinct layers of time that are engaged during the experience of watching a narrative film.

Death and the Digital

The debate about the tense of the cinematic image has been recently overshadowed somewhat by the related issue of how the incursion of the digital alters both the ontology and viewer-experience of cinema. Laura Mulvey's *Death 24x a Second*[23] is the seminal text for this issue. It examines the implications of the increased control over, and access to, the temporal structure of the film allowed by DVD and various other new media technologies. Viewers can now choose to watch a single 'chapter' out of the context of the whole film. They may also pause the film, freezing what appears to be a single frame of the film, allowing for the fetishistic scrutiny of the image. This revolution shifts control over the time of the film from the film itself to the viewer. The viewer is no longer subject to the duration of the film, but can split, shuffle, pause, rewind, and rewatch in slow motion that which could previously only be watched at one speed, in one order, and at one sitting. For Mulvey, the frozen image also

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[23] Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2006).

transmits a sense of death and the uncanny latent in the moving image. This emerges primarily from the fact that the frozen image uncovers the original 'camera time' - the moment of photographic registration when the image of an object or person in the past was captured. In the narrative film, this sense is obscured by the viewer's involvement in the unfolding story, and the presentness of the film-world (as well as the same notions of the unavoidable 'presentness' of the film image mentioned above). The pause button extracts the image from this context and reveals its pastness, its origins as an indexical image of someone or something that once stood before a camera. This argument again concerns the separation of the film-viewing experience into time-layers, all of which are bound together into the cinematic moving image, and some of which even manage to completely obscure others.

Mulvey's recent focus on the frozen image theoretically links cinema's digital future with its photographic pre-history. Indeed, we could say that the theorisation of the temporal nature of film goes back at least as far as the technology's origins. Eadweard Muybridge's series of 'motion studies' of horses, buffaloes, birds, humans and other animals used the photographic apparatus to analyse time, to break it down into discrete instants. The captured images allowed the motion of a body over time to be analysed, providing information about the state of the body at multiple points during movement, information that could not be well discerned by the naked eye when in normal motion.

Muybridge succeeded in demonstrating that all four of a horse's hooves left the ground simultaneously while galloping by building an apparatus that utilised multiple stereoscopic cameras, capable of taking 12 shots in under half a second. The exposure time for each shot was short enough to snatch a pristine, clear, frozen moment from the horse's motion, turning movement (that had heretofore been unintelligible as anything but a continuous single action) into a series of frozen instants. This and subsequent

experiments constitute a precedent in the history of cinema as a technology for conceptualising movement into stasis. Just as it turns stasis into movement, re-animating the series of still frames into a moving picture, it offers a reading of that movement as the product of stasis, the product of a limited (and relatively low) number of still images.[24]

Soon after, the Lumiere brothers' actualities demonstrated that film could take a temporal sample from a world in duration. Their now famous single shot films of factory workers and trains served a documentary purpose in that they documented and preserved an image of things happening in a certain place at a certain time. However, unlike still photography, which allowed a certain kind of investigative/contemplative exploration of an instant sampled from a continuum, the motion picture camera instituted a substantially different relationship between the viewer and the viewed. One could only watch the film for as long as it was being projected, and one watched the recorded events at a specified pace. The film has and had a prescribed duration, whereas the photograph has no duration of its own, only that duration in which it exists as an object. The film viewing experience, from the very beginning placed one duration within another, folded one layer of temporality into another. Mulvey demonstrates that the DVD reclaims this power from the film and gives it back to the viewer.

A fundamental change to the temporal ontology of cinema is also the focus of Garrett Stewart's *Framed Time*.[25] To crudely paraphrase Stewart, the incursion of the digital upon the cinema screen has fundamentally altered the way that time is presented. Rather than breaking time down into twenty four still images per second (the illusion of motion achieved through the rapid unspooling of this series of frozen excerpts) Stewart

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[24] Mulvey expands upon this notion in *Death 24x a Second*.

[25] Garrett Stewart, *Framed Time: Toward a Postfilmic Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

believes that the digital film (or the celluloid film with significant digital elements) presents 'framed time' - the continual fluid change of the image within the frame. Instead of a series of frames we have a single frame, within which movement and change occurs. The fundamental difference he cites is the exchange of time as series for time as whole. This difference exhibits itself in the preponderance of time travel and memory films of the last decade, as well as in digital effects that render visible previously impossible (and, we must infer from Stewart, unthinkable) alterations of mise-en-scène within the shot. No more will we see Dr. Jekyll change into Mr. Hyde through a series of cuts and dissolves, from now on he will morph before our eyes. This for Stewart is indicative of the way in which the incorporation of the digital, and the fundamental change that this has effected upon the presentation of time, is self-reflexively, and sometimes unconsciously, referenced and thought through by contemporary filmmakers. In this sense Stewart is suggesting that the influence of the digital has inspired many contemporary filmmakers to enact the shift from the Muybridgean view of time as a series of states to the Bergsonian idea of the single continuous whole.

Morphing has certainly become a very common effect, but Stewart seems to believe that the desire to use such an effect only arises *after* its discovery/design. The fact, however, is that this effect (and others like it) were designed, not discovered, and only through a lengthy and laborious development, guided always by an understanding of what it would be like to see something morph into something else. Examples of digital morphing in films like *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (Cameron, 1991) may be countered with examples such as David Kessler's (David Naughton) lycanthropic transformation in *An American Werewolf in London* (Landis, 1981) which visualises a mutability of the body perhaps even more striking than that of contemporary digital

examples, no matter that they might surpass it in terms of the grotesque and horrific. The gruesome climax of Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead* (1982) figures the rapid liquifaction of a living (well, undead) body, the grotesque spectacle of which rests upon the fact that it occurs in front of us, within the shot, without allusion or elipse. This is not done with digital technology (it was too early and the filmmakers too poor), rather it is done with stop motion – a process which relies even more directly on the breaking down of time into still images. Even the transformations of Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), which does indeed achieve its effects through a series of cuts and dissolves, betrays the urge, even at this stage in the history of cinema, to represent bodily change within the course of a single shot. The film wants to show you Jekyll's (Fredric March) body altering, reshaping, *morphing*, within a single shot, without recourse to cuts. This is why it uses dissolves between two versions of the same stationary shot – the closest contemporary shooting and editing methodology could come.

It is significant also that right at the heart of digital cinema's evolution is the shameful secret that conceptually it still operates much like its photographic ancestor. Digital cinema still thinks in frames. Projected film in a cinema runs at an average of 24 frames per second, a PAL DVD runs at 25 fps, an NTSC DVD at 29.97. Often the frames will be interlaced – this means that each frame is split into two 'fields', a field of all the odd horizontal lines, and a field of all the even horizontal lines. The two are shown consecutively, but because of a combination of the way our eye works and afterglow on the screen the image appears to be whole, just as, when part of a series of consecutive fields projected rapidly onto a screen, the image will appear to move. In the case of a PAL DVD interlacing results in 50 separate fields. This is the case for a celluloid film that has been converted into a digital format, like *Psycho* (Hitchcock,

1960) for instance, as well as for an entirely digitally produced movie such as *Ratatouille* (Bird and Pinkava, 2007). When we go to see a film like *Ratatouille* in the cinema we are more than likely watching a celluloid print of the film, the digital images split into the archaic format of 24 frames per second. DV cameras split the moving image into frames, as do HD cameras, as do the current bleeding edge of digital cameras. Most tellingly, the current industry standard for digital cinema projection, known as D-Cinema and rolling out in cinemas all over the world, runs at either 24 or 48 frames per second. 24 is, in this case, not an arbitrarily chosen number.

Cultural Temporality

Both of the previous themes are primarily concerned with the relationship between the ontology of cinema and the temporality of cinema. The final theme that I will describe here is primarily concerned with the relationship between cultural context and the temporality of cinema.

The fragmentation and re-organisation of time that is at the heart of narrative cinema provides the possibility for representing the passage of time (ranging from the limited scope of subjective time to the epic scale of historical time) in a variety of ways. As we will see during the course of this thesis, there are several steps through which the time of the event depicted is filtered, the most obvious of which is that of the director's perspective and vision (not to mention that of his editor, cinematographer, composer etc.). This means that the representation of time in a film may justifiably be understood to be (to some extent)[26] culturally and ideologically inflected.

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[26] While cultural influence on the subject is difficult to argue against it is not the *only* reason why people do things. Artistic decisions may be equally attributable to individual idiosyncracy, to unique thought or discovery. Indeed, claims that certain decisions are 'natural' or biologically rooted may even be defensible.

The work of Mikhail Bakhtin may be of particular service here in providing us with a theoretical grounding. His concept of the 'chronotope' emphasises the cultural specificity encoded into the representation of a particular time-space. Indeed, his work is particularly relevant to the present study in that it stresses the importance of privileging neither the temporal nor the spatial dimension during the analysis of narratives. Both should be treated with equal weight, and the inseparability of the two should be recognised.

Bakhtin is primarily concerned with the novel and the status of language as a carrier for meaning and connotation. However, the chronotope can have a special significance for the analysis of film, referring as it does to the expressive potential inherent in the representation of space in time. Bakhtin encouraged a sensitivity to the way that language was used in the novel to construct the time-space of a fictional world, a world that is refracted through the perspective and intentions of the author. It is also refracted through the shared, dialogic and socio-historically situated character of the words themselves and the expressive mode employed. Therefore, chronotopic analysis encompasses both the aesthetic potential of representing time-spaces, but also the cultural situatedness of the text. Bakhtin writes:

…the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!) but rather it exists in other people's mouths, other people's contexts, serving other peoples intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own.[27]

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[27] M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 294.

Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist describe the chronotope as "an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring."[28] In translating this approach to film we might think of the construction of a narrative sequence as offering a time-space created using direct images of our own world. This filtering and refracting mechanism renders a particular view on a world, one that arises from a rich and varied conglomerate of experiences, intentions and assumptions.

Mary Ann Doane's *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*[29] situates the birth of cinema within a historical/cultural context that saw the rapid standardisation and rationalisation of time in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Doane cites a series of time-related facts: a sudden proliferation of pocket watches; the elimination of 'local' time for the benefit of railway schedules; the splitting of the world into time zones; and the first standardising time signal broadcast from the Eiffel Tower in 1913.[30] Coupled with this is the rise of industrialisation, which entailed the quantification and rationalisation of labour time. When time is money, the efficiency of the work process becomes a significant concern, and Doane cites the early use of long-exposure photography to record the precise movements of the worker over time as one example of the way that photography and film were exploited as visual aids in this modernist enterprise. She writes that "new technologies of representation, such as photography, phonography, and the cinema, are crucial to modernity's re-conceptualisation of time and its representability. A sea-change in thinking about contingency, indexicality,

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[28] Ibid., 425 - 426.

[29] Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[30] Ibid., 5.

temporality, and chance deeply marked the epistemologies of time at the turn of the last century."[31]

The rampant quantification of time converged with cinematographic technologies in another way - time could now be archived. It seemed that time could be captured and stored, and the implications of this idea haunt the way that we think about cinema, time and the massive accumulation of recordings that is the archive to this day.

Doane touches on psychoanalysis, thermodynamics, Peircian semiotics and Bergsonian concepts of time in her analysis of the transformation of the Western relationship with time, and its still-resonant effects. She identifies a central tension in this history - cinema simultaneously facilitated the rationalising/standardising impulse of capitalist modernity while allowing the 'contingent' (the chaotic randomness of the real) to slip into sometimes the very same images. Cinema allowed time to be structured, re-organised in various ways - it could be both a tool for the conceptualisation and dissemination of time in a particular way (the standardised mode that suited industry) or for the disruption of those dominant, hegemonic concepts.

Like Garrett Stewart, David Martin-Jones focusses on a body of recent cinema that is characterised by fractured subjectivities and narratives, by non-linear structures, time-travel and stories that often hinge around time and memory going out of sync. In *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*[32] he applies the Deleuzian concept of the Time-Image to the issue of national identity in an attempt to account for this widespread cinematic flurry of temporal confusion and uncertainty. For him the representation of time in a film is capable of expressing elements and processes of the national context from which it emerges. The temporal structure of the narrative or of the film sequence

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[31] Ibid., 4.

[32] David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts.* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

may express the growing pains, integral tensions, disorders and losses of identity, political turmoil, or cultural confusions present in a society at a particular moment. Real-world upheavals such as national reunification in Germany, the crash of South Korea's economy and the First Gulf War are traced as sources for the specific variations of time/memory/fragmentation film that emerge from these national contexts within a period stretching from roughly 1995 to 2005.[33]

Martin-Jones' use of Deleuze allows him to identify and describe a taxonomy of ways in which these national characteristics are manifested as sensations and structures of time on the screen. He asserts that "Deleuze's philosophy of time can help us understand the process through which the manipulation of narrative time is used to construct national identity."[34]

Conclusion

As we have seen, these three main themes engage with the temporality of cinema in either primarily ontological or ideological terms. They tangentially touch upon the relationship between time and film style (some more than others), but their primary subjects and purposes necessitate that this aspect either remains in the service of another enterprise, is substantially sidelined, or indeed is almost entirely avoided. However, they perform the vital function of illuminating the area - identifying, establishing and explicating particular facets of the field. My aim is to further illuminate just one still dim corner of the field of filmic temporality - that of the stylistic use of time in twentieth century film. I will use close textual analysis to reveal the ways that time is employed as an active formal element within three distinct stylistic categories of film.

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[33] Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, 3.

[34] Ibid., 3 - 4.

This work necessarily foregoes extended discussion of the ontological and ideological aspects of cinematic temporality. Such a selective vision is viable because it builds upon the works mentioned above.

Chapter 1

The Temporality of Continuity Editing

> "…each shot has a functional beauty, like a
> neck or an ankle. The smooth, orderly
> succession of shots has a rhythm like the
> pulsing of blood, and the whole film is like a
> beautiful body, kept alive by deep, resilient
> breathing."
>
> - Jacques Rivette[35]

Amongst the categories of information that the Internet Movie Database[36] lists on the front page of each movie entry is one entitled 'Goofs'. This section contains details of various kinds of mistakes that viewers have spotted within the film. Often these consist of factual errors or moments where film equipment wanders into shot, but by far the most prevalent kind is the continuity error. This is when the set of elements that compose the mise-en-scène in one shot doesn't logically match with that of the next. For instance, when Maverick (Tom Cruise) is victoriously hoisted into the air at the end of *Top Gun* (Scott, 1986) he goes up without sunglasses, his head leaves the frame, and then after the cut he comes back down wearing sunglasses. The importance of maintaining this kind of continuity between shots that may have been recorded minutes, hours or weeks apart warrants the presence of a 'script supervisor' whose job

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[35] Jacques Rivette, "The Genius of Howard Hawks," in *Howard Hawks American Artist*, ed. Jim Hillier and Peter Wollen (London: British Film Institute, 1996), 28

[36] Internet Movie Database, http://www.imdb.com Accessed 4 February 2009

is to monitor precisely these changes[37].

However, Maverick could conceivably have used his lightning reflexes to whip his shades on while being thrown around by his colleagues. It is exactly this ellipsis, the hidden time in which he could have taken out and put on those sunglasses, and how the film chooses to organise this elided/abbreviated time, that is at issue in this chapter.

The continuity of 'continuity editing' specifically describes a process of temporal conjunction – the creation of an overall continuity in a sequence through the utilisation of internally (relatively) discontinuous fragments. What continuity editing creates is in one sense a continuity (the continuous story event, as constructed in the mind of the viewer), but in another sense is not (the sequence of film fragments run together on the screen). However, I also want to make it clear that what I will be looking at here is not simply the editing scheme known as 'continuity editing', but the whole of the style with which it is predominantly associated – the Classical Hollywood style. The editing scheme constitutes the dominant ordering force in the creation of a scene's particular time-flow, and it is what I will primarily focus on here, but the elements of mise-en-scène, sound and cinematography all contribute to the production of the specific quality of time attributable to a scene or sequence. What I hope to show is that within the confines of the Classical Hollywood style, filmmakers have the ability to subtly manipulate the flow of time, creating almost imperceptible variations in the sensation of temporality. This can work with or against the narrative (or at any point between), producing a sometimes very complex dynamic. What may at first seem the easiest, or at least most straightforward style to account for in terms of temporality, turns out to be one of the most difficult, precisely because of this clandestine mutability.

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[37] Food apparently presents one of the greatest difficulties for the script supervisor – actors eat from their plate or drink from their drink between takes, bitten apples turn brown, ice cream melts. Foodstuffs (especially the fresh or frozen) can often visually indicate a change of state within a much shorter period of time than other elements of the mise-en-scène (including human actors), thereby threatening the illusion of continuity.

Continuity and the Overlap

In the first decade of cinema's history various approaches to visual narrative emerged and receded. Actualities, recorded skits and performances evolved into a form based on shots joined together into sequences. These sequences could include both long shots and close-ups, and a style of editing that promoted spatial continuity was developed. As far as temporal connections were concerned, however, the idea of making two shots temporally continuous, in such a way that the audience wouldn't find the connection jarring, was not at first a comparable concern in every film-maker's mind.

Edwin S. Porter serves as a good example, both because of his early involvement with film, and because of the prominence and popularity of his films. His dual roles as filmmaker and exhibitor resulted in his early development of editing techniques, for the simple purpose of creating a single show out of the many short film segments that he either made himself or bought in. Interestingly though, his editing didn't follow any of the familiar rules of temporal continuity that modern viewers are accustomed to. Porter was prone to making shots overlap, so that portions of the action were repeated on the other side of the cut. I take this description of *Life of an American Fireman* (Porter, 1903) from Charles Musser's article on Porter in *Sight and Sound*, which featured as the inaugural instalment of a series entitled 'The Innovators':

> *Life of an American Fireman* contains a number of shots which have
> overlapping action: firemen wake from their beds and go down the
> firepole in the third shot; in the fourth we again see them come down
> the firepole, then get on to their fire engines and drive off. In the fifth
> the door of the fire station opens and the fire engines come out and

race off to the fire. From the point of view of classical Hollywood

cinema this creates a kind of stutter that made Porter's work seem

awkward and old-fashioned. From a different perspective, however,

we can see how Porter treated each shot as a self-contained unit that

was also part of a larger film.[38]

Porter's approach to filmmaking reveals a tension between the sequence as a

multiplicity of fragments that compose a singular whole, and the sequence as a series of

virtually enclosed units. The overlap (or its possibility) is the key indicator in this

respect[39]. Maintaining a consistent temporal flow – a continuity – was not an assumed

imperative for the early makers of narrative film. It was only from around 1910 that the

model of continuity editing that we are familiar with was gradually established as the

dominant form, refined and popularised by filmmakers such as D.W. Griffith.

The 'naturalness' of the continuity editing system is disputable, though studies

such as that by Ute Frith suggest that a certain amount of the system is based on innate

understandings and preferences (such as the fact that a character leaving frame right

should enter frame left in the following shot)[40]. It is probably safest to say that the

system was actively developed as a set of conventions based on a set of innate

preferences and understandings regarding the operations of space and time. As the

system developed the specific forms of its conventions were naturalised, and to some

extent learned by the audience, so that greater levels of sophistication were in turn built

[38] Charles Musser, "Time After Time," *Sight and Sound* (March 1999): 16 - 18

[39] Sergei Eisenstein famously used overlapping shots as well, though this was for him a consciously articulated part of his 'intellectual montage'. The overlapping in this case functioned more as an emphatic dialectical technique than a specific type of aberrant continuity. In any case, Eisenstein's brand of editing belongs to an entirely different category, that of montage editing proper, which I will consider in the following chapter.

[40] Ute Frith, "Perceiving the language of films," *Perception* Volume 4 (1975): 97 - 103

upon and therefore rely upon this familiarity. So we might say that the language of continuity editing is both learned and innate.

The principal purpose of continuity editing, as evolved from the model used by Griffith and others, was to make as unobtrusive as possible the joinings between shots, to smooth out the rough edges of the editing act, and to create a perceived continuity where there was none. Because a film scene is predominantly constructed out of fragments there is a constant danger that the point or moment at which two shots are joined will be disruptive, that the audience will find the cut either spatially or temporally disorienting. In a narrative style where a single coherent scene emerges from a sequence of separate shots, the impression of spatial and temporal continuity between those shots becomes extremely important. So a set of conventions that allowed attention to be deflected away from the cut gradually developed. The classical continuity editing system facilitates the creation of both a spatial continuity and a temporal continuity, though, as we shall see, its rules are conceptualised in predominantly spatial terms.

The continuity-editing system evolved as a set of relatively loose conventions, most of which pertain to the spatial orientation between the camera and its subject as it changes across cuts. We see this spatial prejudice in the names given to many of these conventions: the 180 degree rule; the 30 degree rule; the eyeline match; the match on action (though this last one, by its emphasis on action, necessitates temporal extension – an action takes time to play out. However, as we will see later, a defined action serves as a way of clearly, though indirectly, representing the passage of time using spatial co-ordinates). The shot-reverse-shot figure is also most often understood as a spatial figure – one shot (understood as a direction in space), followed by its opposite – though its serial character again necessitates extension in time. Other conventions, such as the practice of beginning a scene with an establishing shot and then moving in to close-ups,

demonstrate the emphasis placed on spatially orienting the viewer and on maintaining the impression of spatial coherence and continuity.

Concern for the spatiality of the shot seems, then, to outweigh that for the temporality of the shot by a great deal. The temporality of the shot is not, of course, ignored, but it is often taken for granted. Time, after all, only goes one way, whilst it seems that there are innumerable variables attached to the representation of the physical space of the film world. Nevertheless, cutting at just the right moment is recognised as the key to pacing, comic timing, the creation of suspense or shock, etc. However, this is often reduced again to a simple decision regarding where a shot should begin and end, and many of these effects are attributed more to the withholding and release of information than to anything specifically temporal (beyond the possibility of delaying the release of that information).

There is one convention of continuity editing that is specifically temporal, though it is seldom mentioned in introductory texts or discussions of continuity editing, and it tellingly centres on the overlap. It is the practice of overlapping two shots of the same action by a few frames, based on the belief that this aids in the production of visual continuity.[41] A few moments of an action captured from two perspectives are repeated when cutting from one perspective to the other. So, while this practice in fact breaks with continuity by introducing overlap, it is a rule of thumb that is believed to aid in the production of the impression of continuity for the viewer. Presumably, this practice is seldom discussed or included within the rules because it seems a minor part of the editor's craft. The other rules deflect attention, but they are there to be recognised, and to a large extent determine the form of a shot. This specifically temporal continuity rule, just like time in the context of film generally, is considered to

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[41] Tim J. Smith, "An Attentional Theory of Continuity Editing" (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2005), 254, and Edward Dmytryk, *On Filmmaking* (London: Focal Press, 1986)

be important, necessary, the underlying force of cinema even, but it is not apportioned an equal variability or stylistic potential to that of the spatial dimension.

As I have mentioned in the introduction, the temporal properties of continuity editing that are usually mentioned in film-theoretical discussions are time-ellipsis (or temporal abbreviation), and time stretching. 'Time-ellipsis' describes the various effects produced by the excision of time from a scene. These range from the 'tightening up' effect produced by the imperceptible omission of segments of time from an event, to the more conspicuous suggestion of the passage of time through various devices (fades, cutaways, holding a shot after a character has left the frame)[42]. The latter is by far the more popular understanding. 'Time stretching' describes the ability to make a moment seem longer than it actually was, either in the pro-filmic reality or in the fictional world of the film, in order to create suspense or add significance. This is achieved through the repetition of shots, or through the alternation of shots from two sites of action. This kind of time-stretching seldom breaks into obvious overlap – the chief value of this technique lies in the fact that it creates the impression of a dragged out, stretched moment without disturbing the impression of continuity. The operation of alternation helps to obscure any instances of overlap.

The other property that is often discussed is rhythm, though it is often reduced to the rate and patterning of cuts. I hope to show that there is a great deal more nuance and potential within the classical continuity editing style for the production of rhythm than a simple focus on the rate or patterning of editing would suggest. The content between the cuts has a great bearing on the rhythm also, contributing to the complex of speeds and moments that create the impression of rhythm.

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[42] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, Seventh Edition. (New York: McGraw-Hill), 283

Re-Constructing Time

I will now delineate a theoretical model of how classical continuity editing treats time, how it processes the real time of the event depicted and, through a formal structure of revelations, hints and ellipses, constructs the filmic time of the event as perceived by the audience during the viewing experience. This theoretical model will take the form of a thought experiment – an imaginary formulation of the practice at an extreme that would not in reality be practical, but precisely because it takes us to the limits of possibility it may help us to think about what it actually means to construct the time of a scene in this way, and what we do and don't think about when we watch a continuity edited scene. Additionally, it will take on greater significance when we come to discuss the Deleuzian/Bergsonian notion of decomposition and recomposition.

The aim of continuity editing, as I've already stated, is to suggest the continuous passage of time through non-intrusive cutting between variously disparate shots. These shots function as glimpses of a spatio-temoral world separate from our own, a fictional world in which time also passes, usually in the same way and at the same rate as the world that we are familiar with. However, a curious thing happens in the translation from one time to another; whole sections of time may be lost or gained, either in the cracks between the shots that make up a scene, or in the chasm of a scene change. Yet the viewer retains a sense of the temporal co-ordinates of the event. We can usually intuit to our satisfaction how long an event takes, as well as the amount of time between events. Even when we don't know exactly how much time has passed between one scene and the next we can usually place it within the chronology of the story time. Exact amounts of time are seldom required or provided in the classical continuity editing style, except when they play an integral role in the narrative (e.g. a bomb that will explode in 5 minutes, or an aunt who will arrive in exactly a week). There are instead

different degrees of vague interval. Events may be presented as occurring:

simultaneously; in immediate succession; a short while after; a long while after; or a

great amount of time after.[43] As Béla Balázs notes in *Theory of the Film*, the amount of

time between scenes can be suggested through various means.[44] A fade out at the end of

a scene suggests a significant amount of time has passed before the events of the next.

A dissolve suggests a shorter, though still notable amount of time (often being used to

suggest the passage of time while a specific task is completed). Balázs notes that

different kinds of cut-in shots between scenes can also determine our impression of

temporal interval. A cut-in of a moving object suggests a short amount of time, while a

cut-in of a static object (such as a rock or a tree) suggests a longer amount of time

because it is temporally undefined – a moving object seems to present a measurable,

well-defined amount of time (the amount of time that the movement takes), whereas a

motionless object "gives no visible measurable duration: it has no dimension in time,

hence it can represent any length of it."[45] It is in relation to these temporal

configurations that Balázs introduces the idea of 'time perspective.' This concept

accounts for the acceptability and function of the varieties of temporal articulation

possible between scenes and between shots, for the leaps, abbreviations and expansions

that occur throughout a film. Time perspective refers to the intermediate layer between

the time of the fictional world and the time of the viewing experience. Balázs himself

denotes the time of this intermediate layer as 'filmic time.' Filmic time is not the same,

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[43] I omit, here, a discussion of the flashback, which has its own set of conventions. The important thing to note is that, within the classical continuity editing system, the flashback generally presents itself as occurring sometime in the past of the film world. The visual markers and techniques used to suggest different temporal intervals do not usually apply to the flashback, as they are overridden by the set of visual and aural markers used to signal the flashback's nature as memory or image of the past.

[44] Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, trans. Edith Bone (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1952), 145 - 146

[45] Ibid., 146

then, as the time of the events depicted in the film. It is the temporal layer of the film narrative, the time of the presentation of events within the film world that uses, and relies upon, the viewer's own sense of time perspective.

The time of the fictional world depicted by the continuity-edited sequence exists outside of the shots themselves, suggested in the mind of the viewer through a series of perspectival glimpses. The event is witnessed as continuous, the cuts unnoticed because of the logical coherence of one shot with the next. The spatio-temporal scene of the event is constructed through glimpses rather than by the actual sustained showing of the what, when and where of the action unfolding.

Finally, to the thought experiment/theoretical model. We might imagine an event taking place in some narrative dimension inaccessible to the ordinary viewer – the fictional world of the story. The event is captured on film from every imaginable angle and the film then cut into innumerable fragments. Film being the only commonality between the dimension of the story and the dimension of the viewer, the fragments are used to communicate what has happened in the story world. A careful selection of the fragments (many of which show exactly the same moments but from different perspectives) is used to re-construct the event. Of course, every fragment could not be used because there would be a huge amount of repetition and overlapping. Each moment would be captured by an infinite number of shots. If they were all to be used the resultant sequence would be unbearably repetitious, unmanageably long. A rule would have to be adopted to make the representation of the event more easily understood, the represented time and space more familiar. This rule might be:

one moment = one shot

For every moment of the event only one shot of the many parallel shots may be chosen, no doubles allowed. A single shot may show as many consecutive moments as the filmmaker wishes, but no other shot may contain any of the moments already shown. Following this rule the fragments are used to construct a single arbitrarily chosen run-through of the event. A new space and time for the event is constructed in the viewer's mind, from the glimpses of the story world that the cinema screen permits. The film conveys to the viewer what happened, but in a much less comprehensive way than it was originally captured. This doesn't matter so much, as the viewer will fill in the blanks themselves, using those glimpses as the keys to the re-creation of the story world. The film sequence provides a key to the re-construction of the time and space of the film world. These three layers of temporality are not equivalent or interchangeable. The time of the fictional event differs from the filmic time of the sequence, and the re-construction effected in the mind of the viewer almost certainly differs from both. The classically continuity edited film functions as the intermediate layer in a translation from one time to another, and, just as is the case with a linguistic interpreter, meaning is often determined by the slightest of details.

Of course, what actually happens is that the filmmaker sets up the scene and films from perhaps several perspectives, but certainly not every one. They then pick the shots most suited to their end, or those that come closest to what they had envisioned, and edit them together to maintain the logical, intelligible flow of the event. The process may be complicated by the fact that all of the shots may not come from the same event - there may be several takes of the same scene, the best shots from the pool of visual data being used to create the single, finished scene. There may be discontinuities of space and time during the recording that may not be apparent in the finished scene. What the audience experiences as one event happening in one place at one time could

conceivably be constructed out of fragments filmed months, or miles, apart. The characters may not even be consistently played by the same actor (in the case of a stunt double). The artificiality of the event becomes even more apparent when we consider the amount of digital interference creeping into all kinds of films. In fact the introduction of CGI simultaneously reduces this layer of complexity while offering perhaps the purest example of it. The more a film world is the product of human hands and minds alone, the more directly and unproblematically its images offer keys to the creation of a fictional time and space to the perceiving subject, and the more it avoids the complication introduced by the background knowledge that the image itself comes originally from another time and space – a real time and space of which the image is but an aspect.

At the most basic level the continuity editing process allows visual fragments (whether of an already existent or entirely created world) to be configured in a way that produces the impression of a consistent and coherent fictional world. The raw material is trimmed, matched and joined according to the projected idea of what this fictional world and its events should look like. Or, put more strongly, the raw fragments are arranged in such a way as to produce that fictional world. What is indexical – a technological recording of the real – becomes fictional by its involvement in the re-construction of the time and space of a fictional world. One time and space *plays* another. The film-image of a dog is indexical with a dog that once sat in front of a rolling camera, but for the viewer this first non-fictional dog is superseded and replaced by the fictional dog to which it is a key. In the classical continuity-edited film, the keys that point to objects and agents in a fictional world are in themselves the embodied images of that fictional world. And in the structure of a continuity-edited scene, the time and space of the conglomerate – all the fragments arranged according to a set of rules

relating to compatibility and coherency – both embodies and points to the time and space of the fictional world. It directly constitutes the time of the world, but it also presents a way of abbreviating or elongating that notional time.

In the continuity editing style of classical Hollywood the integrity of a spatio-temporal 'scene' was predominantly maintained. The main exception to this rule was crosscutting or parallel editing, where two or more spatio-temporal scenes are alternately cycled through. Here the action playing out in each location is only partially elaborated in each shot, reaching conclusion in tandem with the others. This gives the impression of simultaneity; that each action is occurring at the same time, even though we can only ever (without resorting to splitscreen) witness them consecutively.

What I want to concentrate on here is the most common classical Hollywood structure – the single, enclosed spatio-temporal scene – and the way that the construction of its time, which must always appear to be continuous and constant[46], follows a set of rules that nevertheless allow for a variety of subtle variations of tempo, tone and affect.

Rudolph Arnheim describes the editing process:

> In montage the film artist has a first-class formative instrument, which
> helps him to emphasize and give greater significance to the actual
> events that he portrays. From the time continuum of a scene he takes
> only the parts that interest him, and of the spatial totality of objects
> and events he picks only what is relevant. Some details he stresses,
> others he omits altogether.[47]

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[46] Continuous in terms of integrity, constant in terms of speed and tone.

[47] Rudolph Arnheim, *Film as Art* (London: University of California Press, 1957), 89.

What Arnheim means by 'montage' here is the basic act of joining two or more shots together, and in this particular quote he describes the type of montage that operates on a single spatio-temporal scene, chopping it up and reconstructing it. Continuity editing is a process of selection and creative recombination, which is distinguished from 'montage' in the stricter categorical sense by its imposition of a (relatively loose) system of rules on top of the base operation of joining fragments, as well as its general tendency to present actions and scenes as continuous. Later we will go further, extracting another principle from this definition – the notion that each fragment within the continuity editing system is defined and determined by the action that it presents/ contains. And by this I mean that its temporal extension and relations are defined and determined by the actions that occur within it.

The Movement Image

It may prove beneficial to consider for a moment the thought of Gilles Deleuze, whose work in *Cinema 1*[48] seems to me to bear directly upon the issues at hand. The two-volume *Cinema* work as a whole portrays the history of cinema as a history of ways of conceiving of and representing the spatio-temporal world that surrounds us. The first part describes what he calls the movement-image. The second describes what he calls the time-image, which ruptures and to some extent replaces the movement-image.

To simplify, the shift from the movement-image to the time-image is a shift from a cinema where time is always subordinate to movement, to a cinema where movement is shown to be subordinate to time. This difference can be identified both at the micro level of the stylistic fabric of the film, and at the macro level of structure and narrative.

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[48] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (London: Continuum, 2005)

In the movement-image actions determine shot lengths, orientation and placement within a sequence, but in the time-image they become uncentred, disorientated – they are cast adrift in a sea of time. This summary understanding of the distinction between the time-image and the movement-image, which I take from D. N. Rodowick[49], is adequate for the present purpose. There are certain aspects of Deleuze's conceptualisation of the movement-image that impinge directly on the question of the temporality of continuity editing as I have theorised it here, and it is on those that I will focus and elaborate.

The movement-image correlates loosely with pre-WWII cinema (but this term could equally be applied to a lot of post-WWII Hollywood fare and indeed most popular cinema up to the present – the split he refers to is really between Classical Hollywood and the kind of art cinema that emerges after the second world war). These films present us with an indirect image of time. Time is expressed through movement, and as such it becomes subordinate to movement. Through montage, which places multiple shots in sequence, and through the continuous 'translation' of the elements of the frame as a single shot endures, we are given an indirect image of a changing whole. We see discrete movements – the actions and reactions of a physical universe understood as a closed set of elements. But these discrete movements are related to a whole that changes in time – the whole of the frame/whole of the film/whole of the film-world.

For Deleuze the cinema of the movement-image presents a perception of the universe that is superior to our normal way of perceiving the world around us. We normally see the world in a manner comparable to the scientific approach that Henri Bergson believed to be restrictive and counterproductive, and to which a large proportion of his work served as rejoinder. Science for him conceived of the universe as

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[49] D. N. Rodowick, *Gille Deleuze's Time Machine* (London: Duke University Press, 2003)

a closed set of bodies in motion, where the playing out of physical relations could be calculated just as the trajectory of billiard balls on a table.[50] Time in this conception is an abstract value – it is drained of potentiality and the possibility of the new, becoming merely the playing out of calculable physical relations between discrete bodies.

Our mode of perception, outside of film, relies on a similar breaking down of reality into bodies in motion – active, self-determined human elements, and reactive non-human elements. We conceive of our interaction with the world as being essentially an inward flow of sensory data and an outward flow of movement. This process is characterised by a continuous act of subtraction – there is a huge amount of sensory data provided through the senses, too much for us to constantly process in its entirety, so we consume only what interests us, what is familiar or already part of our language of worldly interaction. The way that we see reality and the way that we conceive of our interaction with reality (the outward flow of movement) is based on this practice of subtraction. Bergson describes how we see things and how they actually are: "the duration wherein we see ourselves acting, and in which it is useful that we should see ourselves, is a duration whose elements are dissociated and juxtaposed. The duration wherein we act is a duration wherein our states melt into each other."[51]

John Mullarkey draws attention to the specifically temporal aspect of this reductive process, explaining that for Bergson the constitution of a subject's temporality relies upon the suppression of:

> other times and the times of others. And these other times are with us
> right here, though we are often unable to see them. They seem to be

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50 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), 8 - 12.

51 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 186.

'elsewhere' because they are *suppressed,* bodily and mentally, from our vision. Only some processes are recognized by us, namely the ones we are able to perceive, ones that we subsequently 'fabulate' or narrate as events that have meaning *for us.* Crucial to Bergson's theory of time is the exploitation of others' temporal processes, ones that we must de-temporalize in order to make our lives (and processes) eventful. These others, at base, include the material and natural world.[52]

One of Deleuze's key steps is to draw a parallel between this mode of perception and a particular kind of cinema. The ability to reduce the complexity of our interaction with the world is what Deleuze calls the sensori-motor schema.[53] For him the classical Hollywood style of continuity editing simulates this relationship, both from the perspective of the viewer, and that of the main characters. It interfaces with the viewer's own sensori-motor schema without friction, reproducing, at a degree of abstraction, their mode of interaction with reality. Continuity editing works because it follows the same kind of logic of selectivity that we use in our everyday perceptual traffic with the world around us. Yet it builds upon this – its movement-images can imply a whole that is open, constantly changing, remaking itself:

The shot always expresses the two sides of the movement-image: on one hand, framing establishes a perspective on objects whose relative positions vary; on the other, montage expresses a change in the state

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[52] John Mullarkey, *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 148.

[53] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (London: Continuum, 2005), 19.

of the whole. The strategies of montage thus define the various ways

change can be expressed as movement. In other words, montage gives

particular images of time by defining in what ways the whole can be

conceived as open. But no matter how this image of change varies at

whatever scale, it can only present an indirect image of time […].[54]

The movement image implies a whole that is changing, yet ultimately time remains

calculable, a closed set.

What may we take from Deleuze's concept of the movement-image that will

help us to understand how the time of continuity editing works? We might adopt the

idea that that which decides the orientation, length and conjunction of shots in a

continuity-edited sequence is the action that occurs within it and its function as a

component of a set of actions – a set which itself tends to adhere to a set of conventions.

The movement-image presents a world dominated by human activity, in which human

actions have both purpose and definite effects on the world around them. Within this

framework, we have the possibility for the various temporal modulations already

mentioned - affective devices capable of subtly altering the temporal flow of the film as

a whole, and consequently the way the viewer experiences the time of the film. In the

movement-image time is expressed through movement – the Classical Hollywood style

was formulated as a mode of cinematic storytelling that operated based on laws of

movement, action, and consequence.

It is a style that has the ability to force a temporal perspective, to eliminate the

superfluous and emphasize the most potent and relevant movements, to focus in on one

character, one part of a character even, and reveal one continuous self-contained action,

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[54] Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 53.

or perhaps an action that penetrates the next shot, joining the two into this one movement. Deleuze uses the Bergsonian conception of *durée*[55] to describe the way in which the shot, within a series of shots, performs a decomposition and recomposition of the world from which it is taken (both the real world and the film world). *Durée* describes both the elements of a set (the set being the whole of space-time) which move individually, along their own paths, acting on and reacting with other mobile bodies, as well as the continuous transformation of the whole, of the relations between those bodies (which necessarily includes the transformations of the bodies themselves).[56] The single shot, in the context of continuity editing, abstracts from the whole and presents the element in motion. When associated with the other shots that make up a continuity edited sequence, it takes part in the recomposition of the elements into the film's own distilled and refined whole. For Deleuze the shot is "the concrete intermediary between a whole which has changes and a set which has parts, and which constantly converts the one into the other according to its two facets [decomposition and recomposition]."[57]

Classical continuity gives us an indirect image of time because it is a system of recomposition that gives prominence to movement. In the process of reconstructing the time of a fictional world it has broken time and put it back together again, but in such a way as to favour the actions of humans, to make it seem as if the actions of humans make time flow, as if time will wait for the right action before it goes on. We might describe it as a fabric of time that is woven of actions. It may seem on the surface that the continuity-editing style, more than any other film style, takes time to be a constant – a reliable universal on which the consistency of a structure of temporal fragments depends. In fact the fragments appeal less to an external temporal constant than to the

[55] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 186.

[56] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 22.

[57] Ibid., 23.

internal movements that define them, and to the temporality that is expressed through them.

Actions determine time - it is the character of the actions (the way they look and the system of visual and conceptual relations between objects, actions, and other actions) that determines the character of time. The temporality of continuity editing is characterised by the fact that the time of the movie is the time of the actions that occur during it.

Pickpockets

To make this conception of the temporality of continuity editing more specific, and consequently more intelligible, I'd like to carefully analyse the opening scene of Samuel Fuller's *Pickup on South Street* (1953), in which Richard Widmark's character Skip attempts to pick Candy's (Jean Peters) purse in a subway car. The film opens with a brief establishing shot of the train shooting past, followed by a cut to the interior. We see a woman, whom we are correct in assuming to be the lead female character (Candy), staring at nothing in particular - the distracted mode assumed by those subway passengers who don't have a paper to read. This shot lasts just a few seconds and is followed by some quick cutting between individual close-ups of the two men who are obviously following her, and the first close-up of Candy. In all, this sequence of close-ups totals eleven shots, and as yet we have not been given a wider shot of the interior that might establish the space in which those close-ups fit. The sequence relies partly on the audience's familiarity with the standard geography of the inside of a subway train, but also on the use of eyeline matches. The men look at Candy and at each other, and through this series of shots we understand where the characters are in relation to one another, so that when we are finally given a wider shot of the interior of the train it is

only necessary that we see one of the men to maintain an awareness that we are still in the same space. This is a good example of how a space can be constructed through glimpses alone, but what about the time of this sequence? We actively (as a background process) construct the filmic space when watching a scene like this. Do we construct the time of the scene in the same way?

While space, in anyone's experience, is extremely variable, time usually isn't. When watching a film we search for clues to the geography of the space in which the action is set, but we can be fairly safe in assuming that within the limits of a scene time will only flow in one direction and at one constant speed. Time is not going to be different from moment to moment in the way that space can be different from point to point. Transitions between scenes present temporal junctures which must be actively cognised, but within the scene we don't usually have to worry about when an action is occurring in relation to everything else. Continuity editing spatially pulls shots together into a scene, which provides a frame for temporal security.

However, within the scene, and very notably in the scene mentioned, this secure, accepted continuity is constructed as much as the space is. Following the first sequence of close-ups we see Skip emerge from amongst the crowd. The camera moves in a slight arc and closes in to frame Skip and Candy with a soldier standing between them. There is a close-up of Skip, then back out to the previous shot, and we see the soldier move away, allowing Skip to get closer to Candy. Skip sports the same distracted look as Candy, until he decides to take out a newspaper, which plays an integral role in his pickpocketing technique, as will soon become clear. What follows is a series of close-ups run together even more quickly (at points) than the first, that describes Skip's successful attempt to liberate something valuable from Candy's purse. There are three main sites of action that are cycled through during the course of the sequence: Skip's

face (fig. 1.1); Candy's face (fig. 1.2); Candy's purse (fig. 1.3). The elements at play in these sites are Skip's concentration, Candy's distraction and Skip's wandering hand. Following the theoretical model of a continuity-edited event mentioned earlier, we might say that this event occurred in a story dimension, and is reconstructed on screen through these perspectival fragments, these glimpses of the event. In reality, though, the fragments on screen could well have been taken from several similar events rather than one continuous one. It could possibly be that there were three cameras focused on these three points as the single event unfolded, but more than likely not. In fact the event may never have occurred in the way we see it – all that is required to construct it on screen is the raw material, the component shots, each of which refers indexically to a pro-filmic moment of registration, but does not necessarily refer indexically to the overall temporal event depicted as occurring within the film world. The event in this sense is a construct reliant on the unfolding of the filmic sequence, within the structure of the finished film. It is useful also to characterise the act as being simultaneously one of re-construction. The film sequence provides the direct temporal image of the event, but in a fragmentary, perspectival manner. The holes are filled in collaboration with the audience by its reference to the original event, which takes place on the plane of the fictional. The fictional event comes into being for us through the unfolding of the sequence, yet at the same time we have an intuitive sense that it has happened before, somewhere else, on some other plane. This is the sense of the original fictional event to which the sequence provides a key and produces an image of.

In the opening sequence of *Pickup on South Street*, the action at these three sites is cycled through repeatedly, so it might be possible to identify three continuous raw material shots, that are then interwoven to produce what seems like one real, continuous event.

fig. 1.1 - Skip's Concentration

fig. 1.2 - Candy's Distraction

fig. 1.3 - The Purse

So far I have focused on the construction of continuity as a phenomenon, and as a vehicle for narrative. I would like now to begin to examine the potential for the stylistic manipulation of time within the classical continuity editing system. As I have described it above, the system seems to be oriented towards the regulation of the flow of time. However, it would be foolish to ignore the fact that films of the classical continuity style often bear obviously time-based affective attributes, such as the creation of suspense or tension. We need only look again to the example of *Pickup on South Street*. There is undoubtedly an element of tension created through the prolonged moment of thievery and the repeated shots of looking faces. So, deep within the confines of continuity editing's rules there must also be something more than an efficient means for communicating narrative information. There must also exist the possibility for subtle shifts of tone, tempo and rhythm. For example, the connection of one shot with another, though it may produce simple continuity in the intended sense, might also succeed in creating a subconscious stuttering affect, a starting and re-starting of the temporal flow. Or it can create a pendulous motion, the flow of one shot reacting with the flow of another to create an undulation, a swaying back and forth between shots. We see this sometimes in the shot-reverse-shot of a conversation.

What I am naming 'flow' here Andrei Tarkovsky would have called the 'pressure' of time.[58] While his film-work belongs in a different category to continuity editing his description of a kind of force, or pressure, of time within a shot, which determines the degree and quality of cohesion it will have with the succeeding shot, dependent on that shot's own time-pressure, is applicable to any film. The placing of a film into a particular style category could in fact be based upon the film's opinion of the correct way of joining those pressures. I will examine this concept in greater depth in

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[58] Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 117.

chapter four.

What other temporal modulations are available to the film-maker through the covert process of the continuity editing style? I've already mentioned smoothness – this would constitute an opposing effect to that of rhythmic stuttering or undulation. It is possible to create a smooth flow of shots, dependent on both the rate of cutting and the content of those shots (both spatial and temporal). Using rhythmic stuttering or smoothing a film can feel as if it has slowed down or sped up. Such changes can often section off a portion of the film as having its own enclosed temporality within that of the whole film. The subtle flexibility of the continuity editing style makes these changes clandestine, and difficult to grasp, yet we can feel ourselves being drawn along in a languorous, emulsified flow, or equally with the speed of a free-flowing liquid, or feel immobilised in a clogged flow.

A typical deployment of this capability is acceleration – the build up to a climax, achieved through a combination of rapid cutting and the concealment and revelation of content within the shots. Which brings us back to the pickpocketing scene from *Pickup on South Street*. This too relies on the tension between concealment and revelation, enhanced by a series of cuts between close-ups, each of which shows just a small piece of the event (in both a spatial and a temporal sense). The whole space of the event is concealed, revealed only through partial glimpses, and the whole time of the event is also concealed within the component nature of each shot. The sequence's grounding in its reference to an original fictional event allows for a certain amount of vagueness regarding the chronological placement of the shots. Sometimes we cannot be sure of the linear succession of the shots – perhaps some of the shots, though successive on screen, depict a simultaneity. This could be seen as a departure from the rule I mentioned earlier (one moment = one shot), but the temporal frame provided by the amalgam of

conformative shots seems to allow for this slippage, just as the use of eyeline matches etc. in the same scene provides a spatial frame that allows for a certain amount of safe slippage in terms of the actual positioning of the contents of one close-up in relation to another.

Candy's distracted gaze and Skip's wandering hand are shown successively, but could be understood to be occurring at the same time. The exact moment of Candy's gaze in one shot could conceivably be taken to be either before the exact moment of the shot of Skip's hand, or happening at the same time as it. The same applies to the shots of the watching man. Are they after the preceding shot, or at the same time as it? Why does this vagueness, this slippage between the sequential and the simultaneous not present more of a problem for the viewer? In many cases I think this is predominantly because of the way that continuity editing implies a more complete temporality, that of the original fictional event, that stands behind what is shown. Just as when we see aspects of the space of the scene we construct an understanding of the geography of that space (including the positions of objects and actors and the relationships between them), when we see sections of the time of an event (often focused on a single discrete action or image) we attempt to construct an understanding of how the time of the event as a whole flows. However, while we're watching it the time of the scene/sequence/film is always on its way to a conclusion, but not yet whole. Our impression of the time of a scene is always in the process of being built, until finally the scene has finished and our construction is concluded, but the object itself has ceased to exist for us.[59] The use of spatial fragments in continuity editing relies upon the understanding that a background, encompassing spatiality exists. It refers to and implies that background. The use of temporal fragments does something similar, but the background temporality that it

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[59] I will expand upon this idea in chapter four.

refers to and implies is, unlike a space, not a definite system that can be intuited, but a process that is in a continuous state of becoming. The question of simultaneity and sequentiality can be explained by looking at the way that continuity editing presents multiple aspects of a single event.

The decision to show certain aspects of a space rather than others is often determined by the location and character of the actions that occur within that space. The presentation of these fragments relies upon the fact that we know or can guess what the rest of the space is like even though we can't see it. When we see a series of shots that depict actions that could be either simultaneous or consecutive the slippage between the two is naturalised by the unacknowledged (because it doesn't require acknowledgement) fact that these are excerpts from a background temporality. What continuity editing often unconsciously implies is the multiplicity of duration within even a limited space. Each action has its own time-flow, and the shot excerpts from that time-flow. When we see a shot of Candy's distraction, we may assume that this precise moment of her distraction occurs just before the pickpocketing of the next shot, yet at the same time it feels as if what we are seeing is her distraction *while* the pickpocketing of the next shot occurs. The time of the pickpocketing and the time of the distraction are both separate flows of time, separated by the choice to shoot them both in close-up, yet they fit into a larger background temporality that encompasses them both, along with everything else that is happening in the subway car. The image of Candy's distraction is both tied to a precise moment (while we can see her face), but also stands for the continuity of her distraction, which (probably, though not necessarily) stretches out beyond the limits of the shot (it likely continues as we watch Skip's hand do its work). These two time flows represent aspects, both temporal and spatial, of the same event, and within the event it doesn't really matter whether they are consecutive or

simultaneous – they are separate strands of the same thing, heterogeneous temporal components of a singular event that is already small enough not to need breaking down into further befores and afters. At other times indications of before and after can become extremely important. But even in these cases we often do the necessary work ourselves – when it becomes important we will unambiguously read the action in a shot as before or after its neighbours. When it comes to the micro level of the event, we can think the simultaneous and sequential at the same time without great difficulty. Our ease at accepting this vagueness indicates the kind of contract regarding the representation of time that characterises the temporality of continuity editing.

So, while there may be general rules about how time should be presented (it can't usually be shuffled or run backwards) there is a certain fluidity within this structural framework that allows for manipulation and a creative use of time. Time at the macro level of the scene must flow rigorously forwards, but at the micro level it is allowed to spread out and become more vague, permitting various kinds of articulation by the filmmaker. The temporal dimension of the continuity editing style is therefore largely plastic. It is moulded by the film-maker to re-construct the story event. During this moulding, which includes editing and the choice of image, as well as the original choices made at the shooting stage, the affective dimension of the image is shaped.

We might profitably compare this scene with a series of similar ones in Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959). The film charts the pickpocketing career of Michel (Martin LaSalle). His first attempts take place in metro cars and are shot in a roughly similar way to *Pickup on South Street*, though without the rigorous cycling of sites. Even early on in *Pickpocket* the focus is on the hidden movements of hands that seem to have developed a life of their own, unhitched from their master and exploring the jackets of other passengers. Whereas *Pickup* is intent on portraying the event primarily

through the use of faces, intercut with close-ups of the criminal movement, *Pickpocket*

presents the pertinent action in a single shot, the camera following the hand as it falls

away from the violated pocket. This sequence begins with Michel standing in the aisle

of the metro car, his newspaper open wide before him. His furtive eyes identify his

target standing a few feet away with his back to us. Michel edges toward him until he

has (somewhat unbelievably) achieved an intimate distance (fig. 1.4). There is a cut to a

reverse shot of the target's face (fig. 1.5) – he looks Michel directly in the eyes,

suggesting that he might know exactly what's going on. We cut back to Michel who

seems intent on continuing with his plan (fig. 1.6).
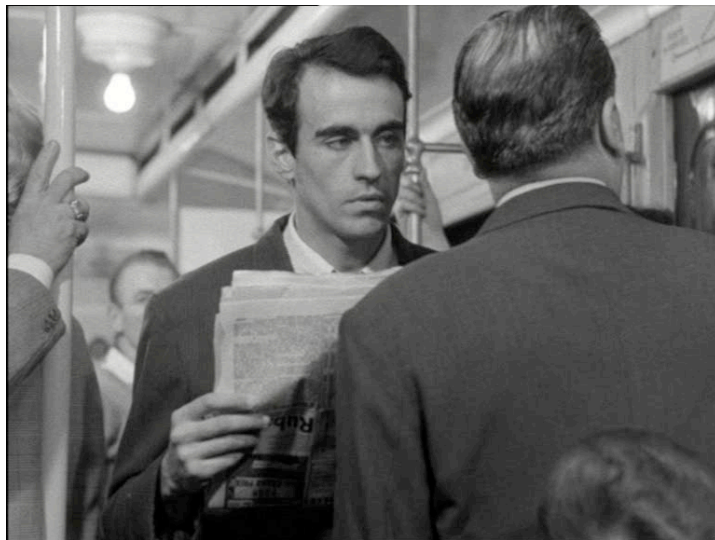
fig. 1.4
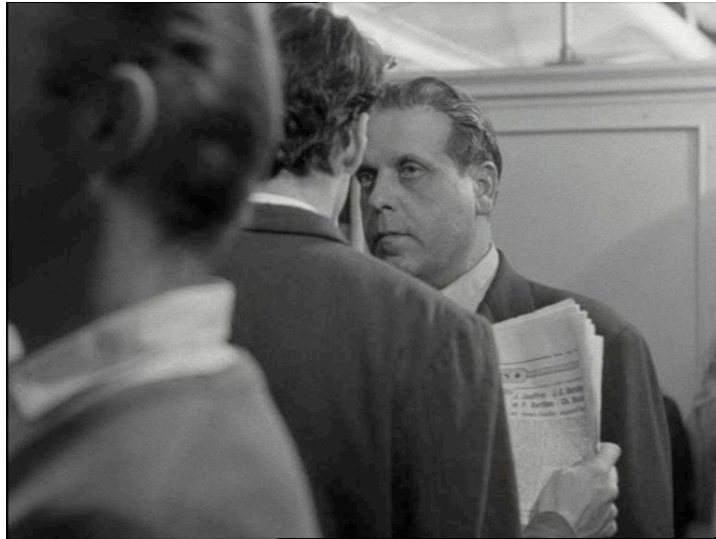
fig. 1.5
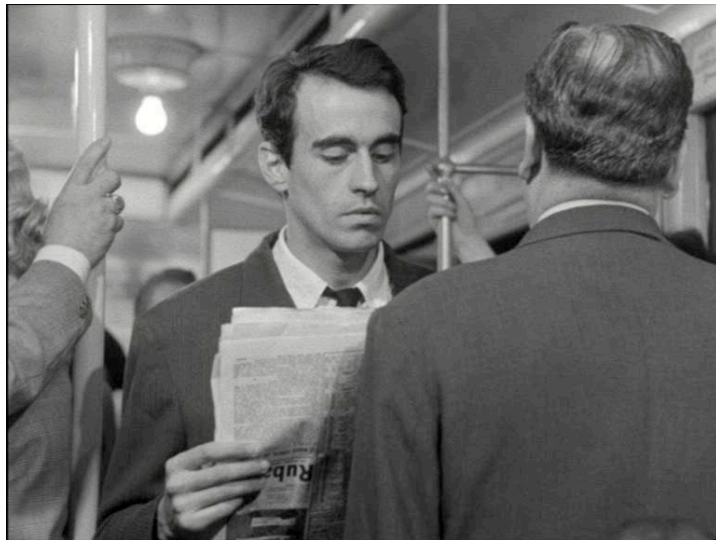
fig. 1.6

Finally we cut to a shot that will encapsulate the critical movement without any break (fig. 1.7). The framing of this shot cuts out the men's faces; only chins are visible. Shoulders and arms flank the main site of action. We aren't allowed to see the hand creeping into the man's inner coat pocket as we have seen Skip's creep into the purse – instead we watch as the newspaper conceals the movement, registering the steps of the operation based on knowledge gained from earlier scenes of Michel studying and practising the trick. He folds the newspaper, having retracted his right hand, bearing wallet, and lowers it to his side (figs. 1.8 - 1.9).
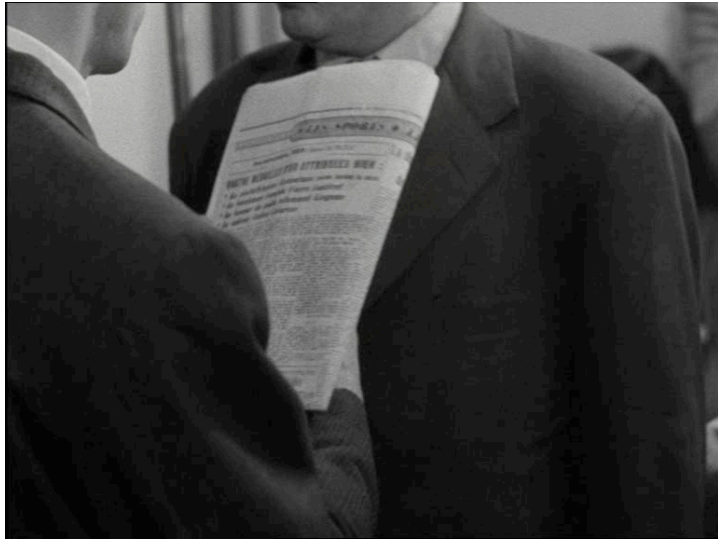
fig. 1.7
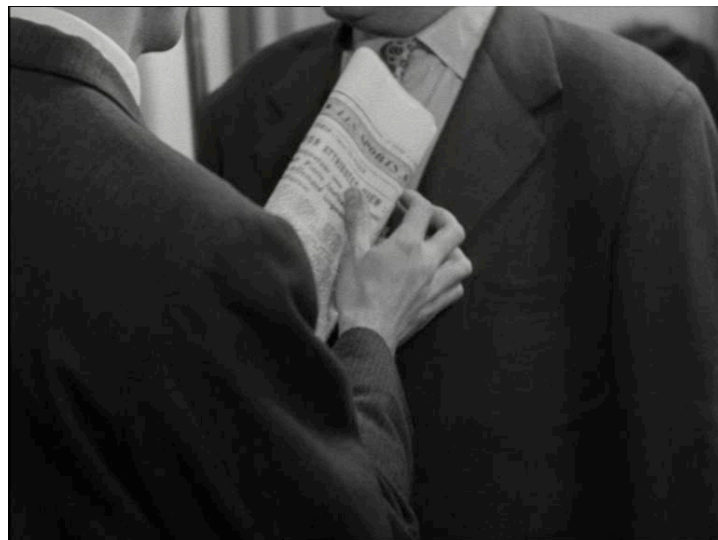
fig. 1.8

fig. 1.9

Unlike *Pickup*, the actual event of thievery is contained within one static shot that eventually tilts fluidly downward following the hand and newspaper to its final destination. Bresson uses the conventions of continuity editing to set this shot up, but when it comes to the pickpocketing itself, which is so central both thematically and narratively, he foregoes these rules and shoots in unbroken continuity. This stylistic change marks the point at which Michel's hands have taken over – they are the dominant agents at this point in the scene.

Michel, much like the protagonists in Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), talks about the existence of supermen within society, and the fact that they should not be held accountable to the same moral system as everyone else. In fact, in committing a crime they can be seen to be simply expressing their genius. And Michel does indeed seem to consider pickpocketing an art, an expression of (his) genius. Michel stresses, in conversation with a policeman (who functions in much the same way as James Stewart's character in *Rope*) that the crimes themselves would not be the total objective of the supermen, only their sort of initiation, what they would do at first to establish their radical and superior position in society. However, Bresson utilises the formal presentation of the crimes to show how the practice becomes intoxicating for Michel, how his fascination with the skill develops into an obsession/addiction. In the scene just described the steady, restrained continuity editing lays a setting of tense stability onto which the extended moment of pickpocketing is mounted. This moment stops the rhythm dead, as we hold our breath. It feels as if everything has frozen but Michel's hand. The rhythm of the scene has not been destroyed and replaced, rather suspended, awaiting the outcome. The camera holds on the site as long as the action takes (it is so quick, yet we feel that it takes *time*), and then glides easily down, falling away as the pressure is released. We cut to a position outside of the car as it pulls into a station, the

hissing of steam aurally figuring this release.

As the film goes on, the pickpocketing routines become increasingly elaborate. Michel has first one, then two accomplices. The gang reach the zenith of their art in a railway station spree of thievery where multiple victims are robbed. It all occurs in a flurry of slick hand movements, changeovers, and the balletic synchronisation of bodies in motion. The camera is often close in, so that we seldom have an idea of the geography of the station or our location within it. The shots are quick and don't leave us much time to grasp the intricacies of the operations. This lack of clarity, coupled with the speed, precision and assuredness of the action makes the skill of these men, and their practice of the craft appear dazzling, and indeed intoxicating. There is a sort of indeterminacy and haziness to the temporality of this scene, produced by the rhythm of editing, the sound and the qualities already mentioned, that seems to me to capture this sense of intoxication, of ecstasy achieved in the flawless execution of the crimes. There is also the fact that no one else in the station is aware of the crimes; the continuity of the crimes, the distinct flow of their duration, is known only to the thieves.

In this late scene *Pickpocket* begins to edge away from continuity. Space is fragmented and the temporality vague. There is a lack of anchorage in either dimension, yet we have the impression that the thieves themselves know what's going on. Consequently we recognise their control over events within the station, even though this power remains hidden to everyone else. *Pickpocket* eschews transparency at certain key points, while conveying the impression that for certain characters the time and space of the event is indeed transparent. The hidden machinations are only fully knowable to, and accountable by, a select, skilled group. The scene groups close-ups of what should be hidden, at the expense of what should be known. There are two sides to this event - the open timespace of the station, and the hidden duration of the string of thievery

operations. By showing us this string of unanchored close-ups of short swift actions the temporality of the event (and to a lesser extent the space) becomes somewhat indeterminate, nebulous, unmanageable. The audience are allowed brief glimpses of the underside of the event, always in the knowledge that certain characters have both sides within their grasp.

Should we consider *Pickpocket* a continuity-edited film? We certainly can't call it Classical Hollywood, but quite a lot about it conforms to the general organisational strategy of the style. Where it diverges, and the effects it produces through these divergences, make it an exceptionally interesting case study in relation to the theme of this chapter.

However, I by no means wish to suggest that those divergences are necessarily superior to the ordinary use of the continuity style. Therefore I will return to *Pickup on South Street* for a moment in an attempt to demonstrate just some of the possible stylistic, narrative and thematic employments of time in a classically continuity edited film.

The section I would like to focus on is Mo's (Thelma Ritter) final scene. It is set in her small apartment, where the communist agent Joey (Richard Kiley) awaits her return in order to pump her for information, but ends up shooting her because she knows too much. Just prior to this scene we have seen her warn Skip, over coffee at a café bar, that this man is searching for him. The scene has a dreary, drained quality, as Mo finds Skip slouched over the bar, looking simultaneously dejected and bored. The scene draws to an end with Skip saying "You look tired Mo, you better go home." Her familiar armour of stoic resignation has slipped for a moment, as she breaks down mid-sentence, her hand reaching to her forehead. Suddenly she seems much older than we had taken her to be.

Between the café and her apartment, a side-on high angle tracking shot presents Mo going through the drudgery of her everyday life, hawking ties (without success) on a construction site (as opposed to her more lucrative, and interesting, life selling information). A row of behatted heads pays no attention to her repeated proposition, apart from one man, who seems to make an almost imperceptible move to look away. This row of listless bodies leaning against a timber and looking on (what are they looking at? Do they have nothing better to do?) suggests at once a feeling of lifeless, blank vacuity, while also representing an unresponsive world (fig. 1.10).

fig. 1.10

This single shot bridges the scenes in the café and her apartment. A dissolve at both ends loosens its place within the temporal structure of this sequence of three sites. The time of her tie-selling expedition is made somewhat vague - it presents both her journey home, and a synechdochic image of the tiring, often fruitless pursuit of her daily life.

In the next shot she opens the door and steps slowly into her dark apartment, a quick sigh escaping as soon as her face emerges from behind the door. She locks it

behind her and hobbles toward her bed, looking as if she's caught for breath. However, the sense here is not that she is sick, but rather very tired, her face contorting into a mixture of pain and relief at yet another hard day done - and yet, this is not the resilient, pugnacious Mo with whom we have become acquainted. The camera pans to follow her around the bed, and then moves in to momentarily submerge the screen in blackness, before she snaps her bedside lamp on and begins to crank a gramophone with her back turned to us.

The music begins to play - it's a version of 'Mam'selle' (a song made famous by *The Razor's Edge* (Goulding, 1946)). As the sound of an accordion gently fades in Mo turns and slumps backwards onto the bed. Her eyes still look away, looking inward, almost appealing to something, her mouth still slightly open. Her body seems quietly dismayed at being used so fruitlessly each day, this day in particular, and craves rest. The music is lazily good-natured, romantic, pleasant and somewhat soporific. With effort, she props up a pillow against the bedrail and shuffles into a position lying back against it, some of the ties that she sells dangling behind her head. She pants as she sits back, the look of pain crosses her face again - this time it's almost anguish, posed as a question. With some difficulty she fumbles out her glasses, puts them on and begins to scribble in her notebook.

A single mobile shot contains all of this action, conspiring with the elements of performance, lighting, music, and the accumulated affect of the previous two scenes to produce the feeling of being drained of life, of being literally exhausted, used up. The time of this scene is tired too, satisfied with little movements in this temporal bubble high up above the street.

The lyrics of the tune ironically evoke a romantic meeting in a Parisian café, while Mo is emphatically alone. At least until a short shake of the mattress alerts her to

the shoed feet that are in the process of being crossed on its surface. A quick pan follows her gaze, but then a cut breaks the flow that had been established. "What are you buying Mister?" she says, as if the only kind of interaction she knows and expects is that of the self-interested transaction, deal, or bargain. Joey explains that he wants the name and address of the pickpocket that she'd already sold to a woman earlier. The Mo we know revives a little, obstinately (though resignedly) refusing to give up the information, even when the offer is raised to $500.

The camera pulls back as the man gets up to stand before the bed, his shoulder constituting the boundary of the frame on the right. We look down on Mo, who lies prone on the bed. The camera's retraction has expanded the frame to include again the gramophone, which sits prominently on a bedside table (fig. 1.11). At this point the spinning record clearly becomes connected with Mo, as a dynamic image of an isolated life spinning itself out. The turning of the record is a refined image of time passing, each revolution bringing the needle closer to the end groove.

fig. 1.11

The positioning of the gramophone beside Mo like this, observed from above by Joey, asserts the correspondence. It is a small box of kinetic energy that produces motion and sound until its power runs out. The sound it is producing at this moment is quiet, unhurried, somewhat lethargic, and lacking in force. Its thin sonance and small form reflects Mo's current state. Furthermore, we get the impression that her lifeforce is weakening, just as the wavering tone-arm nears the centre of the record.

As Joey leans increasingly heavily on Mo we move into a shot reverse shot exchange. The flow of the scene is modulated again, as the medium shots of Mo on the bed are interrupted by brief, fitful close-ups of the sweat-drenched face of a very anxious Joey. Two subjects, and the characteristics of their respective durations (one winding down, the other wound up) are cogently presented. The implications are made explicit:

> Joey: Look, I haven't got a lot of time.
>
> Mo: *You* haven't got a lotta time! Listen Mr., when I come in here tonight, you seen an old clock runnin' down. I'm tired. I'm through. Happens to everybody sometime. It'll happen to you too someday.

Mo goes on to describe the various pains and hardships that define her life, including a difficulty just getting up in the morning. Yet she continues to do so, toiling away in an effort to be able to afford a grand funeral. "I go right on doing it. Well, what am I gonna do, knock it? I have to go on makin' a living so I can die." All the while the record continues to revolve, its circularity suggesting the banality of successive undifferentiated days.

Finally, Mo "talks herself into an early grave," as Joey puts it, by revealing that

she knows he is a communist and that he's after some stolen microfilm. Her fear quickly

gives way to acceptance, claiming that she's so tired he'd be doing her a favour by

blowing her head off. The camera pans left from a close-up of her face to focus on the

spinning vinyl. As we hear the gunshot the needle runs off into the end groove, the

music giving way to static (fig. 1.12).

fig. 1.12

Killing Time: agency and emptiness in *Rio Bravo* and *High Noon*

As we saw in the last section, the self-imposed limits of the continuity-editing

system do not preclude a wide spectrum of expressivity in terms of temporal stylisation.

I will now push this point further by illustrating the potential exploitation of those

temporal stylistics for political and philosophical ends, demonstrating the fact that

temporal stylisation can actively contribute to the thematic and conceptual force of a

film, rendering and embodying opposing views, ideas, and modes of existence. The

nature of classical continuity's limiting frame makes it particularly effective in this

respect. I will examine how much it is possible for the manner in which time is

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presented to influence the manner in which time, and the protagonist's relationship to it, is understood. To do this I will look at two films that are united by a similar theme of waiting for a potentially lethal event over which the main character has little or no control – Howard Hawks' *Rio Bravo* (1959) and Fred Zinnemann's *High Noon* (1952).

The continuity system presents time within a representational framework that is modelled after a human way of experiencing a spatio-temporal world. It performs a naturalised recomposition of time that allows for the presentation of varying modes of temporal experience, of differing ways of relating to one's own duration and the duration of a world outside of oneself. The prescribed style-set of continuity editing offers a specific mode for thinking through the moving image, for the philosophical exploration of ways of being in the world.[60]

Both films are westerns of the classical period, and as such should not deviate significantly from the mode of temporal structuration presented so far. In fact, it has been suggested that the western hero of the classical period embodies the idea of masculine agency – "A single man re-shapes society in a flash of will and lead, and America has loved him for that power to make the world rather than to be made by it."[61] While this perspective may be accused of glossing over some of the complexities of character and narrative in many of these apparently straightforward films, it reflects the generalized understanding that classical westerns contain characters whose motives are relatively clear-cut, who are presented with situations wherein their choices are relatively clear, and who make decisions that have definite results within, and effects upon, the film world. From a Deleuzian perspective the style of the films should reflect

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[60] I adopt the Hedeggerian term here because of its specifically temporal connotations. Being-in-the-world, or Dasein, contributes a sense of Being as necessarily being part of a temporal world, a world that endures. cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004)

[61] Lauren Quiring, "Dead men walking: consumption and agency in the western," *Film & History* XXXIII, no. 1 (2003): 41

this perceptual relationship between human and environment. The time presented should be determined by the actions of the characters. Yet both of these films contain periods of 'empty' time; time that must be 'killed' by the protagonist in some way before something can happen to end that waiting period. This runs counter to the idea of a film-world, and a film-time, which is bent around the actions of the main characters. Yet there are many films within the canon of the continuity editing style that contain periods of waiting, particularly many heist or prison films. So is this a chink in the armour of the cinema's sensori-motor schema?

I will argue that the way in which the continuity editing style deals with this empty time functions as a custodial measure, protecting the instinctual understanding of the character's relationship with their environment. I will also suggest that, within those limits, the way that these two films choose to organise their time, and to present their protagonists' relationship with time and the deadline, reflects their respective politics, or world-view.

In *Rio Bravo* John T. Chance (John Wayne) is under siege in a small town, awaiting the attack of Burdett (John Russell) and his men. From the point at which the De Guello (The Cutthroat Song) is played by the Mexican band (the signal that death awaits him) to the eventual attack, Chance and his few allies are conspicuously subject to the passing of time. Their perceived relationship with time is turned around – no longer is the passage of time the result of their actions and their movements, now their actions only serve to fill in that empty period of time. Yet the way this period is presented is indicative of continuity editing's attitude toward time. The first image we get after the realisation of the meaning behind the music is of Chance sitting silently in his chair, tapping his foot and smoking a cigarette, getting up and sitting on his desk, rolling another cigarette and shouting at Stumpy (Walter Brennan) to stop playing along

with the tune on his harmonica. What we get is a refined image of Chance's agitation. This sequence succeeds in both itemising the moments, filling them with actions, and embodying Chance's disquiet in response to the imposition of a deadline on his own time. Chance's body won't stay still, it's itching to do something, straining to escape the sensation of being powerless in the face of time.

This custodial effort extends beyond this initial sequence. The period of waiting, which stretches from one evening to the next, is broken down into images of what the characters did. We see them playfully bicker about a woman, give Dude (Dean Martin) his guns back, have a shave, bicker with the woman, accidentally shoot at each other, bicker with the woman again, and at the end of the first evening we see Chance carry Feathers (Angie Dickinson) upstairs (a hint that even the sleeping hours are spent in activity). The focus is quickly shifted from the threat of imminent death to Dude's recovery from alcoholism and the furthering of the relationship between Chance and Feathers. This succeeds in re-establishing the protagonists' potency, their determination of time (particularly the film time), and returns them to the position of cause in the cause and effect chain.

Rio Bravo faces its protagonists with an indefinite period of time to kill, but in *High Noon* Marshal Will Kane knows exactly when his time will come. A large portion of the film is presented in real-time, but I'd like to initially focus on the final 2 minutes before noon, and before the arrival of the man who has vowed to kill him. Kane has again been made subject to time, but spends the majority of the film actively attempting to deal with his impending fate. One of the main plot points sees him refuse to run away. He asserts his choice to stay and face his enemy, though he intends to do so by drumming up a posse of townspeople. His failure in this respect places him again in a position of vulnerability to the passing of time and the approach of the deadline.

The last few minutes before noon find him alone in his office. He looks at the clock and decides to write his last will and testament. This is followed by a sequence of shots that shows the positions and attitudes of the townspeople who have deserted him, and his waiting killers, interspersed with shots of the clock, and of Kane, and even of the empty chair in his office (in which his prospective killer once sat), accompanied by an increasingly intense soundtrack. Low horn stabs underpin the melody, marking the passage of each moment (and imposing a particular rhythm on time) like a metronome. The cuts often coincide, adhering to a regular rhythmic pattern, with louder, more urgent orchestral stabs.

This sequence succeeds in atomising the real-time of Kane's final minutes, of making the time pass visually, through shots that each stand for something, and aurally, though music that seems to count itself down to a climax. Interestingly we can look at this sequence in the same way as the scene from *Pickup on South Street* – even though it seems to be a real-time rendition of the final 2 minutes, the shots could all be taken as simultaneous, as they contain images of people in different locations around the town manifesting their awareness of the approaching moment. Once again, this apparently 'empty' time is rendered as a composite of *things*, of symbols, attitudes and actions.

In this final sequence Kane is visibly disturbed, frantic even. The editing style works both to contribute to this impression (augmenting Cooper's performance), and to express it. At the same time, this progressive cycling though different places full of waiting faces, peppered with shots of the clock face, insists upon the inexorable progress toward the fateful moment. The sequence proceeds gravely toward its conclusion with the unwavering steadiness of the approaching train that is Kane's concern.

In one respect this would seem to agree more readily with Deleuze's conception

of the time-image, wherein the character and their actions are seen to be subject to the passage of time. Here Kane is undoubtedly felt, and feels himself, to be subject to time. Yet the way he has responded to this imposition, and the way this response is formally presented adheres exceptionally closely to the model of the movement-image. Kane's situation is clear, as are his choices. He acts decisively, choosing to stay in the town and deputise a bunch of townspeople to stand against Frank Miller (Ian MacDonald) and his gang. It happens that in this case, his decisive actions do not have the desired results – the townspeople refuse to help him. But this must be considered one of the possible outcomes of his request – either they would help or they wouldn't. This maintains the primacy and clarity of the cause and effect chain (nobody said that the effects had to be good or wanted). When his resolve weakens, it does so visibly and unequivocally, just as its reinforcement is rendered visible in the moment of a facial expression and a movement (fig. 1.13). This subjection to time ultimately becomes merely conceptual, a side effect of the overarching theme of Kane's betrayal by the townspeople.

fig. 1.13 – the return of Kane's resolve

The final minutes before noon find Kane very much aware of his state of subjection to the passage of time and the impotence of his own actions. Yet the style of this final scene projects a sense of order on the unfolding of time - it breaks it down into a series of views from around the town that hammer home the film's themes of betrayal and approaching doom. This sequence is full of cross-cutting and eyeline-matches, carefully maintaining a strong sense of logical connection between shots, the sequence itself contributing the forceful control that Kane has lost. Kane is a leader and protector in the town, his fatherly/friendly influence should pervade the town (and he has indeed covered much ground, managing to visit many homes and buildings in the town in search of aid), yet it is now revealed that he is just a man, alone in his office, while the real ability to be everywhere, see everything, and ultimately control everything is wielded by the film sequence itself, as it strings together scenes from around the town, forcefully releasing/imposing its images and information. The protagonist has lost control, and more importantly lost his sense of control, but an external driving interpretative force remains, one that determines the recomposition of the notional time of the town and townspeople based on a clear conceptual plan.

The Absurd Man and the Cuttthroat Song

While both films present their protagonists with a deadline that bears a potentially lethal threat, they differ in terms of how the protagonists choose to respond to that deadline. Indeed this was, according to Hawks, part of the reason for making *Rio Bravo*. Chance's professionalism, his assertion of responsibility, agency and self-determination was to be a kind of rejoinder to what was in Hawks' view Will Kane's lack of professionalism. It seemed unacceptable to him that a lawman should grasp feverishly for solutions that relied upon the help of unskilled townspeople, and which

would involve them in a battle that could well see many of them dead. Whether we agree with this sentiment or not, we must accept that the key issue is one of self-determination, and responsibility.

In Hawks' own words:

> *Rio Bravo* was made because I didn't like a picture called *High Noon*. […] I didn't think a good sheriff was going to go running around town like a chicken with his head off asking for help, and finally his Quaker wife had to save him. That isn't my idea of a good western sheriff. […] a good western sheriff would turn around and say, "How good are you? Are you good enough to take the best man they've got?" The fellow would probably say no, and he'd say, "Well, then I'd just have to take care of you." And that scene was in *Rio Bravo*. […] we made *Rio Bravo* the exact opposite from *High Noon* […].[62]

These two films present opposing worldviews, and they do so partly through the elaboration of story and character, and partly through the way that they organise and present their time. Both may be classed within the category of classical continuity editing, and both work within the confines of this system to produce two subtly different renderings of the temporality of their respective fictional worlds. We may make value judgements about the result of *High Noon's* manipulation of its time flow in relation to the film as a whole, but the decision to impose a particular rhythm and quality on a film's time is devoid in itself of value. To say that the way that *High Noon* treats time is simply bad would be somewhat akin to saying that the choice of a particular colour

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[62] Joseph McBride, *Hawks on Hawks* (London: University of California Press, 1982), 130

scheme in a scene is bad because you don't like the colour blue. We might, however, say that if *High Noon* falls down in some way, it does so in the way that its particular temporal scheme is deployed within the overall structure of theme and narrative. It presents itself as occurring in real time, and creates building intensities of dismay and suspense as one by one the townspeople give their excuses for not being able to help. The relationship between the protagonist and their time feels perhaps a little too straightforward – the temporality of *High Noon* has the character of novelty. Time is overly instrumentalised as a tool of subversive polemic. Just as the characters are somewhat thin and given little chance to develop, so too is the time of the film thin, and given little chance to develop. On the other hand, *Rio Bravo,* as we shall see, actively dramatises the changing relationship between character and time, between the protagonists and their duration, and utilises this aspect to produce a film that has, on the whole, a great deal more to say about human beings, their feelings and relationships, and the concepts of responsibility, duty, cowardice and courage.

This opinion of the relative merit of the two films I share with Robin Wood, who suggests a compelling reading of *Rio Bravo* as expressing a proto-existentialist understanding of the human condition. This he places in contrast with what comes across as the blunt exercise in invective that is *High Noon*. He explains how the protagonist of Sartre's *Nausea*[63] has a revelatory moment while listening to a version of the song 'Some of these days' on the radio. The monumental nature of artworks like this song, particularly this recording of the song, becomes apparent to him (the protagonist). Things such as this allow the human being a certain amount of transcendence, as their creation lives on beyond them and the absurd corporeality of matter. Wood, however, understands the scene in *Only Angels Have Wings* (Hawks, 1939) wherein Jean Arthur

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[63] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (London: Penguin Books, 2000)

sings that same song to suggest a transcendence possible through the constant recognition and appreciation of one's own mortality. This is for Wood also the defining feature of Chance and his band's actions and choices in *Rio Bravo*. He writes:

> …it is the fact of death, *and only that,* that confers meaning on life. […] This (rather than a 'sense of duty' *a la High Noon)* is perhaps part of the reason why John T Chance in *Rio Bravo* seems repeatedly to *court* death, in situations where the cards are clearly stacked against him: death, and the willingness to embrace it, is the ultimate test.[64]

The fear of time itself is surely contained (even if only implicitly) within the fear of death. It is true that the fear in *Rio Bravo* has a clearly defined and relatively immediate source (the threat of Burdett's men) – but it may be extrapolated outward to pertain to the greater human condition. This rings especially true once we see the way that the film uses this threat to present in miniature the way that human beings are subject to the passage of time, the approaching possibility (and ultimate certainty) of death, and the particular inflection, whether recognized or not, this places upon every moment on the way.

Wood playfully describes Hawks as engaging with and correcting Sartre, but we might even hazard a continuation of the existentialist correspondence beyond this. Hawks' 'correction' of Sartre, as described by Wood and elaborated here, has much in common with the alternative response to the Existentialist quandary found in Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisypuhus*[65]. For Camus the only appropriate reaction to the

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[64] Robin Wood, *Rio Bravo* (London: British Film Institute, 2003), 23

[65] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (London: Penguin Books, 2005)

realization of the absurdity of existence is simply action – to do things even though we know them to be, and precisely because we know them to be, futile.

Chance is a professional - being sheriff is the job he has chosen to do, and an essential responsibility attached to that role is that he refocus dangers to the community as a whole upon himself, that he make himself, rather than the townspeople, the focus of violence. This sentiment is articulated quite clearly by Chance himself in an exchange with his rancher friend Pat Wheeler (Ward Bond), who has just offered his drivers as deputies:

> Suppose I got 'em, what'd I have? Some well-meaning amateurs, most
>
> of them worried about their wives and kids. Burdette has 30 or 40
>
> men, all professionals. Only thing they're worried about is earning
>
> their pay. No, Pat. All I'd be doing is giving 'em more targets to shoot
>
> at. A lot of people would get hurt. Joe Burdette isn't worth it. He isn't
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> worth one of those that'd get killed.

Only professional lawmen should deal (and should have to deal) with professional killers. Joe Burdette (Claude Akins) can't be allowed to get away with cold-blooded murder, but neither is that principle worth the lives of several townspeople. It needs to be worth the lives only of those who have freely chosen to take on that responsibility. Ensuring the punishment of a criminal should never endanger the lives of any but those who have chosen to professionally take on such a role. This assertion of selfhood, the decision to take on this role, constitutes a transcendent action in the mode described by Wood and Camus.

During the course of the film we see Chance put to the test. The absurdity and

finitude of his existence is brought home to him in the concentrated form of what is essentially a death-sentence. His life may very well end within a day. Potency, agency and choice suddenly seem to be both elusive and illusive. Yet Chance and his few colleagues (all there by choice) respond by doing things – most importantly they do things that don't in themselves constitute a direct response to the threat, in fact they don't really have anything to do with it. A more rational response might be Kane's frantic scramble to gather a posse that could realistically have some chance of repelling Frank Miller and his men. Chance, however, decides to forego any such rational responses, opting instead for the very real possibility of death implicit in his band's lonely stand against Burdette's '30 or 40' professional killers.

As I have said, the threat common to both films may be understood in terms of the imposition of a temporal constriction that demonstrates in small the greater constrictions and freedoms (and for the existentialist; absurdity) of temporality. The contrast between them emerges in the way that the protagonist's relationship with their temporality is presented throughout the course of each film.

After the scene of concentrated agitation and nervousness mentioned earlier (Chance rolling his cigarette), the film settles into an easy pace. The rhythm of cutting slows down, allowing for a series of relaxed dramatic elaborations of the characters and their relationships. The characters use their limited time to (for example) give Dude a bath and a shave. This scene then slips into a comic confrontation between Chance and Feathers (it was Feathers who was giving Dude the shave). Dude himself is significantly making a choice to re-engage with the world even after it has seemingly lost all meaning for him. For the previous two years he had disappeared into drunkenness following the departure of the woman he loved. It is the possibility of death, and more importantly the possibility of making a stand against death (even if it has little hope of

succeeding) that brings him back from the undifferentiated temporal abyss of his alcoholism and galvanises him into action, any action (it is important to note, though it is never an issue in the film, that Dude chooses to put himself at risk – we may assume that he has not acted as Chance's deputy for at least two years). These relatively insignificant activities and exchanges quickly overshadow the threat, holding greater weight, more relevance and merit it would appear, within the re-constructed time and space of the film-world.

But let's stay for the moment with the scene immediately following the realisation of the De Guello's true meaning. A slow track out from Chance's tapping foot echoes and reverses an earlier slow track in to Dude's pained face (battling alcohol withdrawal). It is the first shot of the scene, and so has the potential to play a large role in determining its temporal quality. The slow track modulates and prepares our sense of time, altering it from that of the previous scene and setting the standard for the present one. The camera movement is slow, and it begins with a close framing of the tapping foot (a small movement). The constrictive quality of the framing, and the restrained movement of the camera (revealing the room at a cagey pace) institutes a sense of constrictive time, of the impotence of the protagonists in the face of a foe that has announced its intent but not its presence. The De Guello still plays in the distance, its sound seeping into and pervading the jailhouse, as if the deadline itself were hanging in the air.

Chance does not know what to do with himself, and yet time flows, there only to be filled, each moment mocking him through the simple fact of *not* being the climactic moment of action/decision/doing. Soon though, a decision is made. The discussion significantly turns to the women and guns in Chance and Dude's lives, and Chance decrees that they will 'take a turn around the town.' Once out on the street, the two men

stride away from the jailhouse. The camera tracks at a constant pace with them, facing

them, so the camera is moving backwards. This confines the viewer's knowledge of the

space to only that which the pair have already passed through. They can see where they

are going, but we can't. So they are driving the movement, piloting the mobile frame.

Yet they are not going anywhere particularly - this is movement for the sake of

movement. They talk about retrieving Dude's clothes from his former, sober life, while

Chance keeps a watchful eye on any passers by (who only seem to pass behind them).

His domain is asserted in this way, even if only for himself. They are aware and in

control, they are travelling, and they are deciding where to go based not on necessity or

outside determinant, rather on their own initiative. The take is relatively long (exactly a

minute), and the camera movement is characterised by its smooth, brisk pace. It is worth

repeating that the characters hold an epistemological superiority throughout - they know

where we are going while we do not. The length and pace of the shot is also determined

by their actions. The shot begins as they exit the jailhouse, they set the pace at which the

camera tracks, and they end the shot by stopping (for no particular reason) and leaving

the street. With this one shot the regime of the film has shifted back to protagonist

action as determinative principal.

     High Noon most clearly opposes this model of character agency and style in its

adoption of a real-time aesthetic. Viewer and protagonist are painfully aware throughout

of the approaching deadline. Kane cannot take back control of his own time because it

has irrevocably been given over to a narrative device. Films that use this device do so

predominantly in an effort to create building suspense and tension. This usually arises

from the uncertainty as to whether the protagonist(s) will achieve their goal/escape their

fate before the time runs out. This becomes all the more clear when we share the same

timeframe. Their subjection to time is palpable, because it is commensurate with the

viewer's subjection to the film's duration. So Kane cannot but be subject to the passing of the film's time, forced to fit in between each shot's edit points, rather than determining them through his own actions.

Cowboy Songs and Self-determination

The difference between the ways in which the two films use the presentation of time to express their world-view is apparent in the way that *High Noon* uses music to insist upon the inevitable passage of time and the menacing promise of the lethal moment, while *Rio Bravo* demonstrates that music may also become an instrument of rebellion, a way of taking back control over time, or at least insisting upon one's will to determine and regulate one's relationship with time, even if it has been prescribed (in this case by the playing of The Cutthroat Song and the promise of 'no quarter' for the losers, but the prescriptions of mortality, illness, poverty, work, and the everyday may be extracted from this). This appropriation of music's power in *Rio Bravo* occurs within the film world, whereas in *High Noon* it is the non-diegetic theme that enforces and repeatedly reminds us of Sheriff Will Kane's predicament and impending crisis.

The theme song of *High Noon* is Dimitri Tiomkin and Ned Washington's "Do Not Forsake Me." Deborah Allison considers it to be a seminal example of the movie theme song, functioning both as a narrational and marketing device.[66] The song plays over the opening credits, its lyrics prefiguring the events of the narrative, and its insistent repetition throughout can be seen as both a means of adding to a sense of thematic and formal coherence and integration, and of creating extensive exposure to an associational trope that extends beyond the film and always points back to it.

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[66] Deborah Allison, ""Do Not Forsake Me: The Ballad of High Noon" and the Rise of the Movie Theme Song," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 28 (September/October 2003), available at http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/03/28/ballad_of_high_noon.html

Additionally, much of the novelty of *High Noon*'s story lies in its temporal constrainment – it is supposed to take place over the course of about an hour and a half, between morning and noon of Kane and Amy's wedding day. The singular focus of the score suits this intentionally limited time-span. Too many other songs, movements, or variations might have produced the impression of a more extensive, variegated time and cluttered up the minimal starkness that the film achieves as it is.

The song itself explicitly introduces the notion of temporal constrainment and inevitability before the credits have even finished rolling:

> *O to be torn 'twixt love and duty!*
>
> *S'posin' I lose my fair-haired beauty!*
>
> *Look at that big hand move along*
>
> *Nearin' high noon.*[67]

The musical theme rises up repeatedly during the course of the film to emphasize Kane's plight. David Arnold points out that the successive iterations of the theme gain in resonance and weight because they correspond to the growing sense of hopelessness and betrayal:

> …the song's verses and cadences repeat to add poignancy to Will
>
> Kane's abandonment by his wife, his repeated failures to win support
>
> from the townspeople, and the ever-more-imminent threat of Frank
>
> Miller's return. The song's repetition is as regular, you might say, as
>
> clockwork, and, like the omnipresent images of clock faces, serves

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[67] Quoted in Allison, ""Do Not Forsake Me" and the Rise of the Movie Theme Song,"

maddeningly to remind us that time is running out.[68]

Rio Bravo begins with a rather pleasant, and rather innocuous, typical western theme, easing us into the film world and its temporality. I have already mentioned the De Guello, which performs a similar function to *High Noon's* theme – announcing and accentuating the deadline. It too was composed by Tiomkin (as Hawks reputedly didn't like the historical original[69]), and so too is its purpose to emphasize the impending possibility of death (though this time from within the film world). And, as we saw earlier, for a little while it works – rattling Chance's nerves as he rolls his cigarette.

The first sign that this subjection of the protagonists' time to an arbitrary limit will not go over so easy comes in this very same scene. As Chance shifts about uneasily, Stumpy pulls out his harmonica and begins to play along with his own death knell. While this has the effect of riling Chance even more, it shows one of the protagonists appropriating and refiguring the tune, thereby undercutting its solemn threat. What should be ominous and intimidating becomes a little bit safer, even comedic. It is entirely appropriate that the character who performs this initial act of resistance is Stumpy, whose incessant grumbling and whining makes him a natural subversive.

The next, and more explicit use of music to suggest that the characters are beginning to take back control of their time, or at least making do in the face of loss of control, occurs when Dude and Colorado (Ricky Nelson) break into a spontaneous rendition of 'My rifle, my pony, and me', followed by 'Get along home, Cindy, Cindy.' Arnold takes this scene to present the jail, and its male community, as a newly minted domestic space. This is certainly one way of reading this particular confluence of

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[68] David L.G. Arnold, "My Rifle, My Pony, and Feathers: Music and the Making of Men in Howard Hawks' *Rio Bravo*," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 23, no. 3 (2006): 268-269.

[69] Ibid., 270-271.

narrative, musical and formal elements, but I am more inclined to interpret this building solidarity as a form of resistance against the loss of temporal control. The perceived link between character actions and determinate change in the film world has been severed by the imposition of a temporal limit not of their own making. Now they respond to this imposition by doing the unexpected – holing up in the jail and having a singalong. This effectively operates as a reassertion of their temporal and spatial domain. Chance suddenly realizes that all they have to do is shut themselves up in the jailhouse and wait until the U.S. Marshal arrives in a few days time. They have a secure space in which to exist for a certain period of time.

It's tempting to think of these events (Dude's overcoming his alcoholism, the blossoming romance with Feathers, the singalong) simply as distractions, the sitcom heart of a famous western, but I believe they offer much more than this. And whatever it is that they are doing, it is bound up with that central threat, and permeates the stylistic fabric of the film.

The singalong scene begins with a fade from black (a signal that an appreciable, though undefined, amount of time has passed since the last scene), loosening its temporal connection within the overall structure. We fade in to the image of Dude lying back on a bed, a cigarette in his hand, his hat pushed forward over his eyes, which are closed (fig. 1.14). Without a moment's pause he spontaneously breaks into song. The fade, his attitude, the framing, and the silky, unhurried tone of his voice suggest ease, contentment, and relaxation. The initial words of the song itself contribute to this impression:

The sun is sinking in the west,
The cattle go down to the stream,

The redwing settles in her nest,

It's time for a cowboy to dream.

fig. 1.14

The tranquility and serenity of this scene, as well as the delight in the fun of the singalong displayed by each character, constitutes an idiosyncratic response to the gravity of the threat they face. The scene is marked by its feeling of ambient cosiness, the editing and framing concerned with alternately showing a character's musical performance and their delight in another's performance. The warmth of both the lighting and the company dispels any thought of the danger that lurks outside the jailhouse door (fig. 1.15).

fig. 1.15

The group's active, positive response is one of inaction. They choose to do what is unnecessary, idiosyncratic, far from obvious. Hawks communicates this strategic playfulness through the temporal dislocation of the scene, through the rhythm of cutting (cyclng through sites where a character sits, stands or wanders, drinking coffee, singing or playing an instrument), the music and the demeanors of the characters (each has his own characteristic way of being at ease – Dude on the bed, Colorado sitting on the table, Chance standing with coffee in one hand and the other in his pocket, and Stumpy astride a backward chair). The group's relationship with their own duration is again expressed through actions and attitudes, accentuated by a film style that is focused on and defined by actions.

Kane's actions are clearly motivated – they are sensible, rational, realistic, and as such require little actual thought or choice (merely dull conviction). Chance's actions are irrational, unpredictable, and tenacious – they reflect a human subject stubbornly insisting upon their agency and potentiality even in the face of futility and senselessness. Hawks uses the temporality of continuity editing – the very fact that time is bent around actions (that is, human agency) – to produce a nuanced and profound expression of a particular way of relating to the world.

Jacques Rivette explains why Hawks' mode of storytelling was so compatible with classical continuity editing:

> It is not an idea that is fascinating in a Hawks film, but its
> effectiveness. A deed holds our attention not so much for its intrinsic
> beauty as for its effect on the inner workings of his universe.
> Such art demands a basic honesty, and Hawks's use of time and space
> bears witness to this - no flashback, no ellipsis; the rule is continuity.

No character disappears without us following him, and nothing

surprises the hero which doesn't surprise us at the same time. There

seems to be a law behind Hawks's action and editing, but it is a

biological law like that governing any living being: each shot has a

functional beauty, like a neck or an ankle. The smooth, orderly

succession of shots has a rhythm like the pulsing of blood, and the

whole film is like a beautiful body, kept alive by deep, resilient

breathing.[70]

This also partly gets at what distinguishes *Rio Bravo* from *High Noon*. It is the idea that

fascinates in Zinneman's film – time and space are instrumentalised, functioning

predominantly as conceptual scaffolding, the framework within which an idea plays

itself out. What's more, the idea has already shaped that time. The film's real-time

device, in conjunction with the musical theme, pacing, the gradual revelation of total

betrayal, and the insistent imagery of clocks and train tracks, succeeds in effecting a

great sense of impending doom, of an unstoppable rush towards climax and destruction.

In contrast *Rio Bravo* deals more directly with issues of fate and fatalism, every

scene has a sense of potentiality, of possibility, growth and life. It is the very episodic,

undirected nature of the middle section, after the De Guello has been played, that

produces this sense of irrationality (anything could happen) and therefore, true agency.

In *High Noon*, however, each scene acts out a conception of fate – it couldn't have gone

any other way, it can't go any other way. Hawks is more sympathetic to time, more

liable to employ it as a creative partner, to show us how humans act within time, how

they spend that time and what it can mean to them and to those around them.

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[70] Rivette, "The Genius of Howard Hawks," 28.

It is in this sense that I submit that the defining characteristic of the temporality of continuity editing is that it is defined by actions. This is no bad thing – it is a profoundly human way of telling stories that take place in a temporal environment. But it is not simply a condition of cinematic storytelling – how a film chooses to organise the temporality of those actions is integrated into the thematic fabric of the work, expressing a character's relationship and engagement with their environment; revealing a particular perspective on duration, a particular way of enduring, and perhaps even showing how it can transform, evolve or petrify.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have established that the classical continuity editing system presents a framework within which the sensation of time's passage may be manipulated without distracting or disturbing the ordinary perceptions of the viewer. Continuity editing may be clandestine, but it is by no means ineffective in terms of temporal stylisation.

There are three layers of time operating during the unfolding of the continuity-edited film: the fictional time of the fictional event, the filtered time of the film sequence, and the experienced time of the viewing space. Continuity editing works to naturalise the disjunction between the first two layers, to make it seem as if the film sequence depicts the event as it happened, with temporal verisimilitude. It achieves this goal, and in doing so provides a cloaking mechanism for a variety of temporal modulations. These modulations can be sharp or slow, they can add nuance to a scene, or change our sense of it entirely. They can contribute to, and integrate with, the thematic fabric of the film, and they can even present sophisticated conceptions of what it is to be a temporal being in a temporal world.

Chapter 2

The Temporality of Montage

> The shot is by no means an *element* of montage.
>
> The shot is a montage *cell*.
>
> Just as cells in their division form a phenomenon of another order, the organism or embryo, so, on the other side of the dialectical leap from the shot, there is montage.
>
> - Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram'[71]

Montage is famously a style based on connection, juxtaposition – a style centred around the belief in the fact that the conjunction (or collision) of two shots produces a third meaning inherent in neither. In this section I wish to consider the possibility that montage, at the ever-passing moment of its presentation, comes closer than any other film style to presence, both in the sense that it is *of-the-present*, and in the sense that it is *near*, an immediate phenomenon. Yet, just as it eschews the presentation of a fictional time outside of the viewer's native time, it simultaneously permits the flagrant manipulation of the unity and speed of duration from within the world of the fictional events portrayed.

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[71] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. Jay Leyda (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1951), 37.

Before I embark upon this discussion I wish to stress the fact that a montage sequence may fit within a predominantly continuity-edited film. I begin my study with the obvious touchstones of Eisenstein and Vertov, and with films that conform very clearly to the idea of montage throughout, but I do so as a way of identifying within those strong forms of montage the core of the montage aesthetic and its relationship with time, which will then allow me to apply this understanding to the weaker forms of montage that seem to sporadically infiltrate the continuity-editing systems of contemporary film.

During the course of this chapter I will examine the montage principle as it is understood and applied in varying contexts, from the dialectical montages of Eisenstein to the hip-hop montages of Darren Aronofsky. I will also look at split screen and minimally edited sequences within the category of montage. This is possible because I take the term 'montage' to refer fundamentally to the joining together of things, the putting of things into relationships. Many theorists and artists have built upon this base, adding specifics and limits to their particular definition. However, I would like to consider the temporality of montage as it manifests itself in a variety of guises, and the significant limit or specificity that I will apply concerns the temporality of cinema. These will all be film montages, and so the relationships into which things may be put must always remain caught in the flow of time, and to a large extent obey the rules of time: of sequence; direction; and expiration. It is partly because of these rules that montage is predominantly understood in terms of editing and the (usually rapid) sequencing of shots. As I mentioned above, I will attempt to complicate this somewhat by discussing the use of split screen and minimally edited sequences as montage, though these devices by no means escape the force of time.

A basic montage, in the Eisensteinian sense, consists of at least two shots, each of which presents their own content, their own respective meaning. Their relationship produces a third meaning that isn't attributable to either on its own. It is the product, rather, of those two shots, when their proximity suggests an association.

There are two possible configurations of this montage relationship (as I conceive of it within this study): one pertains to shots that are logically connected outside of the montage relationship (i.e. objects coherent with the narrative space); and one that places images that are not logically connected prior to the montage into a relationship. This second category constitutes the clearest incarnation of Eisenstein's principle – the interpretive lacuna between two disparate images, and the precise control of the content of each of those images, reducing the sequence to a series of reacting ciphers. An example of this second category would be the image of bulls being slaughtered juxtaposed with the image of workers being mercilessly shot in *Strike!* (Eisenstein, 1924). It is indeed conceivable that bulls were being slaughtered somewhere in the world of the film, and at the very moment that the workers are being shot, but, in the case of *Strike!* at least, the inclusion of such extraneous information, if it were rationalised in this way, still serves a purely metaphoric, associative, and polemical end.

Further examples of the dialectical montage crop up frequently in Eisenstein's work. This type of montage benefits from its distinctiveness – it is easy to identify. But the remainder of each of these films, that which surrounds those dialectical sequences, is also informed by a montage aesthetic. Montage for Eisenstein constituted a style of representation, as well as a mode of cinematic dialectics. Those moments of pure juxtaposition (such as Kerensky and the mechanical bird) represent a sort of Platonic form for the style (strong montage), which is applied in a weaker way to the simple process of telling the story. The scene in *October* (Eisenstein, 1928) that follows

immediately after the Bolsheviks have won the vote at the Second Congress of Soviets expresses a buzz of excitement and activity as a rapid sequence of shots present a flurry of feet entering and exiting through a swinging door, intercut with shots of telephone receivers being picked up. None of these shots are connected following rules of continuity. They are logically and spatially connected, but still conform to the aesthetic of montage, as modelled by the pure dialectical montage. The material itself does not engage in a dialectical relationship, thereby forcing the viewer to make a connection – rather it is the *way* in which the material is presented, the style of representation that increases the expressive effect of the images, enriching and embellishing, deepening the contours of that one meaning that the sequence seeks to express, which is: things are busy, such excitement!

The term montage may therefore be applied to sequences of images of disparate, unconnected content, employed solely for dialectical and affective purposes, but also, and importantly, to sequences of images whose content comes from within the logical narrative space. Material coherent with the narrative (elements of the story) may also be put into a montage relationship – which means that a montage is not determined solely by the dialectical qualities of the material it utilises – it is rather a formal technique applicable to a range of materials, irrespective of whether or not they relate dialectically.

In terms of temporality we may think of the dialectical or strong montage as presenting an extreme version of the kind of filmic time produced by the weaker forms of montage. In the dialectical montage, the continuity of space and time between two fragments is drawn out to its thinnest possibility, its most tenuous connection. The content of both fragments may conceivably exist within the same world at the same time, but this is just one possibility amongst many – they may as well be taken from different worlds and different times.

Assumptions of neighbourhood or of congruence between the contents of fragments are more than unfounded – they somewhat miss the point. A linkage between images is not sufficient to create a world, but it is sufficient to create an idea that wasn't already suggested by either image on its own. To successfully create a world the linkage must be of a certain kind, and the content of each fragment must conform to a growing idea of the world to which the film refers. At the beginning of a classically continuity edited film these strictures are at their loosest. The viewer is willing to accept a variety of incongruous images because the world and its characters are only beginning to be shaded in (it could even be a world in which workers are being shot while bulls are being slaughtered – but from there the relevance of this connection would have to be swiftly developed). However, as the fragments pile up, creating an ever more detailed picture of that world, its content and its limits, the possibilities narrow, and rules of relevance and congruence must be followed. Dialectical montage takes the openness and possibility of the beginning as its sustained method. The images serve as carriers – for concepts, emotions, associations, and abstract shapes and movements, and by their linkage a further idea, emotion, or association is engendered. The fabric that these fragments construct by clustering into sequences is one of ideas and abstractions more than one of time and space. So the primacy of time and space is eroded, yet both remain in different ways. The spatial configuration and character of the image persists in both the real-world object to which it refers, as well as the graphical dimension of lines, shapes and edges often accented by the Soviet montagists. Time, on the other hand, is simultaneously pushed back while it is brought forward, negated while it is foregrounded. Each fragment is temporal, each has a specific duration, but it is always an excerpt, a sample of another time. When put into a montage sequence it doesn't re-

construct the time of a fictional event (as in continuity editing), it is, rather, entirely subordinated to the rhythms and tempos of a procession of moving images. Precisely because the fragment is temporal, and the sequence into which it fits is temporal, time comes forward as the rhythmic flow of ideas and abstractions.

Rhythm is a central concept in the theories of montage that emerged from the Soviet filmmakers of the early twentieth century. It is usually the editing scheme of a film that is considered to be the primary rhythm-producing force, though V.I. Pudovkin demonstrates a more comprehensive and open understanding of where cinematic rhythm comes from. Here, in a response to Louis Delluc's theorisation of cinema in 'Photogeny", he describes how rhythm is produced through editing:

> ... the viewer will always notice each moment when one shot changes to another (a kind of jump), even if this change is carried out smoothly, as for instance with a dissolve, and will perceive this as a sort of visual blow – or an accent, as I call it.
>
> These accents (moments of transition) will be distributed throughout the film or; more precisely, throughout the time it will take to show the film. They are distributed in a particular order that depends on the relative length of the takes and the way that they are combined. They can be very powerful (a close-up replaces a long shot), middling in their impact (one character replaces another without a change of shot), or weak (dissolve). In one way or another a series of accents be evident in any film, regardless of the tendencies of the director who makes it. If you imagine that each moment of transition is accompanied by a short sound of the appropriate pitch or volume,

we should, in the course of showing the film, hear a whole tune made up of sounds that were sometimes loud, sometimes soft, sometimes fast, sometimes slow. Precise, accented moments arranged in time and separated by varying intervals surely represent a form of temporal rhythm? (I understand rhythm to be a simple succession of accented and unaccented moments).[72]

Yet he goes on to describe how rhythm is inscribed in the image through movement and the image of movement:

Any movement, seen from the point of view of its visual perception, is inevitably possessed of a more or less clearly expressed rhythmic construction. A man walks, turns around, walks in another direction – and this is perceived as a sequence of interval, accent, interval. Any rapid change in direction or speed, any transition from stillness to movement or vice-versa is perceived as an accent, while the periods of uniform movement that divide them are seen as intervals. Alternation is present in every movement but it is distinguished in different cases solely by the degree of its complexity.[73]

Pudovkin is careful to stress that the accents are distributed 'throughout *the time it will take* to show the film', rather than simply saying 'throughout the film'. Here he displays an understanding of the crucial difference between the time of the film and the

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[72] Vsevolod Pudovkin, *Selected Essays*, ed. Taylor Richard (New York: Seagull Books, 2006), 5-7.

[73] Ibid., 8.

time of its showing in front of an audience, as well as the fact that a film is only a film while it is being shown before an audience. A rhythm within the time layer of the film world has the capacity to be translated to the audience if it is presented within the content of the film fragment. This kind of rhythm (a rolling barrel, pumping pistons, the curved line of a grain silo) can exist within both layers of time. However, the kind of rhythm that is produced through editing, as well as through the interaction of these rhythmic elements of content, can exist only within one time layer - that of the cinema space, the projection of the film reel, the duration of a viewing by an audience. Rhythms from this layer can of course have an effect upon events and things within the world of the film in the sense that they alter the way that the fictional event or thing is perceived. They can distort or accentuate, convey an essence or introduce dissonance, but these filtrations exist always at the most superficial time layer of the film; that of the cinema space, never that of the film world[74]. Here again we must consider the variation between a weak and strong montage. In the case of a pure dialectical montage the rhythm is produced both by the rhythm of cutting, and by the interaction of rhythms contained within the fragments themselves. Rhythm has its roots in both the time layer of the cinema space and the time of the fragment itself (the duration of the recording of the pro-filmic space and the things that existed within it while the camera was rolling). In contrast, the question of this kind of montage's rhythmic relationship with the film world and the time of the notional event is simply not an issue. There is no real film world for the rhythm to have an effect upon, to produce a filtration of. It is an idea that is rhythmicised by a particular cutting scheme, not an action, event, or thing. The absence of congruence between the fragments means that they are not glued together

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[74] Apart from the rare exceptions of films where at least one protagonist is aware of the fact that he is in a film, or where the film world acknowledges its nature and presents itself as connected with a world outside of the film (as at the end of *Blazing Saddles* (Brooks, 1974), or in a curious scene from *The Tingler* (Castle, 1959)).

into a unit except by the superficial layer of montage, so rhythm cannot have an effect upon an event within the time layer of the film world. Indeed it is the rhythm that binds the fragments together, rather than any internal congruence.

In this respect, montage, as a film style, may be defined by the way in which it presents time. To some extent it is atemporal, in that it bears no intrinsic time of its own – the temporality of the fragments is simply an aspect of their status as raw material. The temporality of montage emerges in the cinema space, as the temporality of images juxtaposed in front of an audience.

The Fourth Dimension

If we can say that montage is atemporal in this way, then we might also submit that it is atemporal in further ways. Sam Rohdie, in his book *Montage*, compares D.W. Griffith's use of parallel editing with that of Eisenstein[75]. Rohdie suggests that Griffith's joining of fragments produces and refers to a chronological linear time of the film world. In contrast, Eisenstein's use of repetition pushes it away from the time of the film world, toward the time of the viewing itself.

> Griffith's parallel alternations are always chronological and essentially
> linear. Eisenstein's parallelisms are seldom successive or
> chronological in this way and are not composed to the time of the
> action (interior to the film) but by an abstract time of the film (exterior
> to it). Fragments (shots) are not joined to create a continuity nor do
> they refer to an interior unity of which the fragment is an essential

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[75] Sam Rohdie, *Montage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 33.

part, but rather correspond to a need to demonstrate a relation or organise a significance.[76]

This is essentially the point that we have been pursuing for a while now, but Rohdie suggests a further implication of Eisenstein's practice:

> Eisenstein proceeds by breaks so that a repetition dilates time and resists progression while correspondences and associations create links beyond time and beyond a line of before and after. And they create relations of tempo, rhythm and rhyming that are independent of action and often, as in the case of the Odessa steps, are a marked distortion, an excess and overemphasis.[77]

Similarly, in a discussion of jump cuts Noel Burch cites several examples of Eisenstein's use of this technique to produce similar yet altered images of Cathedral towers, hanging bicycles and the famous cream separator spout. The object is seen from a variety of angles. This repetition presents a set of surrounding perspectives on a single central point. A fulcrum with a series of viewing points spread centrifugally outwards. Burch sees this technique as the fragmentation and recomposition of space in an almost Cubist manner. He describes a scene from *Ivan the Terrible, Part One* (Eisenstein, 1944) in which a series of three shots presents different views on a group of anxious faces with an icon in the background. The components shift places within the frame from shot to shot.

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[76] Rohdie, *Montage*, 33

[77] Ibid.

… Eisenstein has here managed to create a very unusual sort of

cinematic space: It exists only in terms of the totality of shots included

in the sequence; we no longer have any sense of a surrounding space

endowed with independent existence from which a sequence of shots

has somehow been excerpted. Rather, we see a space that exists in the

same multi-faceted, complex way that Braque's billiard table exists;

we see a setting that is the sum total of all the perspectives of it

embodied in the successive shots, a setting whose cohesion is created

by the harmonious articulation of the shots.[78]

Burch extracts the significance of this achievement in terms of the spatial, but doesn't

follow up on the temporal implications. By fragmenting space and recomposing it in

this way we gain multiple, varied perspectives on an event. The positions of the

components within the frame change from shot to shot, so that spatial continuity is

undermined. The shots become alternatives to each other, each having equal claim to

authority. The only thing that could give one primacy over another is their position

within the sequence. We cannot view all of the shots at once, so we must watch them in

succession. The temporality of film sets the conditions for primacy. Yet I am inclined to

think that the peculiarity of this spatial relationship has an effect on our impression of

time rather than the other way around. The equality and alternativity within the shot

sequence will bleed over into the temporal relationship, presenting the shots as

alternative temporal perspectives on the event also. The linear left to right chronology

of the sequence is disturbed, giving the impression of the neutralisation of time's

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[78] Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1973), 39.

forward propulsion, of the fragmentation and recomposition of time as a structure having more in common with a prism than a line.

The roots of this technique can be traced back to Eisenstein's theorisation of a 'filmic fourth dimension'[79]. In contemporary usage the fourth dimension is most commonly understood simply to be time, but for Eisenstein and his contemporaries the idea of a fourth dimension was considerably more complex and provocative, not to mention vague. For him the fourth dimension was something that required time to come into being, and to be intuitively recognised, but it was an aspect of objects and events that we have only partial access to, can only partially grasp. It isn't simply a three-dimensional object, or collection of objects, in duration, but the total event of a set of objects in motion over time. This ideal seems to have much in common with the Bergsonian conception of durée – the system that is caught in a continual process of total change. The fragmentation of the space-time event and its recomposition as a crystalline entity, viewed from multiple perspectives, reflects Bergson's assertion that duration is a multiplicity, a thing that changes in quality as we focus on any component part (any aspect). Anne Nesbet describes Eisenstein's attempts at producing four-dimensional cinema in *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925):

> Again and again this film places extraordinary demands on its
> audience as it seeks to construct a transcendent, fourth-dimensional
> point of view. These demands are made at some points with great
> subtlety and at other points with furious 'Cubist' directness. One
> sequence combines shots of the people on the steps, the sailors on the
> battleship and the little yawls, taken from various angles [..], in order

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[79] Eisenstein, *Film Form*, 64-71.

to unite civil and revolutionary views of events within the spectator's synthetic meta-perspective. On occasion the film attempts to give us 'sections' of the four-dimensional hyperobject, the paradoxical three-dimensional shadows cast by a four-dimensional thing.[80]

These 'sections' correspond to the repetitive variations on an image mentioned above, the same kind of thing that Burch was responding to in his discussion of jump cuts. This type of montage is at once deeply engaged with a very sophisticated notion of temporality, while effectively negating time, taking it apart (perhaps we might even say deconstructing time).

Dan Shaw describes the effect of Eisenstein's montage as often being 'centrifugal' rather than 'cumulative', and resulting in a 'kinetic jumble of parts'[81]. There are echoes here of Rohdie's notions of repetition and return producing a non-linear chronology, a crystalline temporality that offers an alternative to the convention and familiarity of the time of continuity. The centrifugal montage neutralizes a shot's temporal status, devaluing its position within the sequence, and emphasizing its availability and equality as a possible perspective on both the time and space of the event (as well as each of the other shots in the sequence). Yet the fundamental temporality of cinema means that we do see this happen over time – indeed Eisenstein himself is keen to recognise this. Here he is likening the ability to create overtones in film to the same potential in music:

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[80] Anne Nesbet, *Savage Junctures: Sergei Eisenstein and the Shape of Thinking* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 64.

[81] Dan Shaw, "Sergei Eisenstein," *Senses of Cinema*, cteq annotations database. Available at http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/04/eisenstein.html

And here is observed one further curious parallel between the visual

and the musical overtone: It cannot be traced in the static frame, just

as it cannot be traced in the musical score. Both emerge as genuine

values only in the dynamics of the musical or cinematographic

process.

Overtonal conflicts, foreseen but unwritten in the score, cannot

emerge without the dialectic process of the passage of the film through

the projection apparatus, or that of the performance by the symphony

orchestra.

The visual overtone is proved to be an actual piece, an actual

element of – a fourth dimension![82]

The 'overtone' is how he characterises the specific product of four-dimensional cinema,

a product that cannot be identified in the freeze frame, and which only comes into being

when the film is rolled, at the moment that it is given back its duration.

How then do we conceive of the paradoxical temporal status of Eisenstein's

four-dimensional montage, that is both atemporal yet fascinated with time and reliant

upon the temporality of cinema? Perhaps we might say that this kind of montage is in a

continuous process of becoming atemporal.

Fragments of Time

Jacques Aumont, in his book *Montage Eisenstein*, stresses the degree to which

Eisenstein understood his films to be compositions of 'fragments', and of filmmaking as

the assemblage of individual fragments into a reflexive system. This concept of the

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[82] Eisenstein, *Film Form*, 69.

'fragment' has two important aspects, two points that informed Eisenstein's approach to film. These are:

1. "The 'physical', or the 'physiological' (to use Eisenstein's term) characteristics of each fragment, which focuses precisely on the individualization of every fragment as a *film image*"[83].

2. The "temptation to absolutely master the fragment, or the image, by breaking it down analytically into 'stimuli.' It is the temptation, if you will, to claim to be able to calculate each fragment (its composition, and therefore, its effect)."[84]

The sections of film that go to make up a continuity-edited sequence could equally be called fragments, but they exist – in the mind of the filmmaker, and on the script page – as the elements of a potential continuity. In this sense we can think of lost fragments, of the raw film sections that never made the cut, that had a destiny stamped upon them, but ultimately were not chosen to flesh out the scene that pre-existed them in potential.

The montage fragment, on the other hand, has no pre-existent potential continuity to live up to, no pre-determined destiny that it must meet. Eisenstein believed there to be a "necessity for the filmmaker to treat each fragment like a 'new point of view, differentiated from that of the [preceding] fragment'; that is, to construct each fragment like a new image of the material filmed, possessing its own definition in terms of 'parameters.'"[85] From Aumont again: "it is certain that Eisenstein is deeply

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[83] Jacques Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*, trans. Lee Hildreth, Constance Penley, and Andrew Ross (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 32.

[84] Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*, 33.

[85] Ibid., 35.

preoccupied with this value of the fragment as a *unit* of composition. The essential meaning of the concept of montage […] is that, for Eisenstein, meaning is communicated by putting each fragment into relationship with those that surround it."[86] The 'physical' aspect of the fragment is the degree to which the film section has its origin in the pro-filmic, in a reality that the filmmaker has an amount of control over. The urge to control the pro-filmic results in the breaking down of the fragment into molecular stimuli, and its conceptualisation as a collection of 'parameters.'

From here, once again, the idea arises that montage tends toward becoming atemporal – a system of contrasting and reflecting cyphers, bearing only the duration of its projection. And, in its most formally exact case - the dialectical montage that constitutes the strongest form of montage - it would necessarily be so. At least, it would were it not for the fact that one of the parameters to be controlled must necessarily be time, the fact that the cyphers themselves are temporal. Like all the other parameters, the time of one shot is put into a relationship of conflict or complemetarity with the shots around it, or even with the other parameters of its own shot.

The film sequence is therefore caught in a continuous process of becoming as it unfolds in front of an audience, its conflicts and connections operating upon the time of the film fragments, but within the time layer of the cinema space. The time of the film fragment conceived of as a unit is disconnected from the temporality of the sequence in all respects but that of its affective function. Time is a parameter within a complex of parameters - it is contained and superceded by the time of the sequence's unfolding.

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[86] Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*, 35.

Ideology

Another definition of montage: the subjective re-organisation of reality. Lev Kuleshov uses the term in this sense in his essay *The Principles of Montage* while describing the dissemination of news through capitalist and communist newspapers: "the political world-view of the editor of the paper […] determines the montage of one or another paper."[87] Montage is the means by which reality is put through the filter of the filmmaker. Reality (time and space) is edited and re-organised by the filmmaker according to their ideological leanings, their perspective. In a very literal way Kuleshov and Vertov wanted the filmmaker to be a propagandist, and to refine the art of cinema was to hone their skills as cinematic propagandists.

> The artist's relationship to his surrounding reality, his view of the
>
> world, is not merely expressed in the entire process of shooting, but in
>
> the montage as well, in the capacity to see and present the world
>
> around him. […] Thus, film montage, as the entire network of
>
> filmmaking, is inextricably linked to the artist's world-view and his
>
> ideological purpose."[88]

The force of intention, be it of the filmmaker, or somehow of the film itself, becomes inescapable. As the sequence of images becomes more arbitrary we feel a decisive hand behind them. It becomes apparent that we are being shown these things for a reason and we search for it. We may identify the traits of an auteur behind the classical Hollywood film that we are watching, but this will require some effort, or

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[87] Lev Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film: The Writings of Lev Kuleshov*, trans. Ronald Levaco (London: University of California Press, 1974), 185.

[88] Ibid., 184.

some specific interest in such connections, to get beyond the feeling that we are witnessing an account of events, wherein what we are shown is determined by the requirements of the story. With montage, however, what we are shown often seems to be determined by the requirements of the idea that needs to be conveyed.

V.F. Perkins points to this fact in relation to Richard Brooks' *Elmer Gantry* (Brooks, 1960). A key scene sees an evangelical healing performed while, unbeknownst to the crowd, the tent is ignited by a thrown cigarette butt. The two sites are intercut – as the 'miracle' is successfully performed, the tent successfully catches fire. In the context of the film, Perkins asserts, this manages to subtly suggest that the miracle can only have unfortunate results for the character that performs it, Sharon (Jean Simmons). However, such a meaning could be more explicitly communicated, he says, were the healing intercut with shots of a forest fire. Such a juxtaposition would be unmotivated by the events occurring within the logical world of the film, as in the arbitrary connection of the slaughtered bulls with the slaughtered workers in *Strike!* In this case, he writes, "the symbolizing effort – embodiment of the destructive potential of mass hysteria – would have been more apparent. We would clearly be witnessing an 'editing' effect."[89] In this case the sudden assertion of the director's intention breaks the illusion of a real event recorded, and of real time unfolding. It draws the onscreen images outward into the present of the cinema space and the viewing event.

The Typage of Moments

One of the other central concepts of Soviet montage theory is 'typage,' that is, the use of actors chosen for their natural appearance, demeanour or life experience rather than their acting skills. As theorised by Kuleshov, Eisenstein, Pudovkin and

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[89] V.F. Perkins, *Film as Film* (London: Da Capo Press, 1993), 102-103.

others this is more than simply stereotyping. There are two main aspects to its employment as both a theoretical and practical concept: realism and clarity. I will first examine how these two aspects were applied to the selection of actors, and then go on to suggest that elements of the same criteria can be understood to have application to the selection of moments within the montage editing scheme.

The first aspect, realism, is often explained in terms of the difference between the conditions of performance for a stage and a film actor. A stage actor may be made up to look like a variety of characters, using padding, wigs and make-up. This is acceptable within the context of a theatre, but not suitable for a film. Pudovkin stresses the "necessity to use, as acting material, persons possessing in reality the properties of the image required."[90] The formulation 'acting material' is indicative of the status of the actor within the Soviet montage style. The film actor functioned to a large extent as simply another object within the frame, as a specific kind of material to be filmed.

Environments were chosen according to the properties that were required in front of the camera. Introducing professional actors (made up to look like the character required) into these environments seemed an unnecessary element of artifice, and made for an incongruous mixing of materials. The professional actor, and his or her set of capabilities, belonged to a different context. Kuleshov writes:

> Because film needs real material and not a pretense of reality – owing
>
> to this, it is not theatre actors but 'types' who should act in film – that
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> is people who, in themselves, as they were born, constitute some kind
>
> of interest for cinematic treatment. That is, a person with an exterior

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[90] V. I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, trans. Ivor Montagu (New York: Bonanza Books, 1949), 107.

of character, with a definite, brightly expressive appearance could be such a cinematic 'type.'[91]

So Pudovkin, Eisenstein and others used non-professional actors, people drawn from the environment and context that was the subject of the film, whose faces or bodies naturally conformed to the desired image. This contributed a certain amount of realism, but they also used what would conventionally be considered stereotypes – immediately recognisable caricatures emblematic of different classes, cultures, ages, occupations, or social positions. The motivation for this strategy was the production of clarity.

In this respect typage served the editing scheme of montage. As a precise configuration of moving images juxtaposed in succession, intended to produce clear concepts through the collision of images, as well as a near-musical rhythm, the content of each shot needed to be rigorously controlled. Clarity and speed (as in the speed with which the viewer could resolve and assimilate the contents and meaning of a shot) were principal considerations.

The content of each fragment (I am confining myself to the visual content) can possess a varying degree of clarity. The clearer it is, the more easily and quickly the viewer absorbs it and the more strongly and precisely he becomes an element in the general construction of the film. The more complex and confused the content of the individual fragment, the greater the chance that the viewer, unable to grasp it fully, will store in his mind a vague, amorphous impression that will

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[91] Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film*, 63 - 64.

either wreck what follows or inevitably be remembered as an

annoyingly unpleasant moment. […] The montage construction of a

film, which is the basic characteristic method of making an impression

in cinema art, depends on the maximum clarity of each element that

constitutes the film.[92]

The image must be uncluttered, its content and meaning must be unambiguous. Typage

allows the filmmaker to very quickly convey the nature of a character and what they

stand for. Pudovkin describes what he considers to be a face made for cinema: "If a

face, filmed for two metres (the average length of a take), can make a clear impression

on the viewer (as a freak, a beauty, a villain, a kind and congenial fellow, and so on),

then that face is photogenic."[93]

What I would like to suggest is that this criterion for choosing actors tells us

something about the status of the shot as a section of duration within the montage style.

If the dimensions and connotations of the acting body (as well as the rest of the mise-

en-scène) are precisely controlled in the name of clarity and speed, why then should the

temporality of the shot not be treated in the same way? In the montage style the

'moment' of the shot becomes a type, less in the sense of a recognisable moment (one

that has settled in the cultural memory as a shared constant – though it can have this

aspect too), than as a regulated and reduced temporal event that makes a 'clear

impression' on the viewer. In this way the temporal content of the shot is less an image

of a real event that may have occurred in a real or fictional world, than an image of the

idea of an event.

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[92] Pudovkin, *Selected Essays*, 10.

[93] Ibid., 13.

The particular understanding of realism at work here - the blending of character and place, of body and environment - extends to the choice of moment also. The blending of non-professional actor whose 'look' is correct with the realistic environment for which it is appropriate occurs as a moment of confluence, a moment when the pose or action of the character coalesces with the qualities of the environment to produce a clear and unambiguous image. This constitutes an exceedingly controlled realism, and the ultimate stage of this control is the choice of moment based on the criteria of clarity and realism.

We should also note the detached quality of the type actor, who, as an image of an idea, often seems to be isolated and self-sufficient, an organism that is complete in and of itself. It may have an associated environment (the sailor with the sea), but it does not require this environment to serve its signifying purpose. The typed moment operates in the same way. Even within a sequence that depicts an extended coherent event, a typed moment may stand by itself, unhitched from the homogenous temporality of the time of the film world (which is, in fact, in the process of disintegration). It is an isolated and self-sufficient temporal image of an idea.

Now that we have looked at the dialectical/conceptual operations of montage on the temporality of the film fragment and sequence, I would like to move on to a consideration of a more flexible stylistic understanding of the term that does not necessarily invoke the dialectical structurations mentioned above, but rather an overt plasticity of time in relation to the events depicted. This understanding has a great variety of practical applications, but I would like to begin by looking at one fairly well defined and familiar application.

Even Rocky had a Montage

Aside from the Eisensteinian dialectical montage, the other most widespread use of the term describes a rapid sequence of shots that indicates the passage of a large period of time. Such sequences are often inserted into predominantly continuity-edited films, their purpose being the abbreviation of large chunks of time, allowing the narrative to skip ahead, while also providing kernels of salient information about that abbreviated period. So we have the athlete-in-training montage – the key information being that time passed and the athlete trained. In this case a large quantity of time is required by the narrative – we could not accept the athlete's overnight improvement, nor his or her ultimate success, without some sense of struggle, of time sacrificed. We also have the success montage, which presents the gradual rise to power of the mogul, magnate, or gangster, and often facilitates the 'turning point', after which the success story becomes either briefly or terminally a tragedy. Again the service performed by the device is to abbreviate the quantity of time necessitated by the narrative. The film outside of the montage will show us in detail the moments that constitute the dramatic peaks in the life of the protagonist, the moments of choice and determination, whereas the montage will quickly convince us of the work and time invested in the protagonist's success. It will often cover large quantities of space as well, displaying the web of influence, the spreading power of the protagonist. We see his or her empire grow even if they themselves are entirely absent from the montage sequence. Another kind of success montage is that of the performer (the singer, dancer, actor) as they travel from town to town with a hit show, or as the show becomes more and more popular in one place. We see a montage of performances, places, neon signs, theatre hoardings, crowds and queues. Again the effect is to condense a large amount of time and events into a short

sequence of images. It manages to convey a sense of sustained success, hard work, and accumulated experience.

This is one specific and widely recognised understanding of the term 'montage', as succinctly described through song at one point in the film *Team America: World Police* (Parker, 2004). The conventional use of this kind of montage sequence (specifically the training montage) is astutely parodied, and indeed plays an integral role in the plot of the film. Gary (voiced by Trey Parker) is a professional actor who has been recruited by the Thunderbirds-like international anti-terrorist task force Team America for his acting skills. At this point late in the film the rest of his team have been captured by North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il (voiced by Trey Parker), and are imprisoned in his fortress from where, with the unwitting help of Alec Baldwin and a host of other Hollywood actors, he also plans to set off a series of bombs throughout the world. Spottswoode (voiced by Daran Norris) convinces Gary to attempt to storm the fortress, save Team America and foil Kim Jong Il's plot single-handedly. Gary quite rightly wonders how he's going to manage this, as he has no military training whatsoever. Spottswoode says that he thinks he knows "just what we need..." This turns out to be a montage sequence, emphatically affirmed by the song's repeated chorus of: "we're gonna need a montage!"

As Spottswoode's sentence trails off the music fades in, already in full swing and a pastiche of several Eighties pop songs familiar from their use in films of the Eighties (such as the *Rocky* films), some of which included montage sequences. The lyrics explain the purpose and operation of the montage sequence as we watch scenes from Gary's intense training period. It very tightly organises examples of the specific traits of the training montage, introducing new aspects as they are mentioned in the lyrics, so that the meta-diegetic nature of the song, and the narrative device itself, is

strongly enforced. Within the sequence Gary's progress is measured by the twice-returned-to image of his efforts at a shooting range. At first he is terrible, then better, finally spot on. In between we get brief shots of other less quantifiable elements of his training: on a running machine; lifting weights etc. These shots function as typed moments of exactly the kind mentioned above, rapidly providing a clear and refined content while also being temporally undefined. These are moments that stand for a much greater block of time. The short image of Gary lifting weights loses its specificity within this context and comes to stand for a much longer period and a much greater effort. This moment points to a bank of other similar moments, homogenising that unseen time into a simple cloning of that single, somewhat de-temporalised template moment.

Soon shots from locations other than the training facility are intercut, partly to achieve the sense of even more time having passed when we return to Gary, and partly to, as the song tells us, "remind everyone of what's going on." We see elements of Kim Jong Il's plot unfurling around the world: invitations to his ill-fated World Peace Conference being delivered to world leaders; and a photoshoot with Alec Baldwin and other celebrities. The sequence condenses a large amount of action and time into a short period, but it also manages to give us the impression of a web of events that may or may not be simultaneous. Finally the song fades out as the image blurs and fades to black while the action continues (though several of the strands seem to have reached a conclusive point when Gary has achieved virtuosity in a particular skill). The singer's final words are aware of the fade and comment upon it: "Always fade out in a montage..../If you fade out it seems like more time has passed in a montage...." This last

line echoes Béla Balázs' description of the power of the fade and the intercut shot to produce impressions of varying quantities of time passed.[94]

This kind of montage sequence has very specific conventions and functions. It uses certain aspects of the montage style that I described early on in this chapter, such as the typage of moments and the use of these moments within an audiovisual/ conceptual framework that conveys a particular idea. It also functions as a bridge to another understanding of the term montage that refers more to the stylistic implications of its application within a single, coherent spatio-temporal scene. It is much more difficult to pin down the limits and functions, not to mention temporal ontology, of this category. Nevertheless, I will attempt to sketch out an understanding of some of the temporal operations and effects attributable to this style by analysing scenes from several films from varying periods and places in detail.

Intellectual and Physical Montage

If the strongest form of montage is the Eisensteinian intellectual or dialectical montage – the collision of two concepts (embodied in images) resulting in the creation of a third concept outside of the images – then the weaker form must be the application of this aesthetic of collision to a content that does not deal exclusively in concepts. The weaker form allows 'montage' to refer to techniques used in contemporary Hollywood cinema as well as certain stylistic traits identifiable in a wide variety of international cinema, not just that which is silent and Soviet, saving it from being condemned either to the role of historical curiosity or to the description of a device considered by many to be a cliché (as evidenced in the *Team America* tribute). The term 'montage' may also legitimately refer to the basic process of joining fragments of film. In this sense

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[94] Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, 145 - 146 (discussed further in chapter one)

continuity-editing is a type of montage, just as a square is a type of rectangle. In terms of film-style, however, something that is stylistically a montage defines itself against continuity editing. Certain stylistic characteristics identify it, without being essential attributes, such as: rapid editing; jarring movements through space; jarring movements through time; disparate content; rapid sequencing of close-ups; short, quick camera movements.

Let's return to the idea of the hypothetical event that is reconstructed through continuity-editing. The effect that the application of this style had was to reconstruct the time of the notional event, while subtly manipulating the way that its time flows; cutting out the surplus time, focussing on a character's movements, even allowing for the representation of simultaneity in consecutive shots within what appears to the viewer to be a recording of the event as it happened, an indexical relationship appearing to exist between the time onscreen and the time as it passed within the world of the film. Continuity-editing aims to create an uninterrupted continuity, to make those cuts seem only like changes of the camera's spatial position, rather than its temporal position.

For a weak montage that operates within a film narrative, we also have a notional event that precedes the filmic presentation. The content of the shots in the sequence may be as coherent within the narrative space as would be the case within the confines of the rules of continuity editing, but the time of the event becomes fluid, open to an increased expressivity. Montage (in its weak form) is a style in which the notional event remains intact, but is violently rattled, re-ordered and dissected in presentation. It is an editing together of logically coherent content without concern for continuity. Without another time layer to sink into, the simple act of joining two shots together produces an impact within the time layer of the viewer. Also, this splintering and shuffling of events has not the dialectical form of intellectual montage – it often

produces more of an intuitive/sensual effect. In respect of this we might dub the weaker form 'physical montage.'

Nevertheless, in treating time as a substance that may be divided into fragments – small building blocks that may then be put together in an almost infinite variety of ways – even physical montage somewhat destroys the layer of filmic time that the narrative of the classical continuity-edited film relies upon. However, the effects of this violent recomposition may also be understood to be reliant upon, and productive of, an increased plasticity of time. In the next section I will analyse the use of 'physical montage' within a film of the Soviet silent period. I will then attempt to trace the influence of this style through its subsequent manifestations in music video and certain recent Hollywood films.

The *Lezginka* Sequence

In the dancing sequence from Eisenstein's *October* we see a concentrated catalogue of the temporal effects available to the montage filmmaker. I'll leave the description of the scene to Eisenstein himself:

> With an abrupt, rhythmic drawing, when the music is really
> hammering it out, you can cut sections according to the rhythm of the
> music. They will coincide. In the film *October* there is the *lezginka*
> episode. The 'Savage Division' is approaching Petrograd. They are
> met by workers' organisations, and they fraternise. The Petrograd lot
> do a Russian dance and the 'Savage Division' respond with a *lezginka*.
> Two rhythms meet. There the accumulation of montage was driven by
> the rhythm of the *lezginka*. There was a precise coincidence. But it

could have been done quite differently. You could cut a section for

each musical accent, and add a new section with each beat. Or you

could have a long section of conversation, accompanied by this

chopped-up rhythm.[95]

It's worth re-iterating here that Eisenstein is explaining how a silent film can

convey the feeling of music through editing (just as, at another point in the film, he

conveys not just the sound but the sensory impact of a machine gun firing through the

use of rapid editing, framing, and mise-en-scène).

In this sequence the relief at a conflict avoided, and the spirit of brotherhood, are

celebrated through the use of affective montage. Close-ups of dancing feet are intercut

with: medium shots of the Cossacks dancing the *lezginka*; a Bolshevik ecstatically

dancing in a puddle; two elder members (one from either side) nodding approvingly

from the edge… The editing becomes increasingly rapid until it reaches a crescendo, yet

is sporadically tempered by slower, less active shots of a wooden figurine and a

dejected Alexander Kerensky burying his head under some pillows. The fragments

connect to each other through a series of repetitions and variations; each time we return

to the dancing feet the shot is slightly different. The cutting speeds up so that we see

only glimpses of the dancers, then the figurine nodding in time to the same rhythm. And

there certainly is a powerful rhythm, even though there mightn't be sound. It comes

from both the speed of editing and the speed of action within each shot – as Eisenstein

says, 'the accumulation of montage was driven by the rhythm of the *lezginka*.'

In fact we can detect two rhythms, one associated with each dance. The

Cossacks dance the *lezginka* and the Bolsheviks dance a Russian dance in response,

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[95] Sergei Eisenstein, *Selected Works Vol.1: Writings 1922-34* (London: BFI, 1988), 325-6;
   quoted in Richard Taylor, *October* (London: BFI, 2002), 52.

presenting a joyous meeting and sharing of two cultures. Just before the dance we have

seen the Bolshevik delegates tentatively approaching the Cossacks' camp. The

uncertainty and suspicion with which they are greeted is expressed through a series of

close-ups of knives and swords being slowly unsheathed. The campsite has an uncertain

geography, and these close-ups are unmoored, cut loose from any definite spatial

location. They perform, as do many shots in Eisensteinian montage, a predominantly

symbolic function, yet the speed and direction of these unsheathing movements play a

significant role in the complex of this sequence's rhythm. This is followed by a series of

close-ups of faces. The Bolsheviks try to convince the 'Savage Division' to join their

cause, and their success is represented by the progression from close-ups of aggressive,

suspicious faces to close-ups of joyful, friendly faces. The turning point comes with the

inter-title that reads: "The Bolshevik leaflet…" This is followed by a cutaway to

Bolshevik headquarters, where bundles of leaflets are vigorously handled by volunteers.

We could interpret this as parallel editing, showing us something happening at the same

moment in another place, or as a flashback, showing us the origin of the leaflets used by

the Bolshevik delegates. Neither is certain, so the sequence of three shots at this site is

temporally undetermined. We can, however, confidently interpret it as the spontaneous

presentation of a logical origin for the leaflet, so the most pragmatic understanding of

this shot would have to disregard its temporal placement. In fact, this cutaway reveals

much about the temporality of this whole sequence. It operates as the intellectual

element in this otherwise physical montage.[96] The sequence depicts a scene –

Bolsheviks meet Cossacks – but this event has its temporality stripped and reconfigured

as a sequence of ideas and images. The temporality of this stream of ideas and images is

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[96] Alternatively, we could describe it as the strongest element in this otherwise weak montage.
  However, the intellectual/physical dichotomy manages to avoid the value judgments
  associated with the terms 'strong' and 'weak.'

masterfully modulated throughout to produce an extremely affective temporal spectacle, but the primary time layer is that of the cinema space. The leaflet cutaway, which seems to break most definitively with the time and space of the fictional event, is simply the most extreme manifestation of a method that informs every shot in this sequence.

A series of short shots of the knives and swords being confidently re-sheathed triggers a change in tempo. Suddenly we are in the middle of a frenzied dance contest/ exchange. We are close in to the dancers, though we can see the crowd of both Bolsheviks and Cossacks encircling the muddy dance-floor, clapping and cheering as we watch first the Cossack dancers, then the Bolsheviks, then both together (figs. 2.1 and 2.2). The editing tempo of this part of the sequence builds to a furious rate of only a few frames per shot. The rhythm of editing works in relationship with the speed and character of the dancers' movements within the shots. The first shot we see after the sheathing of the knives is a close-up of the dancers' feet, several of them, all performing a similar movement – a rapid crossing and uncrossing that results in the impression of a rocking back and forth. The visual component of the sequence's rhythm consists largely of the repetition of this motion, coupled with the longer shots of the dancers moving in circles and medium shots of single dancers twirling. The speed of revolution works with the speed of cutting to produce the overall rhythm. At one point a dancer leaps up and out of the frame, his head emerging in the next shot then falling back down to his crouched puddle-dancing in the next. The middle shot lasts just long enough to convey a sense of gravity, of the moment of weightlessness when the jump becomes a fall, and of the swinging pull between beats of the rhythm.

fig. 2.1

fig. 2.2

Once the two groups have become involved in the dance, shots from other sites are cut into the sequence. First there is a rather abstract shot of a nodding figurine, whose nodding head and waving hand seem to move in time with the rhythm of the dancers, while also invoking the approving heads of the onlookers (fig. 2.3). We cut back to a shot from the dance - the lower half of a Bolshevik twirling furiously. The next shot is of Kerensky, his upper half burrowed deep into the pillows of the tsarina's couch. The gathering speed of the dancing contrasts brilliantly with the still, dejected boots of Kerensky, and we can't help but feel that the nodding figurine is both nodding in approval of the dancers and waving in scorn at Kerensky. The comical appearance of this little figure and its position within the sequence constitutes a gesture of mockery, not by the filmmaker necessarily, but by the film itself. The figurine is a logical link between the site of the dancing and the tsarina's chamber, where Kerensky hides. The

dancing event, which represents the defection of the Cossacks and the strengthening of Bolshevik power, is an exuberant taunt, and the figurine manifests and expresses this sentiment.
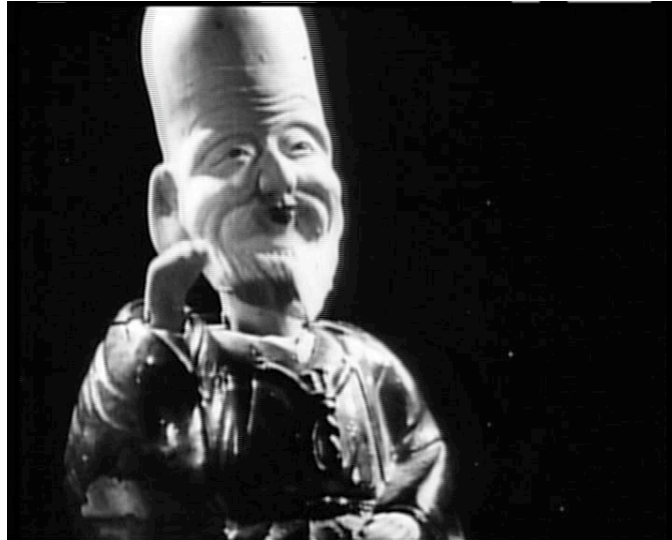
fig. 2.3 - The Nodding Figurine

There is no real connection between these sites. Kerensky can't be aware at that very moment of what is happening down at the railroad tracks, and the figurine seems to exist in some abstract nowhere-place. Indeed, just as with the bulls in *Strike!*, we have no reason to believe that the shots of Kerensky are showing us something that is happening simultaneously with the action in the other shots, other than the fact that they are contained within the same sequence. Yet by placing them in juxtaposition they seem to be connected by more than simple succession. They may not be simultaneous in the time of the film world, but they are interpreted as such in the time of the cinema space. The events seem to speak to each other across space, Kerensky dejected because of the dancing, the figurine gleefully aware of both.

As I have said, the fluid, ecstatic movement of the dancing shots contrasts with the stillness of the Kerensky shots. In the latter, movement is stifled by the cloying, muffling mass of cushions that seems to be swallowing Kerensky (fig. 2.4). The

opposition of dynamic movement with stasis is a theme that runs throughout *October*.
The revolutionary proletariat seem to be full of vital energy, while the Provisional
Government come across as ineffectual and incompetent, wasting time preening and
languishing in the palace. The figurine sits somewhere in between the other two sites in
terms of dynamism. It moves in time with the rhythm, nodding and waving, but it is
also wooden and inanimate, its body steadily fixed to some surface, its very stillness
mocking Kerensky, forming a link between him and the celebration that will lead to his
downfall.

Fig. 2.4 – Kerensky's boots.

As we have seen, time is not manipulated solely through structural, contextual
methods, but also very literally through the speed and character of the action in each
shot. Additionally, the utilisation of the temporal/dynamic associations of such images
as those of the soft pillows or the sharp lines and points of the soldiers' boots feed into
the complex of characteristics that produce the temporal qualities of the sequence as a
whole.

It should be noted that a further method of temporal manipulation is employed –
the alteration of motion-speed through the manipulation of film-speed. The dancers'

movements quickly become supernatural, their skills often augmented by the use of fast-motion. A few interspersed shots of onlookers seem to have been slowed down ever so slightly, perhaps as yet another ingredient in the rhythm's recipe, or perhaps simply as a matter of utility – stretching out what footage of the onlookers was available.

The cycling of these three sites, and the repetition of images throughout this cycling, places this sequence again within the model of a centrifugal montage, an entity that is continuously becoming atemporal.

Montage in Contemporary Cinema

Montage, as a term which describes the editing together of pieces of film, applies to almost all forms of narrative cinema (with very rare exception). The more specific use of the term to describe the rapid sequencing of shots (many of which may be close-ups) in order to produce a 'third meaning', an agglomerative percept or concept, may increasingly be applied to much of the output of Hollywood and mainstream cinema in general. A relaxation of the classical continuity editing style (as noted by David Bordwell[97]) has allowed for a greater spectrum of devices and articulations, many of which have been adopted from other forms such as music video, war reporting, video games and reality TV. The continuity-editing style has not quietly morphed into montage, but has grown to accept more blatant shot juxtapositions and rapid sequences of obtrusively discontinuous shots. The manifold techniques of the contemporary director have grown to include the kind of barefaced stylistic expressiveness, and to a limited extent the elasticity of time, that we have looked at in the Soviet montage. Directors like David Fincher, Darren Aronofsky, Spike Jonze and Michel Gondry have all incorporated effects, techniques, and elements of editing style

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[97] David Bordwell, "Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film," in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 55 no. 3 (2002): 16 - 28.

which might be described as radical in contrast with the classical Hollywood style. This list can't but strike one as a catalogue of the hippest big-name directors working from the late-nineties into the present, and it is also important to note that three of them (Aronofsky being the odd one out) come from a background in music video.

In the screenplay for *Requiem for a Dream* (Aronofsky, 2000) Aronofsky uses the term 'hip-hop montage' to describe the rapid sequences of close-ups used repeatedly to represent the consumption of various drugs. His use of this technique begins with the 1991 short film *Fortune Cookie* (Aronofsky, 1991), is developed in *Pi* (Aronofsky, 1998), and derives originally from the formative influence of hip-hop in his youth. These brief, electric sequences in *Requiem* produce a very particular kind of kinaesthetic shock, the sensation of release and spontaneous satisfaction associated with the drug, and the obsessive repetition of the ritual of drug-taking (as a minor variation on the same image-routine is used for each occasion). Aronofsky describes the theory behind the technique:

> I've always wanted to figure out some ways to use hip-hop techniques
> in film, as a very, very quick way to deliver information to the
> audience. […] The point of the montages in *Requiem* is to demonstrate
> the repetitive, obsessive nature of addiction, as well as to draw a
> connection between all the different addictions in the film: TV, coffee,
> drugs – they're all the same. It doesn't matter what the chemical is, the
> result affects your body, and it helps you to believe in the dream. The
> montages were always a very calculated element, and hopefully they
> really build out of the story.[98]

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[98] Darren Aronofsky and Hubert Selby Jr., *Requem For A Dream: Screenplay by Darren Aronofsky and Hubert Selby, Jr.* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2000), xi.

These things considered, it may be fruitful for this discussion to divert into the world of music video, which, though not exactly within the bounds of this study's subject area, is nevertheless a good indicator of the modern audience's tolerance for jagged, discontinuous editing, and its desire for a sort of brute sensory pleasure. We may also identify here the inconspicuous flanking movement that has leveraged a greater spectrum of expression for the mainstream filmmaker (though some might say it has in fact imposed its practices – the infamous 'MTVisation' of cinema and culture in general).

Carol Vernallis makes the link between Soviet montage and music video explicit in her article on editing in music videos.[99] She too describes the music video aesthetic as a radical alternative to classical Hollywood continuity, and identifies one of music video's characteristic traits as being the productive recognition of the materiality of the cut. The self-conscious flaunting of technique is something that I will describe in greater detail when I return to *Requiem for a Dream*.

The tremendous variety of music videos dwarfs even that of cinema. The form of music videos is open to great diversity and heterogeneity for a number of reasons: because they're shorter and (mostly) cheaper than films; because they are to some extent secondary to the music; and because their frequent goal is to capture the viewer's attention though vibrancy, novelty or salacity. That said, there are certain types of music video, and certain stylistic articulations that are common, maybe even dominant (at least for certain periods).[100]

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[99] Carol Vernallis, "The Kindest Cut: Functions and Meanings of Music Video Editing," *Screen* 42, no. 1 (2001).

[100] For a convincing description of some characteristics which are common see Vernallis' article.

Here though, I will concentrate on one video that, while not entirely representative of those dominant forms, serves as an instructive example in the context of the present study. It exemplifies some of the possibilities for blatant expressionism in editing and approach to time enjoyed by the music video.

Beans – *Mutescreamer*

Central to the rap artist Beans' image is the fact that he consciously eschews the machismo and misogyny of mainstream hip-hop. And, as the music video is one of the most powerful image-creating tools for an artist, it is unsurprising that the video for his single *Mutescreamer* (Levite, 2004)[101] should reflect his unconventionality.

Beans is alone throughout the video (accompanied only by clones of himself at certain points). The setting is a snow-covered winter forest, the brilliant white of the snow contrasting with the dark, almost black trunks of the trees that penetrate its blanket. This kind of visual contrast, or indeed extravagance of setting, would not by itself be unusual for a mainstream music video, but the idiosyncracy of placing Beans in this particular environment, wearing the clothes that he does, and being alone as he is, adds a surreal touch. As well as this the editing seems to be more self-consciously jagged than the average video, which is part of the reason why I've chosen to look at this video in particular. It provides an amplified instance of the structural manipulation of time characteristic to so many music videos. It also quite obviously sets up an interplay between the rhythm of editing and the rhythm of the music. The rhythmic juxtaposition of high and low angle shots syncs with the beat, while at other times a zigzagging motion is produced by the rapid editing of shots of Beans himself, which follows the pattern of Beans' word-flow.

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[101] Available on the compilation DVD *Warp Vision: The Videos 1989 - 2004* (Warp Films, 2004)

The video begins with six shots of the forest. Each bar of the music at this point ends with two drum hits, and the introductory sequence of the video (these six shots) lasts for a total of two bars, whence we see Beans for the first time in the seventh shot. The introductory sequence is tightly synced with the music – each bar consists of one shot lasting three beats, and then two quick shots concurrent with the two drum hits on the last beat (figs. 2.5 - 2.7). This quick double cut at the end of the bar occurs several more times throughout the video.

fig. 2.5

fig. 2.6
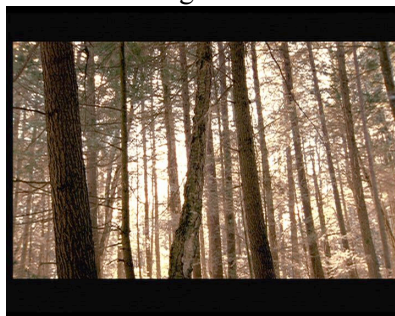
fig. 2.7

Editing is used to visually mimic the steady rhythm of the music, but also (at other times) to mimic (or perhaps intensify) Beans' rapid word-flow, which flitters around and within the beat. For one particular clause in his exposition (which straddles two bars) the cuts bring us back and forth, from relatively long shot to close-up, while Beans' position in the frame also changes from shot to shot (fig. 2.8 - 2.13). Rhythmic editing (aligned both with the beat and with the performer's voice) is just one of the techniques used by the director, Adam Levite, to approximate the music purely through the visual. There are also rotating pans that jerk along in time; a repeated strobe effect applied to Beans' sped-up motion (which works in conjunction with the editing to produce a strangely pleasing rhythmic effect); as well as speed-ups, slow-downs and juxtapositions of shots of stillness with shots of movement. The passage of time itself is used – a shot of the forest *sans* Beans seems to leap forward in time, the sky that we can see between trees rapidly changing, on the beat. Movement within the shots, coupled with the movement of the camera itself is also used. In some shots multiple instances of Beans appear, not dancing with each other, but their movements contrasting and complementing each other. These techniques rhythmicise time, in much the same way that music often does, by stuttering, syncopating and establishing rhythmic lacunae to alternately propel and pull the viewer along.

figs. 2.8 - 2.10

figs. 2.10 - 2.12

Of course, were we to watch the video without the sound, we would really only get a vague sense of what the music might be like – the total product is the combination of sound and moving image. This rhythmic correlation between sound and image is also part of what links the aesthetics of a music video like *Mutescreamer*, with its attendant temporal manipulations, to the stylised temporality evident in several contemporary

feature films, both independently produced and those emerging from the studio system. Now that we have discussed the music video, its montage heritage, and identified some of the ways in which it treats time, I'd like to look at a film that adopts a montage style that has been filtered through this aesthetic.

Requiem for a Dream

Requiem for a Dream seems, at points, to function at a level of didacticism equal to that of much of Eisenstein's work. This is manifested in the mise-en-scène, characterisation and sound, but most notably in the editing and in the temporal and spatial illustration of the film's world. I have already mentioned Aronofsky's use of the term 'hip-hop montage' to describe the film's iconic drug-taking scenes – these serve, along with the use of split-screen and various other effects, to create a film whose innovative and above all obvious style became perhaps its most remarkable characteristic. Aronofsky's film manages to incorporate the rhythmic, expressive montage of music video with something of the intellectual montage of the Soviet filmmakers.

The opening scene demonstrates the way that the film employs certain conspicuous stylistic extravagances to create a cinematic fabric that is at once superficially interesting and pleasing (in the way of a music video), and conceptually operative in a way that seems to me to adhere to the aesthetic of intellectual montage. By this I mean that it processes the time of the fictional event and represents it in such a way that it gains a formal dimension that is pleasing in itself, while also sharpening and reducing the meaningful stature of each shot so that the scene as a whole gains a tight conceptual structure based on the interrelationship of perspectives on the event.

The first images of the film are taken from a television show, this fact conveyed by the perceptibly televisual texture of the image – it has the video graininess and oversaturated colour of a camera pointed at a television screen. The show seems to be a cross between a game show and a revival meeting. It's host, Tappy Tibbons (Christopher MacDonald) is half game-show host, half motivational speaker. While still attempting to decipher the logic of the show, and reeling from the ritualised chanting of the audience, the plug is suddenly pulled. Abruptly we enter the reality of the film world – the television set that had presumably displayed the show is being roughly manoeuvred away from its station by a young man. We quickly learn that the young man, Harry (Jared Leto), is taking the TV to pawn it, and not for the first time. Sara (Ellen Burstyn), his mother, pleads "Harold please, not again the TV," as she rushes anxiously toward a closet, in which she locks herself. As she pulls the door closed, another image slides quickly in from the right giving us a split-screen presentation of Sara in the closet and Harold on the other side of the door pleading with her to come out. The split screen composition continues as cuts occur in both halves. In the left we go from an image of Sara in the dark interior peering nervously through the keyhole, to a point of view shot through the keyhole, allowing us to see the same event from two perspectives simultaneously. Harold has given up on coaxing Sara out of the cupboard and gone back to manhandling the TV. We watch from two perspectives (Sara's keyhole view from within the cupboard and an unassigned view from within the living room) as he tugs at the TV on its rolling stand only to find that it's chained to a radiator. A strange cascade effect seems to occur as our eyes dart from the action in one half to the other and back again. We assume that the halves are synchronised, and presumably they are, but because we see the same action from different angles and in an array that makes it difficult to focus on both at once, the two timelines seem to be shaken out of sync, their

linkage made slightly uncertain. These are two temporal perspectives on a single temporal event. But this splitting demonstrates the particularity of any view on an event, the idiosyncrasy of a heterogeneous duration. This is a montage of perpectives/ durations. Montage, in this application, refers not to the connection of various film materials in succession, but in simultaneity. This indicates one of the key properties of the temporality of montage – the multi-perspectival splintering of an event, either through the succession or simultaneity of perspectives, that splits the event into multiple time-strands, multiple durations of equal potency. This is at once a negation and a foregrounding of time – time is splintered into manifold strands, multiplied and accented, but ruptured and lost to the unhinged multiplicity of a cinematic apparatus that flips from time stream to time stream, as a TV viewer flips from channel to channel. A consistent, coherent, and unified view on time is sacrificed for a glimpse at the multiplicity of duration.

One result of this is that Harry's attempt to vindicate himself is sorely undercut by the simultaneous image of Sara cowering in the closet. He protests: "Ma! Come on, Ma! Why do you have to make such a big deal outta this? You know you'll get the set back in a couple of hours… Why you gotta make me feel so guilty Ma?!"

Once again we see the same action from two points of view – in the left half of the screen Sara fumbles about her neck and crouches down, while in the right we see from Harold's point of view as a key emerges from under the door. The juxtaposition of son and mother, of their words and actions, and most significantly of their perspectives on the same event, creates a third layer of ideas. Sara's final words before the title card slams down with an ominous sound suggestive of a door slamming closed in a jail are: "This isn't happening. And if it should be happening, it would be all right. So don't worry Seymour [her dead husband]. It'll all work out. You'll see already. In the end, it's

all nice." A persistent strategy of the film is to juxtapose reality with a character's dream of how their life is, will be, or should be. In this case our sense of reality is constructed through the accumulation of (sometimes contradictory) details from two subjective perspectives.

This opening scene depicts a single coherent event that occurs within the time of the film world. However, the filtration effects of montage (here manifested in the uses of editing and split screen) bring the event closer to the time of the viewer. The editing is jagged, its coverage intermittent, and in conjunction with the use of split screen the viewer is more transparently charged with the construction of the event in the present. This is a stridently stylish opening, but one that also manages to set up some of the key themes of the film. In this way montage operates both as a stylistic and a structural-thematic strategy.

Let's look now at the aforementioned instances of 'hip-hop montage.' These occur every time a character shoots up, pops a pill or does a line. Each 'routine' consists of a staccato montage of brilliantly quick images. For the 'shooting up' routines we see variations on the following sequence: teeth tearing a bag open; a microscopic image of cells; close-up of a thumb striking a cigarette lighter; bubbles in boiling liquid; close-up of a bottle-cap; close-up of a syringe; tourniquet tightening; an eye dilating (fig. 2.13). Many of these shots last less than half a second, and conform to the notion of typed moments described earlier.

<div align="center">(a)   (b)   (c)</div>

<div align="center">(d)   (e)   (f)</div>
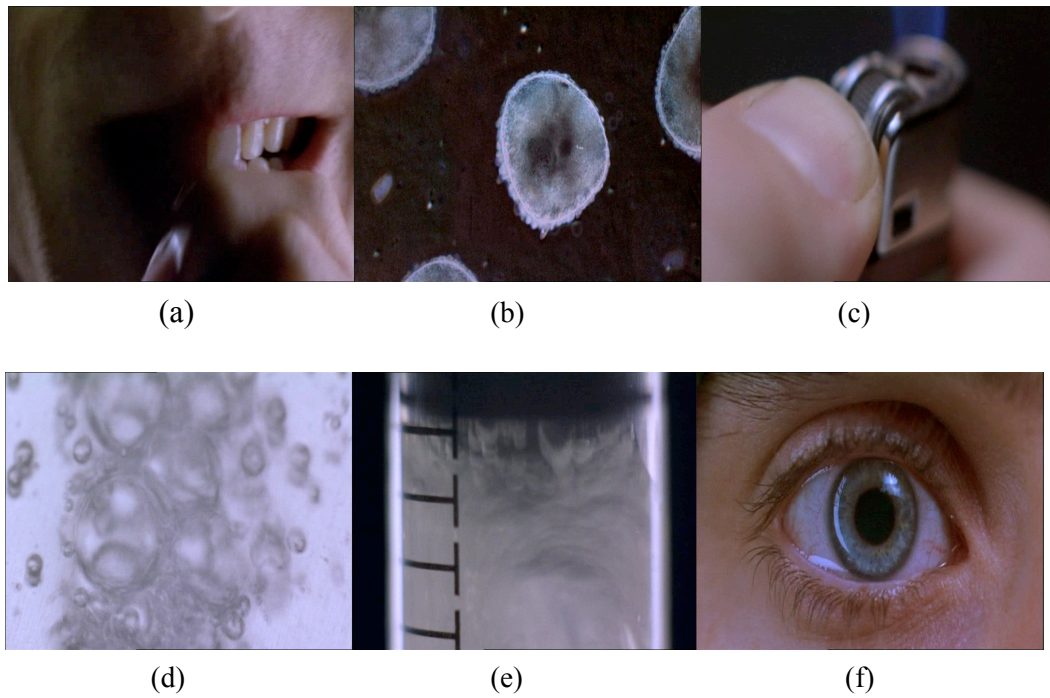
fig. 2.13 – a 'hip-hop montage' from early on in the film.

Each image has a specific sound attached to it, and this aspect in particular makes the almost musical rhythmic repetition apparent. Each type of drug has its own hip hop montage, and as we get to know the language and the 'tune' of each montage they begin to be used in combination – separate montages are run together, contracting the experience of multiple characters in different spaces down to the now familiar routines of addiction.

These routines itemise time. They stand in for the many times that a character exercises their addiction. The material practice of preparing and consuming the drug is broken down into representative images – extreme close-ups, each of which contains a discrete movement. The sequences are repeated, they become familiar figures during the course of the film. And by becoming routine, stressing the ritualisation of the consumption process (an echo of the ritualised chant of the television studio audience), they negate the specificity of time. The characters' growing addictions are depicted as gradual entries into literally captivating routines. Indeed the driving impulse for the

characters seems, at points, to be the wish for exception from the travails of existence, for entry into the temporal stasis offered by narcotics – at one point Ty (Marlon Wayans) dreamily invokes the wished for state of 'no hassles.'

The film has frequently been accused of either coasting on cheap heroin chic or effectively portraying the evils of drugs. Many of those critics who come out in favour of the film still focus on its realistic and damning depiction of the objects of addiction, be they pharmaceutical, televisual or culinary, and their effects. But I am inclined toward reading the film as less of a polemic about the dangers of addiction than an exploration of the human propensity for addiction, of the utopian urge that is at base a wish for escape, exemption, or nullification - of the dream that leads to addiction. Drugs, in this interpretation, become less the subject of the film than a facilitator or prop within the diegesis. One way of looking at how this theme is manifested in the film, and it is only one approach amongst many possible, is to try to understand how the film organises and presents its time and its characters' relationships with time.

As sequences that stand for events within the film world, the 'hip hop montages' do not really give us much information about those events. As I have said they itemise time, and through repetition they emphasise routine and similarity over variety and difference in experienced time. As in Eisensteinian montage the use of splintering and repetition succeeds in negating time to some degree, eroding that sense of an event from a past, and contributing to a sense of a story constructed out of an audiovisual fabric in the present of the cinema space.

Another way in which the film moves temporally toward the viewer and the cinema space is in its attempts to convey a character's experience to the viewer. Through the use of rapid, expressive editing, as well as sped up and slowed down motion, the character's altered states of perception are portrayed. As Sara's addiction

grows and she begins to spiral into madness her speed is sometimes juxtaposed with those of other people around her. We see her walk down a street at what appears to be normal to slightly slow speed, but the people around her are blurs, tails of colour that flash past her. In another scene she waits in a doctor's office. The doctor and nurse move and speak at high speeds, but Sara's limbs seem heavy and sluggish, her voice slowed to a baritone growl. The contrasts of speed seem to suggest that Sara has shifted into a different time stream. The speed effects are expressive of her subjective experience of the film world. However, this audiovisual approximation is at best an extremely reduced and filtered representation of her mode of perception at this point. The use of these kind of effects, while it seems to offer us a privileged perspective from within the world of the film, in fact draws us away from the time of the film world. The effects produced can certainly be intensely sensual (for the audience), but the experience produced is not that of the character, but of the viewer. It is specific to the time of the audience in a way that the subtle manipulations of continuity editing are not. These sequences appeal to a sort of mimetic contract between the artwork and the audience – this is not really what the experience of taking the drugs is like, but it is accepted as a fitting, even artistic, mediation of the experience[102].

Later on in the film there is a scene in which Ty and Harry have been arrested while on their way to Florida and put in a jail. Harry's arm has become badly infected and Ty is distraught for various reasons (the traumatic effects of withdrawal, imprisonment, and seeing his friend in such pain). The scene gives us a hint of the unbearably intense four-site climax of the film. We cut back and forth between the two, Harry complaining about the pain and Ty at the bars pleading for help for his friend.

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[102] For a more detailed description of this understanding of mimesis see the chapter entitled "Poetry and Mimesis" in Hans Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 116-123.

The screen shimmers, and with every word it shakes more, seeming almost to wrench the film off its sprockets (fig. 2.14). The soundtrack squeals with feedback, increasing with the volume of Ty's pained cries. It's as if the characters' emotional intensity is threatening to break through the very apparatus, to damage the film on which it is recorded, so that the materiality of the medium, the apparatus, is drawn into becoming part of the artwork. The emotion from one time layer is so intense that it seems to bleed into another. It crosses a normally untraversable boundary - the line between the world of the film and the world of the cinema space.

fig. 2.14

A similar effect is evident in *Fight Club* (Fincher, 1999). At one point late in the film Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt) speaks directly to the camera. The element of direct address initiates the intrusion of one time-layer upon another, which is continued by the perceived intensity of his message at this point in the film distressing the celluloid itself, just as in the example from *Requiem for a Dream*. The film even more obviously shudders and is rattled off its sprockets, the sprocket holes becoming momentarily visible (fig. 2.15).

fig. 2.15

Persona

The opening sequence of Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966) provides us with

another clearly defined example of a use of montage outside of early Soviet Cinema. It's

opening montage sequence, which I will briefly discuss first, displays a rapid

juxtaposition of disparate images. The arbitrary linking of these shots recalls the

Eisensteinian dialectical montage, yet the conceptual weighting of each image, coupled

with the textural sense-associations that each one bears, produces an ambivalent,

primarily sensoral experience. As appropriate and illustrative as this example is, perhaps

more interesting in the context of the current discussion is a scene from much later on in

the film which demonstrates the temporality of montage even in a minimally edited

sequence. I will discuss this scene once the assertive stylistic precedent-setting and

mode-building of the opening has been examined.

The searing, visceral effect of the opening sequence employs the sort of

'kinaesthetic' impact that Eisentstein described (using the apposite term 'kinofist'[103]),

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[103] Quoted in Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 41.

though he may not have been thinking exactly of the shock and confusion of *Persona's* opening. Additionally, it fits in well with the idea of the intense 'presentness' of the montage style. Like the examples from *Requiem for a Dream* and *Fight Club* the presentness of the montage effect is bound up with the artifice becoming apparent. In this case too the effect is taken to such an extreme that the apparatus itself, through a sort of violent rending of the screen, becomes the subject. Bruce Kawin writes that the film is as much about its own awareness of being a film as it is about the relationship between the characters, noting also that this opening sequence, with its focus on the mechanical details of the beginning of a film projection, would be reflected in the screenplay's original ending in which the film itself would somehow be shown to be removed from the projector and packed away in its carton.[104]

The sequence begins with the lighting of a film projector's arc lamp, followed by a rapid succession of images. The audience is left to interpret the connections and meanings of each, and of the sequence as a whole. Certainly, our response is not determined in the way that Eisenstein would have hoped. The images lack any kind of connecting logic outside of the fact that they are all pieces of film. Its purpose seems to be to stun, shock, and confuse. The viewer has no idea, and somewhat fears, what image might come next. Nor do they know how long the sequence could go on for. These two parameters – what can be shown, and for how long – relate back to the kind of safety net provided by continuity editing. Only when faced with its negation do we begin to recognise the uncanny base on which cinema, as we know it, is grown.

Michel Chion begins his book *Audio-Vision*[105] with a discussion of this opening sequence, so effective an example it is of the binding force of sound on film. Without

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[104] Bruce Kawin, *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard, and First-Person Film* (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2006), 105 - 106.

[105] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

sound, he insists, the sequence loses much of its shock value. It no longer feels so brutal, so distressing, once stripped of its accompanying sound. Without sound the image of the nail impaling the hand becomes "abstract", whereas with sound it was "terrifying, real". Sound adds to the shock value, emphasising impacts, inflecting the whole sequence with terror through the urgent, incessant distress call of machinery. Yet, as Chion points out, with the sound subtracted we become more aware of the abstract nature of the sequence. The images have lost much of their propulsion, the sound having previously endowed them with speed and rhythm. Without the sound that unified the sequence, applying a layer of continuity over the top, the images reveal their origin as discrete blocks of duration. These temporal images seem to somehow float in a temporal void, uncertain and undetermined. Sound has the effect of adding direction and force to the images.

Chion's experiment serves his specific purpose, but it also allows us to see just how alien and uncanny the product of montage can be. It can have the effect of de-familiarising the familiar – the familiar in this case being the 'ordinary' experience of time.

Montage does not always take the form of a rapid sequence of unrelated shots. *Persona* also offers us an example of the disruptive power of placing film fragments in relationship, without the coincident attributes of rapidity, or violence of image or sound. Toward the end of the film Sister Alma (Bibi Andersson) delivers a long speech to Elisabeth (Liv Ullmann), her voluntarily mute charge. We see this speech twice; first from behind Alma, showing us Elisabeth's reaction, and then immediately after we see the same speech from behind Elisabeth, now showing us Alma as she speaks. While the editing is minimal, the edit is crucial. This is the same block of time viewed from two

angles, one after the other. It allows us to analyse the speech, from the perspectives of reaction and delivery.

P. Adams Sitney suggests that the framing of the two shots reveals their more conventional origin[106]. Both iterations of the speech are shot from over the shoulder of one of the characters, looking at the other, moving in to close-ups of the face opposite. These two perspectives on the same stretch of time might have formed the raw material for a classical shot-countershot exchange, but Bergman chooses instead to allow us the unusual opportunity to study this block of duration as it occurs at two points in space, and as it is experienced by two subjects. An implication of this is that duration is not unilateral, it does not occur in the same way everywhere or for everyone. It is difficult to be accurate when measuring the length of these sequences, as the second extends beyond the limit of the first, so a comparable end point is approximate, but it would appear that there is roughly 8 seconds of a difference between representations of the same stretch of time. Intercutting literally weaves the blocks of duration together into one, whereas the decision to actually show one after the other makes their alterity conspicuous.

> Instead of intercutting the two perspectives back and forth while
> maintaining the temporal unity of a single speech and thereby
> reassuring his viewers of the spatial and temporal continuity of the
> event and therefore, of its "reality," the filmmaker meticulously
> superimposes Alma's face over Elisabet's.[107]

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[106] P. Adams Sitney, *Modernist Montage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 127.

[107] Ibid., 127.

The artifice of the scene is also immediately clear. The novelty of the sequence, both the fact of its repetition and the final special effect, draws it into the present of the cinema space, as the opening exploration of the apparatus had initially indicated.

Yet this trangressive temporal repetition is also tightly integrated into the thematic and narrative framework of the film. The doubling of time corresponds to the doubling (and confusion) that characterises the strange kind of identity transference or blending that is occurring between Elisabeth and Alma.

Conclusion

The montage principle, as espoused by Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Kuleshov et al., can be said to be based, though it might not immediately appear to be so, on the inescapably temporal nature of cinema. The enthusiasm that this approach to filmmaking engendered can be traced back to an excitement at what cinema could do compared to the artforms that had preceded it. Specifically, that effect of opening up an interpretative lacuna between images (the enthusiasts vary in the way they consider this lacuna to work – some believe it to be more of an opening up of meaning, increasing the valency of both images in a montage relationship, while others believe it to be capable of a precise dialectic form of expression, allowing the filmmaker to control those meanings produced by the impact of one image upon the other).

In other arts we also have the possibility of juxtaposing disparate elements, but none have the same temporal character as film. Paintings and collages present the viewer with their elements all at once, allowing the viewer's roving eye the power to determine what should be looked at first, followed by what, etc. The novel is sequential, but again allows the viewer somewhat the same freedom – they may pause at any point, flick back or skim over. The duration of the novel, at least of its reading, is entirely

determined by the reader. Film is unique in that it imposes its sequence, and its duration upon the viewer. The filmmaker can control exactly how long the viewer sees each moving image, and what image will be viewed immediately afterward. What's more, the temporality of film allows the meaning created within and between images to become continuously fluid, always evolving, being complicated by the succeeding image. Even within a single unbroken take it is difficult to tie anything down to a specific meaning, because, as recorded duration, the image is always involved in a process of change, always in motion, shifting, mutating, evolving. The multiple elements that make up the artwork are given extension in time.

Béla Balázs, a theorist who believed strongly in the power of montage, yet dealt with it in perhaps a more sophisticated way than many of his more zealous compatriots, described this characteristic of film in terms reminiscent of Bergson's description of duration:

> The meaning of a coloured patch in a painting can be gathered only
> from the contemplation of the picture as a whole. The meaning of a
> single note in a tune, the meaning of a single word in a sentence
> manifests itself only through the whole. The same applies to the
> position and role of the single shot in the totality of the film.
> The single shots are saturated with the tension of a latent meaning
> which is released like an electric spark when the next shot is joined to
> it. Of course a shot can have a meaning and significance in itself even
> without being joined to another. A smile is a smile, even if seen in an
> isolated shot. But what this smile refers to, what has evoked it, what is

its effect and dramatic significance – all this can emerge only from the preceding and following shots.[108]

Balázs asserts the relationship between the whole and the part in almost all forms of art. He then adds nuance to this description in relation to cinema specifically. Meaning is produced in cinema not just through the representation of content, but also through the unfurling of a sequence in time. A single shot has its own totality, limiting both content and duration. The film as a whole is a totality, having a set unchanging content, and a fixed duration. But somewhere between the two a rift is opened up, a hazy, uncertain ground.

Montage thrives upon the temporality of the movement between whole and part, and this movement occurs within the time layer of the viewer, actively producing the disintegration of the time layer of the film world. Montage is a continuously becoming atemporal. The rift between shots is exploited by both intellectual and physical montage as a means to produce effects ranging from the conceptual to the sensual to the musical. What links this variety in practice is the tendency to erode the time of the film world and foreground the presence of the film sequence within the time layer of the viewer's own duration.

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[108] Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, 118.

Chapter 3

The Temporality of the Long Take

> Take a close look at the world, keep on doing
>
> so, and in the end it will lay bare for you all its
>
> cruelty and its ugliness.
>
> - André Bazin[109]

> A film is never really any good unless the
>
> camera is an eye in the head of a poet.
>
> - Orson Welles[110]

In structuring this chapter on the long take I will follow Mark Le Fanu's useful, if somewhat vague, delineation of long take directors into those who employ long takes in a way that emphasizes their virtuosity (both of the director and the long take itself), and those whose goal is more the creation of a building intensity, a concentration on the detail and duration of the image[111]. The first category is marked by movement (the ability of the camera to obviate editing by going where it wants and needs to), and the second by stasis (the determination of the camera not to cut, to choose to keep looking). This distinction is by no means definitive, perhaps even doing an injustice to the skills and range of certain directors and to the great amount of play possible between those

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[109]André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" in *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 2005), 27.

[110] Peter Cowie, *A Ribbon of Dreams: The Cinema of Orson Welles* (South Brunswick: A. S. Barnes, 1973), 13.

[111] Mark Le Fanu, "Metaphysics of The "Long Take": Some Post-Bazinian Reflections," *P.O.V.*, no. 4 (1997).

two categories, yet it does provide the key to an understanding of the very different ways in which time can be treated by a long take.

There are other kinds of long takes too, many of which do not self-consciously present themselves as such, but for utilitarian reasons adopt the technique. One example would be the musical, wherein the subject benefits from a continuous take. Shots such as these often share the element of spectacle with the category of virtuosity. One means of distinguishing the two types would be to say that the utilitarian long take facilitates the creation of spectacle through the content of the shot, whereas in the virtuoso long take the camera movement itself may constitute a large part of the spectacle.

Jane Feuer notes in her study of the Hollywood musical[112] that the performances in the backstage musical usually follow a very specific shot structure. The movement from backstage narrative to front-of-stage spectatorship is achieved through a gradual induction of the cinema spectator into the position of spectator within the film world. She writes: "The conventional camera location for recording an onstage performance in a backstage musical was from an imaginary third-row-center seat within the audience. The resulting shots over the backs of the first few rows of the audience onto the stage gave the spectator the illusion of sitting adjacent to the internal audience, perhaps in the fourth row."[113] The figure is completed by a cut or zoom in to a position where the other spectators can no longer be seen, but we are still in the position of the audience. At this point we have effectively replaced the onscreen audience, and the performance seems to be more transparently a performance for us, the viewers of the film. This shifting of address is common to most musicals, as is the fact that once in performance mode long takes are often used. The long take will not be self-conscious in either of the ways

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[112] Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982).

[113] Ibid., 28.

mentioned above – it operates as a facilitator for the presentation of the performance as something that we are witness to. There are often cuts within these sequences, which signifies the degree to which the longness of the long take is not an issue here, but there are almost always significantly long single shots within them too. It should also be noted that the cuts within performance sequences seldom follow the rules of continuity editing, while the narrative component of the film usually will. It is clear that these performance sections operate in a different mode to classical continuity editing, both in terms of an intermittent aversion to editing, and in the type of editing used. Following Feuer, I believe this to be related to the fact that the distance between the performer and the viewer has been reduced, the viewer drawn into the film as a surrogate audience. When watching Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly dance, we are inclined to want to see their performance as an unbroken whole. Their artistry and technique must be seen to be something which occurs as a performance before us. Even in non-backstage musicals, or in numbers which take place outside of a theatre, some sort of makeshift stage is regularly found, often close enough in form to a proscenium arch to allow the viewer to again constitute the fourth wall. In this sense the camera for a limited time returns to the position of a simple recording device which serves to capture the performance. It is somewhat akin to watching a magician perform a trick. The audience must be given the impression that everything occurs in front of them, the artistry of the magician inherent in the fact that they seem to do something impossible. Likewise, the dancer must be seen to possess remarkable skills, to accomplish feats without the benefit and safety net of editing.

The long take in the musical is therefore a function of performance, a practical stylistic trait that permits the impressiveness of the dance number to come across, and the impression of transparent performance to be maintained. For those sections then, the

time of the long take lies at an intersection between the time of the theatre and the time of the artifact. It is a recorded performance – it happens before us, but it also happened *before* us, before the moment of viewing. I suspect that this type of classification might fit many other examples that could be drawn as inconsistent with the argument elaborated throughout the remainder of the chapter. There are, I'm sure, a great variety of possible exceptions, but they will almost always be assimilable to the category of performance artifact, to the long take as facilitator of some act which would lose much of its impact were it presented in any other way than through a long take.

Time Bomb

Let us now return to the main focus of this chapter – the long take that draws attention to itself, or which actively plays some role in the development of the narrative and the formation of the film world. Again, my intention is to categorise these long takes by tendency, and to show how those tendencies coincide with different conceptions of and ways of representing time. Some tend more toward the virtuoso or controlled, some toward the ambiguous or open. For the category of virtuosity we might take the opening shot of Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil* (1958) as our emblematic long take. This shot, which lasts three minutes and eleven seconds, and covers quite a significant amount of space, functions very much on the level of spectacle. It is a bravura piece of filmmaking, displaying a mastery over the mobile camera through the shot's fluid movement and choreography of camera and mise-en-scène.

Touch of Evil also presents us with an interesting case because it exists in multiple versions. The theatrical version was notoriously released without Welles' approval in 1958. The 'restored' version, released in 1998, was re-edited by Walter Murch according to instructions contained within a 58 page memo sent by Welles to

Universal in December of 1957. This version also contains a significantly altered soundtrack, again based on instructions from the memo. I won't linger on the details of the differences between these versions, except for those that concern the film's opening. The shot itself is the same in both versions (as it is in the 'preview' version of 1976). It begins and ends at the same points, and is immediately followed by the same shots. The differences are that the theatrical and preview versions have superimposed credits and a non-diegetic score by Henry Mancini, while the restored version has no credits and a newly mixed soundtrack made up of diegetic sound sources. The credits are somewhat distracting, and their removal allows us to concentrate more on the content and style of the shot itself, but it is the change of soundtrack that has the most significant effect on the temporal quality of the cinematography, the setting and the action. This difference, I will argue, represents a slippage along the scale from control toward chaos. I will not be presenting either version as superior to the other, rather demonstrating how this partial difference manages to alter the sensation of time and place in each case. The theatrical version's opening is the one I take to represent most clearly the virtuosic long take, that which is a feat of craft and control, and I will therefore begin by analyzing this.

The shot begins by fading in to a close-up of a man holding a bomb, setting its timer and running. The camera launches into motion and follows him to his target. We watch him crouch at the back of a Cadillac and place the bomb in the boot.[114] Just as he closes it and begins to run out of the foreground right of the frame, a couple emerges from the background left. The shot is wide and deep, allowing us to see these two actions at once, as well as to understand the visual relationship between the approaching

[114] The fact that it is a time-bomb is of tangential interest here. Time-bombs of course denote both the ticking away of time, and the approach of a deadline. The image can be presented in many ways, producing varying effects. An interesting comparison might be attempted between a scene in which a bomb ticks down in long take (this would be real-time, unless in slow or fast motion), and one in which the countdown is edited (perhaps through parallel-editing, stretching out the final seconds beyond real-time). Which is most suspenseful, and why? Perhaps the more pertinent question is: what difference does it make?

couple and the would-be assassin - the car occludes their viewpoint. We gain a sense of the geography from these first few camera movements, as the camera runs along a wall with the assassin, then pulls outward and upward to show us the building and the street behind. The percussion part of Mancini's score has already begun, but the first notes from the horns come in as the couple approach the car. We hear its ignition and as it lurches off the camera begins to track again. As it tracks left, back along the side of the building, now above its roof, the car disappears behind it. Throughout this long take the car and other elements will momentarily disappear, only to converge once more with the mobile camera. Throughout the take we can identify multiple paths being pursued by multiple agents, and their precise and smooth intertwinement with the path of the camera is a large part of what produces the sense of virtuosity. The other primary element apart from the car is a walking couple, the man played by Charlton Heston, the woman by Janet Leigh. They saunter in the same direction as the car, though their progress goes in and out of sync with it. They meet, lose contact, then finally meet again at the border checkpoint. The camera fluidly glides along at street level then cranes up into a high-angle shot, then back down. This dance/race that occurs between the car, the walking couple and the camera cannot but impress the viewer with its effortless grace. A thrilling feeling of synchronicity occurs at one point when the car is stopped at a light. The camera begins to track backwards rapidly just as Mancini's horn section pushes the music into the main theme. The soundtrack seems to reflect the speed and motion of the camera movement. Simultaneously, the title 'Touch of Evil' is imposed in the left of the frame. The sensation of everything coming together at this moment indicates the impression of controlled affect and event that permeates the whole shot.

As this is the opening shot of the film, we do not yet know the characters or their significance, so the style of the shot comes to the fore. It has a degree of excitement

attached to it, because it constitutes the introduction of the film, but even more so because we gradually realize what this shot is – a fairly bombastic long take. Part of the attraction of this device is the tension and exhilaration that it can produce – tension in that we begin to anticipate the moment when it will cut, and exhilaration when we are surprised that it doesn't (that is, until we finally guess right). One critical response (that itself seeks to evoke the standard feeling toward Welles' work) indicates that virtuosity and spectacle are ever present concerns for both Welles and the viewer, "Judged by first – even second or third – impressions, Welles' films are a triumph of show over substance. […] His films bulge with preposterously vast spaces […] His camera moves with a swagger, craning down through the skylight of El Rancho in *Kane* and up over the bomb-carrying car in *Touch of Evil*."[115]

The stylization and virtuosity of this particular take makes clear its lack of pretension to objectivity. It doesn't really matter whether we think of an authorial intelligence, or of the camera itself as the one with the skill, either way we must see the take as a demonstration of virtuosity on some level. We gain an impression of omniscience from the fact that, though the camera loses sight of some of the main agents at points, it seems to know where they *will be*. This forecasting sets the narrative, visualising power of the mobile camera as a force outside of the time of the fictional world. It is not rooted in the film world's future or the viewer's present (the present in which we watch the film, in which it shows us the car and the couple as they make their way through the town) as such, but it is aware of both.

The soundtrack has a significant effect on the sense of time in the theatrical version's opening. Mancini's driving score inflects the shot with a distinct, unifying tone. After the initial diegetic sounds of the car doors closing and the engine starting up

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[115] William Johnson, "Orson Welles: Of Time and Loss," in *Touch of Evil*, ed. Terry Comito (London: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 235.

the non-diegetic score replaces all diegetic sound. The music possesses a specific character that it lends to the images, and this results in a compressing and refining of valency and affect. The score is confident, sure of itself, and while it suggests a trajectory to which we are not privy, it itself seems to know very well the ill-fated (but exciting!) nature of the impending events. It refines the path of the camera also, suggesting even more forcefully that it knows what is going on, is privy to the secret underside of actions. The paths of the main agents - the car and the couple - are more clearly enunciated, defined against the backdrop of the town, the intertwining of paths becoming the intermittent meeting of their durations with that of the camera. The correspondence between music and camera in terms of speed and ontological character (non-diegetic sound and non-diegetic look - both from a time-layer somewhat divorced from that of the notional event) means that the camera bears the sole duration through which the event is perceived. The primary agents intermittently enter this duration.

So, the single insistent musical voice contributes to the idea of a single insistent duration, that of the omniscient force that pilots the camera over and through the geography of the border town. This opening shot, especially in its original version, displays a great degree of virtuosity and control, and to this degree it presents time as something that can be broken down and tamed, in much the same way as continuity editing. However, it is also apparent that even in this most manifestly controlled of long takes a certain sense of chaotic complexity creeps in. The long take has a tendency to introduce complexity no matter how much its progress and content are the subject of rigorous limitation and control.

This reading of the opening shot is complicated somewhat by the introduction of the new soundtrack in the restored version. We begin, as the man sets the timer on the bomb, with a similar percussive track that might well be the sound of a non-diegetic

score. But we quickly sense that the sound is unmistakably diegetic, coloured by the stone walls and wide streets of the town, as well as (when we're close to the car) the clearer sound of the car-radio. Welles himself describes the effect he had intended in a memo describing the changes he wished to be made to the version Universal sent him after they had taken control, re-edited and shot additional footage:

> As the camera roves through the streets of the Mexican bordertown, the plan was to feature a succession of different and contrasting Latin American musical numbers - the effect, that is, of our passing one cabaret orchestra after another. In honky-tonk districts on the border, loudspeakers are over the entrance of every joint, large or small, each blasting out it's own tune by way of a "come-on" or "pitch" for the tourists. The fact that the streets are invariably loud with this music was planned as a basic device throughout the entire picture.[116]

As the camera moves through the town, music from one 'joint' blends into another. The passage of the primary agents, as well as that of the camera, is marked by the shifting soundscape. As they move into the radius of one 'joint' its music grows in volume while the sound from the last wanes. Each one seems to have its own sonic world, its own distinct duration, with which it tempts passers-by. The unbroken continuity and apparently unlimited ability of the camera to follow the action, coupled with the aforementioned quality of the music, suggests to us that the place itself will play a part in the film, will contribute its own strong character to the telling of the story.

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[116] Orson Welles, *Memo to Edward I. Muhl, Vice-President in Charge of Production Universal-International Pictures* (1957), available from http://wellesnet.com/touch_memo1.htm accessed 25 June 2007

Jonathon Rosenbaum, who was consulted in relation to the restoration, describes the change:

> In all previous versions, this shot is accompanied by Henry Mancini's
> score - which almost subliminally picks up the time bomb's ticking in
> the bongos, generating a fair amount of Peter Gunn-like suspense -
> and overlaid by the film's credits, which divert part of one's attention
> from the unfolding events. In the new version, following Welles's
> specifications, there are no credits over this shot and the only music
> one hears comes from loudspeakers in front of the various clubs and a
> car radio. Though the suspense is lessened, the physical density,
> atmosphere, and many passing details are considerably heightened,
> altering one's sense of the picture from the outset.[117]

The competing tunes provide an effective illustration of the Bergsonian concept of duration. Thinking about the time of this long take (and others like it) in this way can help us to understand how it constructs its affective dimension. It is that intersecting of little durations, coupled with the searching view that threads a path through the town, that makes it feel like a living place. As the shot progresses, when the different musical 'pitches' begin to intersect, and especially when the camera pulls out to show us more, we get a sense of the overall duration of the town, one that is made up of a multiplicity of layered, overlapping durations.

The soundtrack of the restored version draws out an aspect that was already there. James Naremore writes of the original: "The opening scene of the film has [...]

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[117] Jonathon Rosenbaum, *Discovering Orson Welles* (London: University of California Press, 2007), 251 - 252.

made the audience an anxious witness to a total picture of which no single character is aware."[118] The occlusion of characters' lines of sight, the hidden bomb, the suggestion of another world hidden behind the door of each joint - all of these elements contribute to the impression of Los Robles as a labyrinth of details, a container for a variety of lives, actions and events. Our view is at points not unlike the top down view of a lab technician poring over a maze for rats.

Interestingly, one of the other changes made in the restored version builds upon the impression established by the opening shot. Rosenbaum states that some of the editing alterations introduced a greater degree of crosscutting between sites, producing "a stronger sense of different things happening simultaneously in the same border town."[119]

Bazin and Ambiguity

André Bazin's belief in the merit of the long take and depth of field is often reduced to the ideas of objectivity and indexicality. And while these are undoubtedly central issues for him, there is a further aspect to his attitude toward these techniques. The use of long takes and depth of field presented, for him, the opportunity for increased ambiguity. Both techniques are, in comparison to their opposites, larger containers – depth of field containing more space, and the long take containing more time. With increased volume comes the possibility of increased ambiguity. While Bazin might have preferred the content of the shot to refer to reality, there is no reason that this particular characteristic couldn't equally apply to any content, no matter how fantastic, or how much it 'added' to reality. Montage, for Bazin, ultimately inflicts the

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[118] James Naremore, *The Magic World of Orson Welles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 193.

[119] Ibid., 252.

intention of the director upon the audience, as he or she guides them precisely through

the film world, using a combination of close-ups and continuity editing. The long take,

simply by introducing the possibility of having several competing elements and actions

within a unified space and duration, allows for greater complexity in the presentation of

elements, and for a wider spectrum of possible interpretations on the part of the viewer.

Bazin writes:

> In analyzing reality, montage presupposes of its very nature the unity
>
> of meaning of the dramatic event. Some other form of analysis is
>
> undoubtedly possible but then it would be another film. In short,
>
> montage by its very nature rules out ambiguity of expression.[120]

The long take (coupled with depth of field), on the other hand, allows for the creation of

sequences where the meaning is uncertain, where often contradictory meanings can

appear to be equally valid. It stresses the multiplicity of meanings emerging and

receding within a (film) world in duration. Following Bazin's logic, this would seem to

infer that the use of the long take and depth of field loosens the director's grip on

meaning within the film world, introducing an element of chance, randomness,

ambiguity (or, at least, it introduces the impression of a loosened grip, of chance and

randomness).

What then of virtuosity? Many famous long takes are seen as having an authorial

imprint upon them. The skill of the director (and their particular 'vision') is bound up

with the shot itself for many viewers. We can think of the long take following Henry

(Ray Liotta) into the night club in *Goodfellas* (Scorsese, 1990); a similar shot in P. T.

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[120] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," 36.

Anderson's *Boogie Nights* (Anderson, 1997); Altman's opening shot in *The Player* (Altman, 1992); Sokurov's *Russian Ark* (Sokurov, 2002); and indeed Welles' *Touch of Evil*. In the category of virtuosity, then, the element of control, particularly in the case of shots with complex and extensive movement, might be seen to tame the integral ambiguity of the long take, drawing it closer to the principle of guiding the viewer's cognition and interpretation that Bazin identified in montage.

In an article on *Touch of Evil* Peter Wollen writes of a meeting between Welles and Bazin, where the latter's perception of the film was somewhat undermined. Bazin was interviewing Welles for Cahiers du Cinema at the 1958 Brussels World Fair, and had asked him about the moral ambiguity of the film. Welles was strongly dismissive of the idea that there was any ambiguity in the film at all, and continued to sabotage Bazin's impression of the film:

> Welles insisted (contrary to Bazin) that editing is the most important
> part of a director's work, because it is the only time he has complete
> control (until, of course, it is taken away from him, as it so often was
> from Welles) and also because it establishes the whole rhythm and
> tempo of the film, that "the whole eloquence of cinema is that it's
> achieved in the editing room". Welles acknowledges the importance of
> sequence shots in his films – *Touch of Evil* has two extraordinary ones
> – but saw them, in effect, as a way of editing while filming.[121]

Similarly, Bazin has suggested that Hitchcock's *Rope* "could just as well have been cut in the classic way whatever artistic importance may be correctly attached to the

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[121] Peter Wollen, "Foreign Relations: Welles and Touch of Evil," *Sight and Sound* Vol. 6, no. 10 (October, 1996): 23.

way he actually handled it."[122] Bazin uses the seal-fishing scene from Robert Flaherty's

Nanook of the North (Flaherty, 1922) as a counterexample. While he can imagine *Rope*

being shot in a classical continuity editing style, he cannot conceive of the scene from

Flaherty's film without the "hunter, hole and seal all in the same shot."[123] He continues

by asserting that "It is simply a question of respect for the spatial unity of an event at

the moment when to split it up would change it from something real into something

imaginary."[124]

However, V. F. Perkins highlights the fact that the Hugh Gray translation of

Bazin's essay omits a key statement that modifies his assertion regarding the scene from

Nanook of the North. The missing statement is "But it is of no importance if the rest of

the sequence is edited to suit the director's convenience."[125] This suggests that Bazin

may have been more interested in the spatial integrity of the scene than the temporal. In

his view, then, it was necessary for Nanook, the hole, and the seal to be in the same shot

at some point, but in fact didn't mind if the rest of the scene was edited. How long

Bazin felt it necessary for the three elements to be in the same shot remains unclear,

though we may at least refer to the film itself to register what he was describing. The

period from when Nanook begins battling the seal to when it is finally pulled out lasts

just under three and a half minutes. Within this time there are in fact ten cuts. However,

there is one particular shot that seems to fit Bazin's ideal. It lasts for 53 seconds and has

Nanook and the hole in the central foreground, with an oblique plane creating a deep

background. Nanook's gang emerges from this background and we watch, over the

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[122] André Bazin, "The Virtues and Limitations of Montage," in *What Is Cinema Vol.1*, ed. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 2005), 50.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid.

[125] V.F. Perkins, correspondence with the author, 2008.

course of this shot, as they hurry to help Nanook, who struggles with the seal all the while (figs. 3.1 - 3.2). Almost every other shot in the sequence shows the whole of Nanook's body, the line, and the hole within the same frame, but this long take adds deep focus, multiple sites of action, and movement between planes. This shot in particular reflects Bazin's ideals as described in this essay and elsewhere. However, the complication introduced by the fact that he himself declares the act of editing the scene to not matter in fact makes his position much more sophisticated, pragmatic, and openminded. For Bazin, it would seem, editing was by no means anathema, but rather worked productively in partnership with long takes and medium-to-long shots.

fig. 3.1

fig. 3.2

In respect to the current discussion, however, the key assertion on Bazin's part is that the act of splitting the event into fragments changes it from being 'real' to being 'imaginary.' The fragmentation of the event (perhaps into close-ups of: Nanook's face; his hand; the line; the hole; the approaching gang) would produce rifts or cracks in its spacetime that would have to be filled in by the viewer. The event would be reconstructed in the mind of the viewer based on visual keys, in the same way as was described earlier in relation to continuity editing. As it is, this shot provides space for two distinct sites of action (one of which comes to meet the other during the course of the shot), and time enough for the viewer's eye to roam around the frame, flitting back and forth between Nanook (still struggling) and the approaching help. The static frame gives the impression of documenting a real event. The only way that it can be fake is if it is staged - this event undoubtedly happened the way we see it because it is a single take of a frame that contains all of the elements. Without attributing a value to either the 'real' or the 'imaginary' in this case we can profitably use the distinction as a way of thinking about two techniques that operate in very different ways and produce very different effects.

Bazin's description of the *Nanook* scene still focuses on the partial retraction of the filmmaker, in that the pro-filmic event is given more filmic time and space in which to breathe, thereby increasing the possibility for things to go wrong, for chance and ambiguity to enter into the equation. His argument here seems to fit in with a broader one that suggests that an authentic long take must have an element of chance/ambiguity, a loosening or partial giving away of control, a feeling of simply documenting the event (even if it is a fictional one). The extension of a shot's duration admits this partial loss of control, though it can also simply give the impression of this loss. As we shall see, such an impression can paradoxically become a very effective tool within the arsenal of

a director, such as Hitchcock, who, despite whatever appearances, maintains strict control over the contents and variables of his film world and the manner of its presentation.

John Belton expands upon this idea of Bazin's in an essay on Hitchcock's *Under Capricorn* (1949).[126] Paraphrasing Bazin he writes, "Hitchcock's long takes consist of a succession of reframings and each reframing becomes a new shot. Though each 'new shot' is connected temporally and spatially to that which precedes and follows it, the continual reframing 'breaks down' the action of the entire shot into a series of successive actions which results, for Bazin, in a camouflaged analytic découpage."[127]

Hitchcock himself admits to as much in the famous interview conducted by Francois Truffaut; "…this film was, in a sense, precut. The mobility of the camera and the movement of the players closely followed my usual cutting practice. In other words, I maintained the rule of varying the size of the image in relation to its emotional importance within a given episode."[128] James Stewart reportedly complained, during the incessant retakes of the scenes, that what was being rehearsed was the movement of the camera, not the performance of the actors.[129]

Rope works well as an extreme example of a kind of long take that operates on a temporal plane not too far removed from that of continuity editing. The integrity of the duration of the event depicted is technically maintained (though even in *Rope* there are cuts), yet it seems, based on the opinions asserted above (including and especially Hitchcock's) that the sensation of time should be very similar to that produced by the breaking down and tightening up effect of continuity editing. This becomes clear once

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[126] John Belton, *Cinema Stylists* (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1983), 39-58.

[127] Ibid., 42.

[128] Francois Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 180.

[129] D.A. Miller, "Anal Rope" in *Representations*, No. 32. (Autumn, 1990): 116.

we get past the novelty, and the technical spectacle, of Hitchcock's feat – *Rope*'s découpage is so precisely controlled that it operates like a section of well-wrought classical continuity.

Yet the quality of *Rope*'s time is rather distinct, and distinguished from that which is possible of the continuity-edited film. We cannot simply disregard the effect of presenting the action in continuous time, and there are sections (such as the static shot that watches as the maid removes the tablecloth, candlesticks and plates from the top of the chest/coffin containing the deceased David Kentley (Dick Hogan), and continues to watch as she makes several trips deep into the frame to deposit these items in the kitchen and bring the books that belong in the chest with her on the way back – all the time tension and wonder mounting) that do seem to overtly play with the possibilities of extended duration.

So what does the extended duration, as well as the slightly underhanded suggestion that the film consists of one long take, contribute to the aesthetic experience of watching the film? For one thing, the projected unity of space (and it is a small space at that) makes it feel somewhat like a recorded play. This, coupled with the aforementioned affinities between Hitchcock's ultra-controlled decoupage and the classical continuity editing style result in the suspicion that it is very far away from the kind of long take that Bazin would have supported, and perhaps of little interest beyond its status as a limit case in this discussion of time and film. We might suggest that it is the result of an excess of virtuosity, of control over movement and refinement of mise-en-scène, so that, though it self-consciously presents itself as a long take film, Hitchcock's ability to tame the ambiguity of extended duration has destroyed those very features that make the long take interesting (within Bazin's terms at least).

Rope is remarkable in its production of a unified dramatic event that is

embellished by the mobile camera. We might suggest that it feels somewhat like a recorded play because it retains many of the characteristics of the theatrical event, specifically the one act play. It occurs in a single space (apart from the brief introductory shot that glides up to an apartment window shrouded by curtains, whereupon a man screams and we cut to the interior, the curtains effectively pulled on this production), the actors enter and exit this space, and the performance itself has all the traits of a stage play (this fact at least somewhat attributable to the fact that the script was based upon Patrick Hamilton's play of the same name). However, the searching/ focusing effect of the mobile camera allows details within the drama to be defined and accentuated. The camera will shift to focus our attention upon a pile of books tied up with the rope used to strangle David, hands holding a broken cocktail glass (the stem snapped as a result of the sheer tension of the situation), a cigarette case being planted, and of course faces. The frame produces a related but opposite effect - it selectively excludes elements of the set, at points using this technique to great dramatic and suspense-producing effect. Significantly the type and structure of the action does not depart considerably from that of a continuity-edited Hitchcock film – the sequence and function of these 'shots' essentially follow his usual practice. What has changed is that the space in which the action occurs has been designed to allow the action, and the camera recording it, to exist in a dynamic relationship that evades the necessity to edit.

There is a point late in the film when all of the elements of this dramatic set are in motion at once – the very busy scene of the guests' departure. At around the 52 minute mark Mrs. Atwater (Constance Collier) rushes in with the news that Mrs. Kentley is distraught over the disappearance of her son David. The camera swoops around, pausing momentarily on three faces, giving us three consecutive reaction shots. Her news provokes a mass exodus, and as the crowd moves toward the door the camera

moves smoothly with them, allowing a few to go ahead while it focuses on the conversation of Kenneth (Douglas Dick) and Janet (Joan Chandler). Once they too have left the frame the camera swings a little to the right, where Rupert (James Stewart) and Philip (Farley Granger) wait to be re-framed, their site suddenly re-activated by the look of the camera. They have remained in the room, apparently standing in those positions, whilst we witnessed the conversation, and it is only when we return our focus, when we look back into this room, that Rupert breaks this tense configuration. The camera treads a path back to the door with him, using him as a visual anchor, as the sound of the conversations around him continues. This roving camera produces delimited temporal regions. The word 'regions' would at first seem to be inadequate, a use symptomatic of the urge to think of time in terms of the spatial. Yet, in relation to what is happening to time in a scene like this, I'm inclined to think it entirely appropriate. Time is indeed being spatialized. The regions where specific actions occur are activated only by the physical progress of the camera. Nowhere is this clearer than in the imagined murder scene that occurs shortly after. Rupert is detailing how he would hypothetically lure David into the apartment and dispose of him. As his voiceover continues the camera focuses on and glides over the empty space where we are to imagine the events that Rupert describes. We move from the hall into the living room, by the piano, around the drinks table, and onto the couch. It is a trail that leaves a miasma around and upon the objects in its path, and one that as such does not seem to have taken time, only space (and the time needed to detail a series of points in space). The function of the long take in this case is the unity of space that it creates, and the series of events that it plots by consecutively identifying the points of their occurence. For the majority of the film the function is similar, though with the addition of actors and actions it becomes the unity of space and dramatic time.

Hitchcock forces the camera to tread a path through an event, at points privileging certain areas at the expense of others. In this way the long takes of *Rope* bear some relation to those of Renoir's *The Rules of the Game* (1939), except that Renoir's camera seems bewildered and incapable of seeing the whole (because it moves too fast, is too chaotic), while Hitchcock's very carefully eliminates and delimits, using the frame to show us a secret reaction, realisation, or action, never giving the impression that what is outside the frame is beyond capture, rather that it is withheld, that it chooses not to show us.

V.F. Perkins elaborates on the assertion that Hitchcock's long takes bear a similar structure to his edited sequences, demonstrating that the absence of cuts does indeed perform a distinct, additive function within *Rope*. He describes the moment when, as Rupert departs along with the other guests, he mistakenly puts on David's hat and, as Mrs. Wilson (Edith Evanson) points out that it is too small, takes it off again and spots David's embroidered initials.

This is the classic montage layout, and one can legitimately consider the presentation as three shots: medium shot - a man looking; close-up - what he sees; close-up - his reaction. Alternatively, the normal long long-take method of presentation, in the gospel according to Bazin, would be to hold the camera at medium shot to Rupert, keeping him clearly visible while the hat is brought into the foreground of the frame: e.g. Rupert could turn towards the camera in order to bring the hat into the light. Here the montage would be performed by the eye of the spectator, tracing the same course as Hitchcock's camera, but

much more rapidly.[130]

The Hitchcockian long take is placed between the extremes of the Bazinian long take and montage. He continues, establishing what the unbroken take allows Hitchcock to do, what it adds to the figure:

> Montage allows the director to control the apparent speed of an event, while ignoring strict continuity, but also makes the spectator aware of his subjection to the will of the director. If Hitchcock had cut between his three shots he would have been compelled to move much faster: the time which is "wasted" on the journey to and from the close-up of the hat could not have been absorbed in a long static shot. The spectator would have felt annoyed rather than frustrated. The camera movement allows Hitchcock to extend the delay between the latter two shots, and at the same time to make the spectator feel, incorrectly, that he is at the mercy of an event rather than of a director: it is not Hitchcock's fault if it takes this long for the camera to travel from the hat to Rupert's face.[131]

Hitchcock uses the continuity of the long take to enforce suspense and tension, drawing out the realisation of the realisation. Through a near-complete command over the spatial transformation of the shot and the speed of its content he maintains the control of montage (or continuity-editing), while at the same time exploiting the

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[130] V.F. Perkins, "Rope," *Movie*, no. 7 (February/March 1963): 11

[131] Perkins, "Rope," 11 - 12

continuity of the long take to naturalise and validate the delayed revelation of Rupert's realisation.

Rope's long takes balance on a fine line between the impression of objectivity, of a pre-existent chaotic world of which the camera is a powerless observer, and the virtuoso precision in choreography of event and camera resulting in the controlled release of narrative and dramatic information over time.

Interestingly, critical responses to the film which focus on the pace or tempo have been diverse. John Russell Taylor has written that it "seems strangely flat and ponderous, all played at a uniform pace which kills most of the excitement and suspense built into the subject-matter,"[132] while Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer have described it as follows: "Like a sustained bass, the pulse of real time rhythmically joins with that of the action, which is alternately slowed down and speeded up."[133] These contradictory reactions serve to illustrate the degree to which the quality of time is registered in sometimes wildly differing ways. This highlights the difficulty in assigning a definitive impression or reaction to a sequence. However, this is a problem of interpretation that is certainly not unique to the study of time in film. It is perhaps worth iterating that the time itself does not change from viewing to viewing, only our impression of it.

Chaos and Mobile Long Take

The mobile long take does not by any means preclude the sort of ambiguity that Bazin mentions. There are many examples of long takes wherein the moving camera appears to struggle to keep up with everything on screen, succeeding only in forging a path through a world full of conflicting meanings. In *Narration in Light* George Wilson

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[132] John Russell Taylor, *Hitch: Life and Work of Alfred Hitchcock* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978)

[133] Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer, *Hitchcock: The First Forty-Four Films* (Oxford: Roundhouse Publishing Ltd., 1992), 94 - 95.

writes of *The Rules of the Game* as representing

> a continued and intermittently frustrated attempt to keep under
>
> surveillance a complex of interlocking activities, which progressively
>
> become too irrepressible and impenetrable to be kept effectively in
>
> sight. Characters that seem to have been misplaced five minutes
>
> before pop up suddenly in deep focus, screened by some action in the
>
> foreground, an action that subsequently results in inexplicable tears or
>
> evolves into an unexpected piece of farce. These people are likely not
>
> so much to enter and exit a scene as to fall by graceful happenstance
>
> into the tracking camera's range.[134]

In Renoir's film we get the impression that we are being shown only glimpses, that whilst we watch one situation partially unfold, there are several others unfolding elsewhere. The longest takes in *The Rules of the Game* are not startlingly long, but they do contain a wealth of detail, of things happening on several planes. The camera pans through a chaotic ballroom, struggling to keep up with Marceau (Julien Carette) as he evades a jealous husband. At the end of the pan we view, through a doorway, the continuation of a situation we had a left a short while before. We come upon it mid-action, as if it has indeed continued even while we weren't there. This clearly contrasts with the moment in *Rope* when Rupert and Philip begin a significant action only once the camera has returned to them.

I'd like to look in detail now at two films directed by Max Ophüls. Both display a virtuosic skill, particularly in their use of camera movement within long takes.

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[134] George Wilson, *Narration in Light* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 91.

However, I hope to show that the use of the long take here goes far beyond a simple display of skill, and succeeds not in reducing or denuding the power of duration within the shot (which Hitchcock might be accused of doing in *Rope*, as well as other purveyors of more plainly virtuosic long takes), but rather balancing the spectacular impact of the elegantly choreographed long take with the chaotic energy and momentum of untrammeled time. As in the example from Renoir, the extended block of duration is used to create an impression of the duration of the world of the film, and the manner in which the characters experience the time of their world.

The first example is from *Caught* (Ophüls, 1949), and comes relatively early on in the film, after Leonora Ames (Barbara Bel Geddes) has married rich and got her mink coat, achieving the goals suggested by her guardians, contemporary society, and the finishing school which she is so pleased to attend at the beginning of the film. The shot is a little over a minute long and comes after a few scenes that abbreviate the time immediately following the marriage, making indefinite the length of time that has since passed.

It's late, 3 a.m., and she's waiting up for her millionaire husband Smith Ohlrig (Robert Ryan). It appears that this is a fairly regular occurrence. Tired and agitated, she wears an evening gown, the apparent product of the charm school she attends early on in the film. Ohlrig's cynical assistant Franzi (Curt Bois) plays the piano incessantly, ignoring her pleas to stop, but the mounting tension disappears once they hear Ohlrig's car pull up outside. Both are subject to this man's whim, and by extension, their time is made subject to his wishes. They wait in limbo until he arrives, when whatever purpose they serve becomes immanent, their lives re-activated. The shot in question here begins with Ohlrig entering through the front door, striding almost exultantly through the large hallway, taking the camera with him as he hangs up his coat in a cloakroom just off it,

then back over his steps and into the depth of the frame, through an arch that will lead to the projection room. All the while Leonora tries to make him see her. He acknowledges her, but has more important things to do – through the front door comes a stream of other businessmen, lackeys, and hangers-on, all here for the projection of footage of Ohlrig's new project. We get the feeling that she has been relegated to the position of servant for him. He feels assured of his power over her, and this power relationship is revealed through their relative positions during the shot. When Leonora stands there hoping for Smith's attention, he charges past, taking the camera with him, and leaving her behind – just as he ignores her, so to does the frame. When he walks back through the hall he brings her into view again, but his continuous movement results in her turning her back to the camera, and we see from her perspective the man that she thought she loved walking away from her, ignorant of her feelings. Yet his attention is finally snared once she begins to climb the stairs. She is invisible to him as long as she is playing the role of patient, servile wife, but as soon as she steps outside of this role, choosing to go to bed instead of playing hostess, he finally engages with her, though, unfortunately, his intent is only to make her do what he wants. This figure presents in small the trajectory of their relationship through the rest of the film – it's not until Leonora has defied and left Smith that he begins to think he really wants her.

Leonora's time outside of that spent with Smith has been made banal, and when he finally comes home she struggles to get his attention. The long take emphasizes this aspect of her experience. Ophüls' most notable long takes always present a struggle to capture something that is escaping, to 'get in' to a world from which we, or the character, are alien. The camera is not omniscient/omnipresent as it is with many virtuouso long takes, rather it is searching for something within a chaotic world, tied to a character who is caught in the flux of this world. Always there is something that is

striven for which is just beyond reach. Yet at the same time Ophüls's long takes are beautifully choreographed. Part of the function of the long take in this case is to allow for that changing relation of physical position involving camera movement, but it also serves to express the subjugation and near-redundancy of Leonora's duration. Her time finally, and briefly, intersects with that of Smith, but hers is seen to be tangential only, an inconsequential duration in orbit around a more powerful and selfish one. The long take allows us briefly inside of the time of the protagonist, and, in the hands of a filmmaker like Ophüls, this can serve to both bolster and expand upon the themes of the narrative.

In *Le Plaisir* (Ophüls, 1952) we find two instances of this kind of shot. In the first story of this triptych film, the camera follows a masked man into a teeming Parisian nightspot, the Palais de la Danse. He wears a top hat and tails, his figure made strange by the manikin-like mask that conceals his face. Though this sequence contains several cuts, I would like to look at how the influence of the long take style conditions the sequence, and particularly how the use of several extended mobile shots affects our impression of the film-world.

The very first shot of the film is a relatively long establishing shot that cranes down to follow a group of people as they walk down a ramp to the front of the building, then breaks away from them to follow a footman (clearly the focal point even though surrounded by people) as he rushes to open a carriage door. The focus then shifts to the group that exits the carriage as they make their way to the steps leading into the building; the camera finally coming to rest on the hoarding as the group merges with the crowd of revelers entering the Palais. The camera finds its way through this chaotic world by aligning itself momentarily with various subjects. Yet the camera movement itself is partly the reason for this impression of chaos. We are not given the kind of shot

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which would establish this place and this world as somewhere that can be known. What's missing is not an establishing shot in the traditional sense, but a shot, be it long or medium, which would establish that the viewer is in a position of epistemological dominance over the event.

A montage of shots showing us the inside of the Palais follows, many of which are at an oblique angle, suggesting less that there is something wrong within this building, than that it is foreign, by turns magical and strange. It establishes the 'outsideness' of the camera and the viewer, as well as their epistemological impotence; we can look into this world, and we may be lucky enough to look in the right place at the right time, but we do not control what occurs by our looking (the event does not happen because we look at it).

We cut back outside just in time to catch sight of the masked man as he bounds toward the Palais and up the steps. Through two cuts we follow him inside, and then the most notable of the long takes in this sequence presents his cannonball entrance onto the dancefloor. The camera is caught in the current of the dance, twirling with him as other dancers are pulled into the maelstrom. Nowhere else is the feeling of being caught in a flux so powerful.

This continuous take is broken when the man falls down by a cut to the shocked face of his impromptu dance partner. As he is carried away from the dancefloor, the great tumult of the party continues. Here again sound plays an important role. The band is ordered to keep playing, and the music surrounds and dwarfs the little group that ferries the stricken body away. Their part in this whole is minor in comparison to the cacophonous celebration that surrounds and almost overpowers them. The camera stays close, moving along with them, but we can feel the encroaching energy of a world that continues regardless. A doctor is sought and we are given more long tracking shots

following his movement through the crowd, losing track momentarily behind screens and other people.

The series of relatively long takes in this sequence facilitates the creation of this world-in-flux. Ophüls takes advantage of the chaotic potentiality of the extended block of duration. His camera moves through the world of the Palais as another spectator, apparently subject to a limited epistemological perspective. Ophüls treads a fine line between implanting the camera within the continuous duration of the event, locking it into a singular perspective (which can become lost, confused, and is subject to the limits of perception), and allowing it the freedom to re-locate. Using this technique Ophüls orchestrates a controlled disorder.

Montage and continuity editing may present a world which is in disorder (as in Eisenstein's films when inequality/hypocrisy is displayed), yet the mode of presentation, which displays a decisive ordering of time, predominantly suggests that an ordering force exists somewhere; an omnipotent, omnipresent eye that knows where to look, controls the event by its looking, and is already aware of the outcome. Or, conversely, a force that knows what's going on but purposefully obscures, restricting our access, or delaying the revelation of some central truth.

The second long take that I want to look at in *Le Plaisir* comes at the beginning of the second and longest of the three stories. The shot is noticeably long, and noticeably virtuosic, yet retains the sense of being outside, of striving to capture some fleeting object, that I have suggested is so prevalent in Ophüls' work. It introduces us to the Maison Tellier, a brothel in a French coastal town. In a movement that echoes the opening shot of the first story, the camera pans downward to follow a man as he walks down some steps and toward a house. His status as focus of the frame is undercut by the introduction of several other men, alone or in pairs, all seemingly drawn to the same

place, as the narrator informs us of the kind of men who frequent this 'well-kept house' (basically every kind). Our viewpoint seems to become that of yet another customer approaching the entrance to the Maison Tellier, reaching the door amongst a group of three or four just as it is closed. We briefly inhabit this role, yet as in the other sequences mentioned, the camera is ultimately always outside, turned away at the door like the punters come too late.

The camera rises then, destroying the impression that we were just another of the infamous house's clientele, and begins to sail freely around the outside of the Maison, striving to follow the movements of those within. We may move freely about the outside of the house, but we cannot enter the intimate world of the Maison Tellier. It is a magical world, external to the everyday of the town's men. It is therefore a place outside of time, a place where fantasies are fulfilled, and responsibilities forgot, where peace and goodwill seem to reign. The camera, much like the men of the town, wishes to enter this non-place, and when it is refused it strives to somehow know what is inside, to capture some knowledge or understanding, some sensation of this world.

It crawls along the surface of the Maison's exterior, offering us a glimpse of the inside every time we meet a window. We begin by following the progress of the Maison's Madame (Madeleine Renaud) as she climbs the stairs and goes to her office. Our view is filtered through blinds, veils, and window frames, emphasizing the enclosed nature of the world inside, and the limits imposed between the seeker and the object sought. To top this off the Madame shuts each window as she passes, denying what little entry to her world we have. The very surface of the house's exterior (wood, slates, ivy, lanterns) is so detailed and prominent that it gives the impression of a tough shell, a hard and impenetrable, almost ancient, outer crust.

Once she has reached her own room and sat at her desk there is a cut, and the

following shots represent abridged versions of that first long take, each introducing a character in the same way the first did the Madame. The Maison Tellier is produced as a world away from our own, and one which is also beyond the real of the film world. The opening long take creates a model for the following shorter shots – we witness, through glimpses only, the progress of one character as they move (or simply exist) within this world, moving in and out of shot, but always within one continuous block of duration. A pattern of repetition cements these shots together with the initial long take. Their likeness in terms of camera movement and content, as well as the continuing music and voiceover commentary ensure that this series of scenes from within this world remain tightly integrated.

The choices here - staying outside of the house, and presenting the Madame's movement through the house as a continuous mobile take rather than a series of edited shots – suggest that Ophüls wished to create the impression of a world within a world, that has its own secret duration, one that we can only guess at. What would the sequence lose were the opening take replaced with a series of edited shots, each focused on a single window? We would lose the sensation of being enraptured by the fantasy of the house and what goes on inside there, as well as the feeling of being part of a fictional world looking in on an even more fictional world. The long take serves to root us in the film world, to embody our gaze within the film. It brings us closer to that world, and to the characters that inhabit it, by inciting us to recognise its, and their, existence in time. By breaking down a world, both temporally and spatially, continuity editing (though not necessarily all editing) bestows a sense of order and manageability upon the film world. The long take returns the potency, complexity and ambiguity of duration to the film world. When we recognize it as a world that endures, and a world that we have limited access to, we default to a different set of apprehensions,

conceptualizing and considering that world in a different way than we would if it were

presented through a classical continuity editing style. The long take effects a perceived

relinquishing of power, a return of epistemological authority to the object. Our

relationship with the film world mirrors that of the protagonist – we become subject to

it, powerless in the face of time, condemned to take part in its duration on its

terms. It could of course be asserted that this is the condition of all cinema-going

experiences, but Ophüls here draws this aspect to the surface, employing it as an

impression within the formal and thematic fabric of the scene.

   In *Madame De…* (Ophüls, 1953) too, the camera has the quality of a roving eye,

moving through the world of the European aristocracy, trying to catch those important,

fleeting details hidden beneath the veneer of good manners and appearance. Yet the

camera does not seem to have a privileged view – it does what it can, almost as if it was

consciously trying to serve the audience, to show them what it can, but finds that the

task is a difficult one. As in the opening of *Le Plaisir* the camera dances around the

ballroom floor with the characters. During the long pans that survey the gatherings,

following characters as they move through this world, the focus may disappear behind

objects such as screens only to subsequently emerge back into the moving frame. The

unsympathetic flow of time and life is represented in Ophüls' films by crowded

dancefloors, banquets and parades, through which the protagonist must move, attempt

to understand, and successfully negotiate (though they fail as often as not). The power

of this flux is iterated and intensified in the Ophülsian long take.

   Tag Gallagher interprets the long takes in Ophüls' films as predominantly

character-driven – characterizing them as 'portrait-tracks.'[135] I am more inclined to see

the most spectacular of Ophüls shots as being predominantly about the relationship

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[135] Tag Gallagher, "Max Ophüls: A New Art - but Who Notices?," *Senses of Cinema*, no. 22
    (2002), available at http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/02/22/ophuls.html

between the character and the world they inhabit. However, he does write that

"Ophuls's long tracks and long takes emphasize things that seem neither ephemeral nor

trivial, but are imponderable and cannot be "dealt with": emotions, desires, anxieties,

self-awareness, identity."[136] Gallagher focuses on the subtleties of character facilitated

by the use of the long take, but he also touches upon an idea that is central to this thesis:

that the long take introduces, and finds its much of its value in, increased ambiguity and

chaos, by dissolving the schematized complex of continuity editing, and thereby

opening onto the 'imponderable', the ambiguous, and presenting that which rejects

ordering. It is precisely through duration, through the creation of an indexical duration,

that we come to this mode of representation. Continuity editing breaks down and

procedurally reconstructs a world according to a scheme based on human perception

and cognition, whereas the long take (as Ophüls uses it) either appeals to a scheme that

pre-exists the human (and which seldom, if ever, reveals itself fully), or is in fact

without any kind of scheme at all.

Limit Cases

We have so far mentioned several directors who have produced long takes of

great virtuosity (Hitchcock's *Rope*, Welles' *Touch of Evil*, Scorsese's *Goodfellas*) but

which have effectively reduced the specific temporal quality of the long take to an

enumerable series of moments, linked together by and through the skill of the

filmmaker, effectively replacing the cut with a moment of ingenuity that allows the shot

to continue where it might otherwise have been forced to end. We have also looked at

the work of directors who display great virtuosity, yet also intentionally introduce an

element of ambiguity, of chaos, giving the impression of a loosening of control, of a

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[136] Ibid.

dominion over which rule is shared by the filmmaker and the random, pre-cognitive, force of reality. Let us now look at a few directors whose works constitute the limit cases of the long take in cinema, who stretch the idea of the long take as a stylistic device to its sometimes obtuse, sometimes ethereal, sometimes unbearable logical conclusion.

Here the longness of the long take can operate as an end in itself, simultaneously the form and content of the work. I use the term 'longness' rather than 'length', perhaps at the expense of elegance, in an attempt to maintain the emphasis on the quality of time in the shot rather than the quantity. The longness of a shot is the degree to which its longevity seems to outweigh its usefulness in terms of narrative information, the degree to which its length seems to become a primary element of its aesthetic form. This is what Andrew Klevan describes (in reference to Ozu Yasujiro's *Late Spring* (1949)) as "an imbalanced relationship between the shot's length and its relevance."[137] The intensification, and forceful revelation, of time's passage, and the subsequent revelations that build upon this, often represent the primary aesthetic force in the work. What happens between cuts may not explicitly relate to the theme of time's passage, but the presence of an object or process enduring or unfolding within a long take ensures that the duration of the object or process will necessarily become a conspicuous aspect of its aesthetic shape.

The arthouse long take is often associated with a certain ponderousness, an absence of clarity in terms of object and objective, and an ambiguity of meaning. The prolongation of the authorially placed limit on what is to be shown permits the opening up of the sequence to ambiguity, multivalency, the contingent – whatever we choose to call it. Yet can we really say this with certainty? Is it not possible that meaning can be

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[137] Andrew Klevan, *Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), 139.

controlled even within the long take which foregrounds its own longness? Hitchcock

would seem to have done so in *Rope*, producing a purported long take which

foregrounds its longness, but which also seems to control its meanings with the same

precision of any other Hitchcock film. However, as we have already seen, *Rope* is less

proud of its longness than its virtuosity in *not cutting*. So then, is it possible to contain

and control meaning in the long take that eschews virtuosity, that which is merely there

to be long? Perhaps if we were to control the number of things in the shot, we might be

able to control the number of interpretations and associations that they produce. Some

arthouse and avant garde long takes are static, closely framed, have a relatively bare or

restrained mise-en-scène, lack movement, speech or narration, while others seem to

prioritise banality, colouring their mise-en-scène not by the absence of things, but by the

bland normality of those things. This is perhaps where certain associations of asceticism

and minimalism attached to the arthouse and avant garde long take arise from. But is it

right to say that this apparent asceticism arises from an effort to control meaning to

some degree, performing a similar function to the emphatic pans and dollies of *Rope*?

Two films by Andy Warhol seem to fit the description of cinematic asceticism

offered above: *Blow Job* (1963) and *Empire* (1964). *Blow Job* is 36 minutes long and

consists of a close-up of a young man's (DeVeren Bookwalter) face while he receives a

blow job (this last detail we must assume to be the case – we never see below the man's

torso). The mise-en-scène is bare to say the least. We can see the man's face,

occasionally a glimpse of his jacket and shirt, and the rough brick wall behind him. The

shot is lit by a bright light source somewhere above the upper left hand corner, that casts

very definite shadows on the man's features. Technically it is not really one long take,

as the reels of film that Warhol was using lasted only 4 minutes each, the breakages in

continuity announced by a very prominent white flash lasting roughly 5 seconds each

time. The camera does not change position however, and the action appears to be continuous throughout, the white flashes coming across as a stylistic effect, the conjunction of the roughness of the analogue medium and the mounting bliss of the protagonist (we often see his wide eyes, or his hands reaching to his face, just as the screen whites out). This sounds like a rather minimal amount of things to fill this relatively long take. Yet, as Roy Grundmann points out over the course of his 200+ page book[138] about this one short film, the bare frame produces a great deal of complex associations, emotions and meanings for the viewer. Were the film to be reduced to a still image, stripped of its temporal dimension, then it would probably retain the ability to produce a number of meanings/associations for the viewer, particularly if the title is retained. But it is because of the prescribed duration of the image, the fact that we have 36 minutes (a duration that simply by being there seems significant) to study this man's reactions and the details within the frame, to interpret/comprehend/experience what's happening, that so many associations are possible. It is that very asceticism, that lack of detail, coupled with the extended duration, that produces the conditions for the viewer's engagement with the production of meaning for the work. The longer the long take the more associations it may produce, or perhaps more correctly, the longer the long take, the longer the effort to interpret will continue.

The long take is at once a minimalism – the absence of complexity, the replacement of constant difference with the elaboration of the same – and at the same time an accumulation – an accumulation of time. In the place of structural complexity we have instead durational complexity, the unfolding of processes and the endurance of objects. The long take can only really be called a minimalist device if we ignore its temporal dimension, and isn't this its defining characteristic? There are, however, points

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[138] Roy Grundmann, *Andy Warhol's Blow Job* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003).

of intersection with minimalism (as an aesthetic concept and artistic practice) that might help us to understand how the temporality of the long take informs its aesthetic. One characteristic that united minimalist art, according to Frances Colpitt[139], as well as Michael Fried[140] and the artist Robert Morris[141], was its reliance on the presence of the beholder, and their active engagement in the production of meaning (or if not meaning, at least the aesthetic experience of the work). Fried writes; "…inasmuch as literalist [Fried's term for minimalism] work *depends on* the beholder, is *incomplete* without him, it *has* been waiting for him. And once he is in the room the work refuses, obstinately, to let him alone – which is to say, it refuses to stop confronting him, distancing him, isolating him."[142] Modernist art, for which he is an advocate, was internally sufficient – it didn't need a viewer to give it meaning, it already had it. The viewer in this case merely came along and experienced an already existent meaning, that is, if they understood it correctly. Fried asserts that, though many minimalist artists might claim total reliance for their works, there is still something there, the experience in potential, bound up in the artwork, waiting for the viewer to arrive. We might consider this an analogue for the split between films that appear to be internally sufficient (those that at least seem to want to feed us a particular meaning, irrespective of how they may be interpreted after the fact – again we can take Hitchcock's *Rope* as an example) and those that appear to ask of the viewer that they fill in the missing detail, that they actively engage in the production of meaning. There is already something there, but it leaves a greater opening for the activity of the viewer. Whereas for minimalist sculpture this

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[139] Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993)

[140] Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (London: University of California Press, 1995), 116 - 147.

[141] Quoted in Fried, above.

[142] Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 140.

openness arose from the viewer's free movement in space around the object, in film it often comes from the temporal freedom of the insistent long take. The viewer is given time to look, compelled to search the frame for significance, to discover connections and meanings which may or may not have occurred to the creator.

Grundmann himself describes the film's style as minimalist, and goes on to describe the effects of its minimalism in much the same way as those writers mentioned above:

> Its minimalism enables and encourages a prolonged scrutiny of the image, which has certain effects on the viewer. Some spectators may become bored very quickly. Others may be taken in by the camera's gaze onto its object, the young man in front of the camera who may be receiving a blow job. Yet others may temporarily shift their attention away from the young man and focus on the film's chiaroscuro play of light and dark or on its background, the brick wall. And some spectators may engage all of these impressions and activities during one and the same viewing"[143]

Empire too would seem to fit the template for an extreme exercise in minimalist aesthetics. Its eight hour static portrait of the Empire State Building seeming to surpass even *Blow Job*'s attempt to control the things within the shot. Its duration again adds copious possibility for interpretation, the chance for innumerable associations, which arise from the meeting between the viewer and the work. The extreme length of its projection suggests the possibility of an ambient cinema, possessing a duration which

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[143] Grundmann, *Andy Warhol's Blow Job*, 7.

the viewer might be encouraged to wander into and out of, yet at the same time it does have a strict running time of 8 hours and 5 minutes. This is one way of conceptualisng these works beyond minimalism. The minimalist sculpture exists in a space that the viewer is encouraged to walk around, experiencing the way in which the sculpture fits into the environment (the light falling on it, the viewing angle, and the way in which its relation to other objects changes as they walk around it). They experience it as both there all at once and continuing indefinitely. How might the experience of the work differ if it could only be seen for definite periods of time, if the viewer was only allowed into the room in which it lay for exactly 36 minutes at a time? The temporal dimension of the work would necessarily become significant. Viewers might wonder what realisation awaits in that thirty-sixth minute. The work would no longer be ambient, in the sense that you could walk into and out of its compass. The exactness of its duration would suggest that the duration itself constitutes part of the work. All films have this trait.

Both of these films play temporal tricks on the audience. *Blow Job* and *Empire* have always been presented at a slowed down projection speed. The original event in both cases having been recorded at 24fps, *Blow Job* was then projected at first 16fps and later 18fps, and *Empire* at 18fps also.[144] This last fact means that the notion of *Empire* as being a static recording of 8 hours in the life of the Empire State Building is a myth, the true time-span being 6 hours and 40 minutes. Warhol, or at least one of his 'crew', chose a framing which shows us only the top part of the building. Warhol chose the time period to capture, 8:06 pm to 2:42 am, which included the moment when the lights are turned on (a moment of great excitement according to accounts of many *Empire* viewers), but most significantly he chose to alter the projection speed,

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[144] Grundmann, *Andy Warhol's Blow Job*, 191n.

manipulating the time of the originally captured event, and affecting the viewer's perception of the passage of that time. The idea of mechanical recording, of the artist's action being that of retraction from the process as a key part of the process, is undermined and it becomes clear that both films offer a particularly stylised version of the passage of time.

Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1976) offers another relatively extreme example, though it retains some semblance of a conventional narrative structure. Warhol's films are useful insofar as they practically delineate the limits of the use of the long take in film. *Jeanne Dielman*, on the other hand, constitutes a conspicuous use of the static long take as an integral part of the film's narrative and aesthetic system. In a way, this will serve as an amplified, hyperbolised version of the example that I took from Ophüls' *Caught*, and suggests that this form of cinema is an extreme, hyperbolised version of those more subtle uses of the long take mentioned earlier. Yet how can we say that *Jeanne Dielman* deals in hyperbole? Does it not feel like a misnomer to label such a muted, sombre film, whose very currency is the subtleties of the heroine's behaviour, a purveyor of hyperbole? Relative to the conventional understanding of the way in which 'normal' time is supposed to flow in film, I would suggest that *Jeanne Dielman* does indeed consist of a series of shots steeped in hyperbole. It's determination to show us the emptying out, the ritual banality, of Jeanne's life, results in over-emphasis, over-inscription, exaggeration (of time), an impression of the making-strange of reality, a reality that we might foolishly have believed to be within our or the character's grasp. This is the same alienating, indelicate, somewhat surly attitude that seems to saturate so many long takes. What should seem familiar, more like our own experience of time, somehow feels weird and alien. Time passes in the realm of a housewife. We watch as she performs her daily

tasks. One legitimate response is boredom, but, either because of the broader context of cinema into which this film is born (both at the time of its release and into the present – the intervening decades have not dulled its edge), or because of something intrinsic in the film itself, those scenes of banality can prove to be uncomfortable, unsettling, and engrossing.

That confrontational nature of many long takes, which I've already mentioned in relation to Warhol's work, and which would appear to be the shared characteristic of much minimalist art, seems sometimes to be best understood as a question, asked by the film of the viewer - 'how long can I make you watch?'

Ivone Margulies describes the long takes of *Jeanne Dielman* as provoking a reciprocal question in the audience member; "the extension of time through a naturalistic image – the hyperrealist effect proposed – has as its utmost limit the question, 'What am I doing here watching what this woman is doing?'"[145] Yet she adds further nuance by stating that the "question implies not just a confusion between a naturalistic image and reality but the actual possibility of entering the fiction. It is the nature of the image that it seems to invite us to enter a diegetic process. Yet the kinds of correspondences that usually regulate the time of the narrative, of storytelling according to this or that dramatic effect, are not respected."[146] Margulies believes this to produce a confusion between fiction and reality, an entering into the fiction.

Let's look more closely at how Akerman creates this effect that appears to both repel and invite. The film follows Jeanne (Delphine Seyrig), a Belgian widow and part-time prostitute, over the course of three days. Her routines are strictly observed, and nothing about them seems that unusual, apart from her daily visit from a male client (a

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[145] Ivone Margulies, *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist Everyday* (London: Duke University Press, 1996), 68.

[146] Margulies, *Nothing Happens*, 68.

different one for each day) which is the only task that is hidden from the audience (until the climax that occurs on the final day). The film lasts 3 hours and 20 minutes and consists of a series of static long takes that witness her pursuit of these chores. Part of the uncanniness of the film rests in the fact that we watch as she completes tasks that would normally be elided or at most simply indicated in most other films. We watch as she prepares dinner, peeling potatoes and putting them into a pot to boil. Such an activity is by no means unusual, and might well be found in many other films, but it would more than likely also be accompanied by some other information (a conversation, a look, a poignancy in relation to some previous event), whereas here the activity itself is seen to be a sufficient content for the scene. Michael Tarantino writes: "Akerman's 'portrait of a life' extends the viewer's notion of completeness, of time itself. Jeanne taking a bath, Jeanne washing the dishes, cleaning the house… these events, normally excised from film narratives or greatly reduced, seem to take place in real time."[147] The tasks are shown in their entirety on the first day, with a determination to document Jeanne's labour so complete that we, the audience, are drawn into her labour, into the time of her work. These tasks fill Jeanne's days, and so we are inducted into the privileged position of sharing her duration. Beyond this, the shots often continue for a while after Jeanne has left the room, a technique reminiscent of the style of Yasujiro Ozu.[148] Margulies asserts that, in the case of *Jeanne Dielman*, this induces a degree of self-awareness in the viewer beyond what is usual in the film-watching experience. While Jeanne is on screen we look intently, but when she leaves the room we suddenly become aware of our looking.

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[147] Michael Tarantino, "A Few Brief Moments of Cinematic Time" in *The Cinematic*, ed. David Campany (London and Cambridge, Massachusettes: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2007), 35.

[148] For more on this aspect of Ozu's style, specifically in relation to *Late Spring*, see: Michael Pigott, "The Continuous Present in Ozu Yasujiro's *Late Spring*" *Kronoscope* 8, no. 1 (2008): 13 - 28.

Delphine Seyrig's performance is startling in its reserve, giving nothing away, making her much more of a mystery than a simple token of oppressed woman. Her performance appears to be a triumph of non-acting. She manages to, like the films itself, repel and invite – she is inscrutable, yet she is there to be looked at, like the unaware subject of a nature documentary.

As I have mentioned, the one task that is systematically elided is Jeanne's meetings with her male clients. The repetitive ritualised structure of the film, and specifically the fact that we are drawn into Jeanne's duration through the relentless documenting of her daily labours, results in the apprehension that these visits are, for Jeanne, non-existent. She pushes them out of her duration. They represent an incongruity in her life, an aspect of which she cannot reconcile with her ordered, normal, surface lifestyle. This psychological imbalance is conveyed through the use of time, structure and repetition in the film. At first the visits are entirely repressed. The client arrives, she takes his coat and they walk down the hall to the bedroom. The camera remains looking down the hall as the bedroom door closes, and keeps rolling even after. There is a cut, but the camera hasn't moved. The couple emerge and the client leaves. The time of the visit has been literally excised, not simply elided. The fact that it remains in position is significant – if it had moved to a different location, even just to the hall setup where she welcomes and sends off her clients, then we would have felt that the missing time had been somewhat smoothed over, the elision naturalised. This lost time is felt in a way that it is not in continuity editing, or indeed in most cases where the following shot is in a different location.

As the film progresses, Jeanne's behaviour begins to lose its order and we perceive this through the disordering of her time, both in the way it is represented, and in substantial evidence of her temporal miscalculations – she overcooks the potatoes,

goes to the post office too early. The final rupture occurs when we actually witness what had previously been concealed - her third encounter with a client from inside the bedroom. One incompatible aspect of her reality merges with another, as one kind of time erupts into another. The violence of this intrusion takes sensible form in Jeanne's shocking response. It is as if in our seeing this side of Jeanne for the first time, Jeanne sees it herself for the first time. What had been repressed from sight suddenly becomes visible.

Stylistically too this scene reacts with the preceding three hours worth of conditioning. Tarantino again writes, "This moment of extreme action and violence is made all that more effective by the static moments that have preceded it. The anxiety produced by our watching time pass for three hours sets us up for the horrendous event that is to come. It is as if the consequences of a conscious tracking of time are inescapable: fear and anxiety lead to violence."[149]

Why does Akerman choose to order the presentation of time in the way she does with *Jeanne Dielman*? What purpose does the relentless watching of banal operations as they play out serve? It creates certain feelings in the viewer, one of which Tarantino describes above, but there are more… the initial recognition of ritualisation may lead to thoughts of redundancy, Jeanne performing these ritualised actions as a negation of her self. Free thought, difference, irrationality, anything outside of the ritual upsets her routine – prefiguring the explosion of irrationality and non-routine enacted in the murder of one of her clients. Her actions seem constantly to be an effort on her part to preclude herself from having time to think, an attempt to make herself into an automaton. However, we might equally well read this as a representation of her having been placed into this role of automaton by a patriarchal society. In this respect the

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[149] Tarantino, "A Few Brief Moments of Cinematic Time," 35.

particular representation of time in the film may be understood as a way of expressing

the emptying out of time, the banalising of a particular class of subject's time, and the

complementary emptying out of the possibilities for irrationality and difference in the

model housekeeping woman. What other feelings does it evoke? – boredom,

discomfort, anxiety (as Tarantino suggests), engrossment (we become infatuated with

detail – normally insignificant details, the things that a character might do automatically

while some other much more important issue dominates the impression of the scene in a

more conventional film become the central subjects of the film in the case of *Jeanne*

Dielman), contemplative identification (a weird sense of safety in repetition, comfort in

familiarity and the very banality of Jeanne's tasks. We get to know her home and her

duties so well that they begin to feel like our own, or if that's stretching it a little far,

perhaps the home of a relative we might visit once or twice a year). Just as Roy

Grundmann noted in relation to *Blow Job*, a viewer may go through each of these states

while watching the film.

Caché: Time, the Long Take and Truth

Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005) presents us with a particularly interesting case,

being both exceptional in its own way, yet at the same time revealing much about a

certain mode of long take. The longest takes in *Caché* are *very* long, but their length is

somewhat naturalized, retrospectively, by the realization that they are in fact tapes being

watched within the film world. Georges (Daniel Auteuil), who lives on a quite street in

Paris's 13th arondissement and presents a book review show, has been receiving these

tapes from an anonymous tormentor. The tapes are long (one of them is said to last 2

hours) and, it would appear, unedited (with one exception).

The film's opening shot presents a home on a Parisian street, taken from a

distance. There is no obvious focal point at first, it feels merely like an establishing shot, but at some point its duration outweighs such assumptions, and it begins to feel more like surveillance footage. The shot lasts just under three minutes, during which time we hear the distant sounds of the city, highlighting the placidity of this little urban nook. The credits unobtrusively type themselves out in superimposition, and a few human elements (walkers, a cyclist) pass through the frame. At one point a woman emerges from the front door of the house (fig. 3.1) and leaves frame-left. Throughout the camera is absolutely still.

A man's voice, much closer than any of the diegetic sound and seeming to have the character of a sound made indoors in a quiet environment, says "Well?" A woman's voice answers, "Nothing." The scene changes and we watch a man exit the house, shot in the evening and from a different angle. He looks in the alley where the camera must have been, and then we return to the video. With the interruption of the voices and the change of scene we begin to understand the nature of that first shot, but it is still startling when the blurry fast-forward lines first appear and the tape starts to wind forward at an increased speed (fig. 3.4). We are watching a tape being watched within the world of the film, but we are also watching the tape itself. What we took for reality has turned out to be a recording. But then, didn't we already know that the films we watch in the cinema are recordings?

fig. 3.3

fig. 3.4

First let's deal with this shot as an innocent long take. What effects does it have?
Its length and lack of focal point allow the viewer's eye to rove about the frame, leaping
upon any movement. Nothing appears to be central - we're unsure as to what we're
supposed to be watching, or watching out for. A woman does emerge from the house at
the centre of the frame, but her presence is no more substantial than anything else. This
kind of long take, which allows movement to flow *through* it rather than allowing
movement to determine its length and orientation, is a great leveler. All of the elements
of the mise-en-scène, even the inanimate, come to be seen as having an existence in
time. When actions and actors do not determine the cuts we are presented with an image

of duration, of a whole enduring. In the static long take in particular, time is not broken

down and contracted in the mode of continuity editing, but neither does it take its

orientation from an onscreen character, or a disembodied abstract-eye. Here we see a

logical extreme of Bazin's ideal of objectivity in cinema. A mobile long take infers

some sort of guiding consciousness, piloting the frame through space and time, while a

static long take reduces the human input (or at least it gives that impression). Bazin

writes, "All the arts are based on the presence of man, only photography derives an

advantage from his absence,"[150] and, "the aesthetic qualities of photography are to be

sought in its power to lay bare realities."[151] I take the opening shot of *Caché* to represent

a particular ethic that informs the whole of the film, and which adheres very closely to

what Bazin understood to be cinema's great revolution. For him, all of the art-forms that

preceded cinema, be they plastic, performative or literary, were filtered through human

consciousness. Film offered the possibility of objectivity, of reality laid-bare, rather than

subjectively interpreted.

There are several reasons why this equation is not so clear-cut, but there is also

reason to believe that Bazin's understanding of the relationship between objectivity and

cinema was much more nuanced than he is often given credit for.[152] Either way,

Haneke's film begins with this idea and claims it as a narrative lynchpin and an

aesthetic model. These seemingly authorless recordings of reality strike fear into the

hearts of the protagonists. It's hard to tell, however, whether it is the malevolence of the

supposed sender or the tapes themselves that present the greatest threat.

This first shot technically constitutes a credit sequence, and so might be

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[150] André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" in *What Is Cinema? Vol.1*, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 2005), 13.

[151] Ibid., 15.

[152] For more on this see Daniel Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 443-481.

considered exceptional were it not for the fact that the rest of the tapes that Georges is sent take a similar form, and perform a similar retroactive function in relation to the shots immediately succeeding them. There is a second static shot from the same position, this time at night, then a shot of the street from another angle. The next tape received is endowed with movement, shot from inside a moving car, as is the next. We are never sure at first whether this is actually a tape we are watching or the reality of the film world. As the tapes change in form the mystery modulates from the almost supernatural connotations of the first tape, with its combination of length, stillness and lack of central focus, to become the actions of some definite malevolent other. The supernatural interpretation is compounded by Georges' puzzlement about the position of the camera for the first tape. He should have seen it when he walked past, and we the viewers can't shake the feeling that there is something wrong about the camera being up high above the cars and tight to the wall on the left. It is interesting to think that there is something uncanny about that first tape. The apparent lack of motivation, and those three elements of absence – its unbroken length, its absolute stillness, and its lack of focus – lead to the feeling that there is something inhuman about it. The shot, and the video-tape of which it is representative, lacks the selectivity, the sign of intention, that would make it human. Instead it seems as if it is the work of something outside of the realm of the human – something mechanical, something supernatural. I believe the most effective of the characteristics that produce this effect, is the shot's duration. We can imagine such a shot feeling more 'normal', if somewhat unremarkable, were it just as static and just as open, but much shorter. With long takes, particularly static ones, there is a certain point when long becomes *too* long, when one kind of apparent intention is replaced with another of an entirely different kind.

In an interview in the journal *Kino-Eye* Haneke considers his interest in the long

take:

> Perhaps I can connect this to the issue of television. Television accelerates our habits of seeing. Look, for example, at advertising in that medium. The faster something is shown, the less able you are to perceive it as an object occupying a space in physical reality, and the more it becomes something seductive. And the less real the image seems to be, the quicker you buy the commodity it seems to depict. […]The cinema can offer very little that is new; everything that is said has been said a thousand times, but cinema still has the capacity, I think, to let us experience the world anew.
>
> The long take is an aesthetic means to accomplish this by its particular emphasis.[153]

It is clear that Haneke intentionally uses the long take as a device by which to compel his viewers to 'experience the world anew', to recognize the real (when he went on to make *Caché* he attempted to compel his characters to do so also). He conceives of the power of the long take in terms of speed. If television advertising 'accelerates our habits of seeing', then the long take, as a remedy, must slow them down. Furthermore, by slowing them down like this, the long take returns the quality of realness to the object. Haneke doesn't make the viewer's task easy; his images seem to pre-exist the narrative, and are there to be deciphered. They don't slip down easily in the way that television advertising does.

He has a tendency to hide details within the frame, so that, when noticed, the

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[153] Christopher Sharrett, "The World That Is Known: Michael Haneke Interviewed" *Kino-Eye* 4, no. 1 (2004), available at http://www.kinoeye.org/04/01/interview01.php

viewer gets the impression that there is some sort of truth girding all these images. A truth that is perhaps hidden, difficult to find, but existent none the less. For instance, the final shot of *Caché*, over which the credits roll, contains a clue that leads only to further speculation about the identity of the sender of the tapes. We see two characters who we thought had nothing to do with one another meeting and conversing in a familiar way, as if they've met before. As I say, this provides nothing like a conclusive answer, but it hints at an underlying truth. Again, this truth is arrived at by keeping the film rolling, by continuing to watch, by being attentive to reality as it endures.

Haneke uses this device in *Code Unknown* (2000) also. This film is made up of a series of mostly unbroken long takes. Several stories unfold at once, though they all seem to branch out from a single event that occurs on Rue St. Germain in Paris. During one long take, which records a drumming performance by a troupe of deaf children, we notice (though perhaps only on a second viewing) a character called Amadou, who we know from a different narrative strand, in the background. So, we think, Amadou works with deaf children. Which in fact makes Amadou the link to this strand - the shots of the class of deaf children would seem to be the only arbitrary shots in the whole film, were it not for this little, and so easily missed, detail.

In this sense *Code Unknown* and *Caché* both seem to oppose the idea of providing the audience with an intuitive elaboration of the story. Instead of breaking down and reconstructing the space and time of the event so that the viewer need not worry about where to look or when the important moment will be (we might say that with classical continuity editing, every moment is an important one) these films present scenes *from* a world, in which a story lies hidden. Space presents the first level of concealment (at its most extreme in the two examples cited above), and through time both a concealment and a revelation is performed. Duration, by itself, creates ambiguity

– what we think we knew becomes more uncertain the longer the shot endures. At the same time, the extended duration of the shot gives some hope that a truth can be identified, that a truth is there to be discovered. The detail is hidden, but, given enough time, we will find it.

Gilles Deleuze's concept of the time-image may help us to understand how long takes like this work. The Deleuzian Time-image, as a descriptive concept, is by no means limited to long takes, but I believe this is where the concept can be of most use, and is most clearly applicable. The Movement-image presents us with an indirect image of time – we see movement, which necessarily infers time. We see time *through* movement. The Time-image, on the other hand, presents us with a direct image of time. Here the shot *contains* movement. It might help if we think of this in a very literal, physical way – the shot is a four-dimensional container for movement. In the case of a shot that could be classed as a Time-image, the movement is not big enough to fill the container. The room left over within the container is what makes the passing of time the dominant force in the shot.

The action moves *through* the duration of Haneke's long takes. Movement here is disempowered – the limits of the shot seem to determine how long we watch the action for, rather than the action determining the limits of the shot. By stripping movement of this element of control time is released and becomes free to "provide the signaletic material itself."[154] A time-image shows us a whole enduring, that is, changing over time, as opposed the simple movement of objects within a closed unchanging system.

A continuity-edited sequence presents an alternative method for presenting an event. Yet the difference exists even when we compare single shots. The fact that the

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[154] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 41.

long take may continue after the action and begin before alters the way that we perceive that action – it may present us with more information, or simply set that action in a context that shows it in a new light. The continuity-editing shot places limits on the unfolding of time, the long take loosens those limits. Uninterrupted duration, as Bazin suggested quite a while before Deleuze, has a greater truth value than continuity-editing or montage can possibly have.

The moment that an edit occurs within a scene, several new interpretive processes are activated, both on the part of the viewer, as well as, it would seem, that of the film itself. The edit produces a gap which the viewer must fill up, the details presented within the shots providing a key to the creative reconstruction of a fictional world. I am not suggesting that imagination is not involved in a film full of long takes, only that the world is left more intact, and so fewer gaps must be creatively filled.[155] The edit also produces the feeling that a cognitive process is controlling the manner in which the world is reconstructed on the screen. Someone or something is deciding what details are necessary. The long take (especially the static long take) removes this feeling to some degree, thereby increasing the impression of objective truth.

Pause and Rewind

Let's return to the idea of the interruption of onscreen reality by the revelation that it is in fact a recording. This is a trick Haneke is fond of playing. In *Benny's Video* (Haneke, 1992) we begin with a similar device, a recording of a pig being slaughtered ending with the distorted pause lines of a VCR, and the onscreen rewinding of the footage just seen, the climax of which is replayed in slow motion. The difference here is

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[155] There is of course the world outside of the frame to be creatively constructed based on evidence within the frame and on the soundtrack, but this applies to both the long take and the continuity-edited sequence. Here I am arguing that there are fewer gaps, rather than no gaps.

that the recording retains the grainy quality, the washed-out colour and the shakey hand-held feeling of home-video, so the pause, and the revelation that this is a video being watched within the world of the film, does not come as such a shock. In *Code Unknown* a scene that we had been watching for more than three minutes turns out to have been a film projected on a screen. There appears to be a scene-change, a move to another location, when the film suddenly winds down in a very disorienting way – the image stuttering and slowing and one of the actors emerging from the bottom right of the frame, his head blocking our view of the screen. The film is then rewound to allow the actors to re-dub a portion of their dialogue - the 'truth' turning out to be the fact that the scene which we take to be real is in fact a film within the film, currently being projected in a dubbing studio. In *Funny Games* (Haneke, 1997) one of the family's two tormentors points a remote control at the screen and rewinds the death of his accomplice - rather a perverse trick to play on both the characters and the audience. Much of his work has engaged with various ideas of mediation, but it is with *Caché* in particular (and to a lesser extent in *Code Unknown*) that he turns the power of mediation, like an interrogator's lamp, back on the way subjects conceive of their relationship with reality, with the past, and with themselves.

Georges lives a fairly regular bourgeois life that benefits from his perceptual enclosure. He has developed a habitual ability, like most Western Europeans, to blot out disturbing aspects of reality (for instance the news footage that plays in the background as he works, like a sort of ambient audio-visual noise – made real again when the live news feed fills our screen), as well as aspects of his own past. Georges performs this perceptual selectivity as a sort of editing of reality. The tapes, however, are unedited. They show his life back to him. Even though he may only pass briefly through them (as in his 6 second cameo in the first tape) they indicate an objective view - not necessarily

the fact that someone is looking, or that someone knows (as in the much more banal fear of *I Know What You did Last Summer* (Gillespie, 1997)), but simply an indication that there *is* an objective reality, and that his life has a reality beyond his own edited version. This is enough to awaken his awareness, though he struggles against it, reacting to the mysterious harassment with what could be considered understandable indignation. Ultimately we see him retreating back into a solipsistic cocoon, pulling his bedroom curtains in the middle of the day and swallowing sleeping pills in the dark, in an effort to dull, if not his conscience, then his consciousness.

Editing

We find this idea of Georges editing his reality somewhat explicitly articulated in one of the sequences related to Georges' book show. We cut straight into a heated conversation about Arthur Rimbaud's sister, Isabelle. One of the guests sets about listing a few qualifications for his agreement with another's point about her meddling nature, when the image freezes. Georges' voice (disconnected with the space depicted on screen, just as in the first shot) intones over the image, "Stop, it's getting too theoretical. Cut at 'we agree on that point' and go to when Teulé talks about homosexuality." Once again, a voice that seems much closer than the diegetic sound coupled with the sudden interruption of the moving image (the pause and rewind) retrospectively signals the recorded nature of the sequence. We see Georges in the editing room overseeing the editing process, making sure that the show conforms to a certain standard of entertainment. There is nothing unusual about this process in itself, but the way that it is presented suggests that it can be legitimately read as Georges imposing an editing schema on a recording of reality (albeit the reality of a TV studio). When things become too theoretical, when we hit a banal trough between interesting peaks, Georges

commands its excision. Yet in the unbroken duration of reality moments are not defined or distinct – one moment flows into the next, and, outside of human cognition, every moment is equal. Editing puts the recorded image through the filter of subjectivity, just as subjectivity puts reality through a filter of selective cognition (real-time perceptual editing).

Time restored, as in the tapes that Georges is sent, is dangerous. Film has the ability to show reality back to the viewer unedited, to force them to recognize what is hidden, be it the repressed memory of a nation (the slaughter of Algerian demonstrators in 1961, in which Majid's (Maurice Bénichou) parents died) or a callous act committed in one's childhood (Georges' lies about Majid).

Finally, one more example from the film. Georges follows the clues in one of the tapes and finds Majid's apartment, where he confronts him and warns him to stay away from his family. Georges adopts reassuring roles – the victim, the protective father. As Catherine Wheatley notes in her article on the film for *Sight and Sound*, "the scene is shown in a classic realist style that incorporates close-ups, reverse shots and a mobile camera."[156] We leave the room with Georges, follow him outside and watch him regain his composure. Soon after we see the latter part of their meeting again, but this time from the static, unedited perspective of a camera in the back of the room: objective truth. This time the camera keeps rolling after Georges has left the room. We watch as Majid sits alone. Throughout the exchange he has remained composed and spoken in a calm way with Georges, even when Georges becomes slightly aggressive. But once alone he slowly breaks down. The camera lingers on his quiet reaction. The knowledge that this is a hidden camera view makes the scene seem all the more a revelation of a private reaction. The extension of the duration of this scene has revealed a truth about

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[156] Catherine Wheatley, "Sex, Lies & Videotape," *Sight and Sound,* February 2006.

Majid and the situation, one that was hidden the first time we saw it. We understood the event of their meeting in one way before, and in another after.

Conclusion

During the course of this chapter I have charted a progression along a scale that runs between control and chaos, between virtuosity and ambiguity. Hopefully I have demonstrated that while the long take is by no means a guarantee of authenticity, ambiguity or objectivity, its fundamental temporality nevertheless lends itself to the production of these qualities. It also provides a variety of other functions, such as the creation of unity and continuity of time and place, which in turn serves dramatic and spectacular functions (as in *Rope* and *Touch of Evil*). A crucial distinction was made between the ontological condition of the chaotic or authentic, and the *impression* of chaos or authenticity. Renoir's camera only *seems* to be unable to keep up with events at La Colinière, just as Haneke's camera only seems to be hidden, an alien, objective capturer of truth. Such impressions are only possible because these qualities are latent in every long take. The extension of a shot's duration increases the possibility for: random intrusions; chaotic emergences; the emergence of uncertainty; the gradual multiplication or division of valencies. This possibility may be exploited in a variety of ways, only one of which consists in the significant relinquishment of control (à la Warhol). The absolute taming of this possibility through virtuosity and style constitutes the opposite end of the spectrum. However, it is those films that exist somewhere around the middle of the scale, those that exploit the connotations of authenticity and chaos without necessarily adhering rigidly to them as principles, that provide the most interesting cases. Ophüls' long takes present the loss of control in a very controlled way, and they use this technique to produce a particular mode of visually narrating and moving

through a world.

Chapter 4

The Pressure of Time

> "The terminology a film-maker or film theoretician chooses to employ is a significant reflection of what he takes a film to be."
>
> - Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*[157]

During the course of this study I have endeavoured as much as possible to abstain from lapsing into the use of spatial terms when trying to describe the manipulations and types of time in the films analysed. As I mentioned in the review of literature, this is a difficulty that permeates the field of academic film studies. What is needed is a vocabulary that would allow the critic or theorist to describe the formal texture of a film without unnecessary recourse to spatialising terms. In this chapter I will attempt to delineate the origin of such a practical alternative terminology by examining the theory and practice of the Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky. Through a detailed analysis of an extended sequence from his mid-period masterpiece *Mirror* (1975) I will demonstrate that it is possible to both creatively and critically engage with the temporal dimension of cinema as an active stylistic element.

In the introduction I touched upon the question of time and the digital. Garret Stewart's understanding of the digital as having introduced the possibility of 'framed time' (as opposed to time itemised into discrete frames) was considered within the context of the current study and in light of the basic technical facts that undergird

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[157] Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 3.

contemporary digital video formats and techniques. Whether we choose to accept Stewart's assertions or not, his characterisation of this shift in ways of conceptualising time on screen reveals the sophistication, innovation and anteriority of Tarkovsky's theory.[158] If we take it that Stewart is primarily talking about a reconceptualisation of the way that time is presented on screen, which is facilitated by the incursion of digital technologies within film production methods (rather than focusing on the raw and rather blunt facticity of his claims that the presentation of time is fundamentally and manifestly transformed by the medium's newfound digitality) then we cannot fail to see the connections between this very current conception and Tarkovsky's ostensibly antiquated version.

His description of time flowing and modulating through the shot rather than through rhythms of editing predates the digital, but I have hopefully already shown that contemporary digital cinema formats do not significantly deviate from the motive-frame based model which has been in place since the birth of cinema. It is the 24 frames that compose a second of screen time that have been digitised, and not the duration of the second itself which has been somehow converted into a liquid flow of data. I would argue that Tarkovsky's theorisation and, crucially, his practice of the stylistic manipulation of time within the shot gives the lie to Stewart's suggestion that this is a trait that arises concurrently with the use of digital effects and recording processes in the cinema. Hopefully, the range of techniques for modulating the presentation and experience of time identified throughout this study, almost all of which occur before the introduction of the digital, will testify to this fact also.

Time on film and time digitised are different at a fundamental level, but as a phenomenon experienced by a viewer they are not easily differentiated – both present

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[158] Garret Stewart, *Framed Time: Toward a Postfilmic Cinema* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007)

an image enduring on a screen. The limits on the category movie (perhaps more than ever the most appropriate term) at the minimum level of interference would have to be:

1. The work must have a fixed duration.

2. The work must consist of an image displayed on a screen.[159]

The limit cases that stretch even this definition come not just from the digital age but from throughout cinema's history. The crucial characteristic that I would suggest differentiates the movie is a fixed duration. It is the temporality of the image, more specifically the truncated temporality of the image, that defines it against other visual arts and other forms of moving image. The fact that it has a set duration abstracts the work to a greater or lesser degree from the duration of the viewer and the space of the viewing. The narrative film sets up a time of its own, a past the present of which we become witness to. Even the most abstract film we can conceive of, a still monochrome featureless image say, dares us to call it a movie if it has a fixed duration and therefore its own temporal layer folded into the layer of the time of its viewing.

As part of an effort to re-configure our ways of thinking about the artform formerly known as film it may be advantageous to adopt a new mode of designation for the medium. Noël Carroll performs a similar move when he argues for the appropriateness of the term 'moving images' over 'film.'[160] Another possibility also suggested by Carroll is 'motion pictures.' I personally prefer 'moving images,' as it strips away some of the connotations attached to the word 'picture.' What this step achieves, apart from broadening the category to include digital and new media variants,

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[159] It should be noted that a particular shape or form has not been prescribed for the screen. Neither is it specified that image must be projected onto a screen.

[160] Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2008), 3.

is the shifting of emphasis from the production phase of the artwork to the consumption phase. This new term proceeds relatively smoothly from our base definition – an image that has a fixed duration. The only minor tension I can identify is the insistence on movement in the term 'moving images'. As I have already mentioned, there are limit cases that could test this aspect. A still image without movement could be projected for a fixed duration. Indeed it could be printed on celluloid and projected in an average cinema. It seems excessive to have this form of transgression designated as a different medium entirely, rather than as a peculiar stylistic choice within a particular medium. Which leads me to suggest 'cinema' as a catchall term to work in tandem with 'moving images.' 'Film' and 'cinema,' though for a long time interchangeable terms that designated the same thing, find their roots on opposite sides of the process. 'Film' tacitly denotes the production of the artwork as the dominant phase, the celluloid base constituting the 'what it is.' 'Cinema' describes both the site of consumption and the thing that is consumed. And the 'what is consumed' is not the celluloid base, but re-animated images. In fact 'moving images' and 'cinema' both mean practically the same thing. The origin of the term 'cinema' is the Greek work 'kinema' which literally translates as 'motion.' 'Cinema' is the shortened version of 'cinematograph,' the term coined by the Lumieres, which appends the idea of writing or drawing, and produces a word that literally translates to something like 'moving images,' or indeed 'motion pictures.'

Time and Interpretation

My approach so far has been to look from the outside in, adopting a broad approach that considered a wide variety of examples taken from different stylistic categories and periods. I think it is necessary at this point to look from the inside out, to

look closely at an example of a filmmaker, a film, and a theory that consciously engaged with the temporality of cinema. I will therefore examine Andrei Tarkovsky's understanding of what a film is, paying particularly close attention to his concept of 'time-pressure' as an aesthetic principle, and analysing its practical application in the film *Mirror*.

For Tarkovsky time is the fundamental substance of cinema. It is the raw material out of which the artwork is made. The fact that films consist of image and sound ranks just slightly below the fact that those images and sounds have temporal extension, that they have duration. This, I will argue, is a very radical and productive way of looking at film. However, it is also susceptible to accusations of what is called medium essentialism or medium specificity, and all the rather convincing arguments that have been advanced against it. One of the main criticisms of medium essentialism is that it is often prescriptive, telling the artist what can and can't be done with the medium. Its use as a means of evaluating art (based on whether the artwork is true to its medium or not) has also been shown to have more of a crippling than an enabling effect. While Tarkovsky claims that he does not wish to tell anyone what to do, that in fact he is really only describing his own practice, his argument for a particular use of cinema is put forward so strongly that it is difficult to imagine him approving of anything very different. Also, he unashamedly criticises the use of what are in his view properly literary devices (such as metaphor and symbolism) in cinema, because he feels they are not necessary, and indeed not playing to the medium's strengths. Nevertheless, what on the surface appear to be strongly essentialist views can be shown to have an enabling rather than a limiting effect. Almost all of his assertions can be traced back to an understanding of film as an essentially temporal art form and this understanding, I will argue, opens up possibilities rather than closing them down. His position is complex,

and sometimes apparently contradictory, though with some careful examination I believe it can be made clear.

On the one hand Tarkovsky decries the tendency in modern 'poetic' cinema to use symbolism and allegory, to over-determine the way the image can be read. He promotes a return to what he considers to be the essence of cinematic art: its 'time realism.' On the other hand he sees the process of creating a film as akin to sculpting - a selecting, refining, creative act; a moulding of raw time into a shape close to the one that was already existent in potential in the director's mind. He rejects what he designates 'formalism' as an overly intellectual, almost literary kind of cinema (he even goes so far as to say that it does not remind him of cinema at all), yet he also implicitly rejects realism, through his repeated assertions of the primary creative force of the director, and the sculpting force they bring to bear upon the recorded reality.

This is complicated further by Tarkovsky's own personal preference for filmic dreaming, for the representation of an inner life on screen, most notably in the form of the memories of *Mirror*, or the dreams of *Ivan's Childhood* (Tarkovsky, 1962), and a sort of fantastical imaging that is present to varying degrees in all of his films.

"I … find particularly irritating the pretensions of modern 'poetic cinema', which involves breaking off contact with fact and with time realism, and makes for preciousness and affectation."[161] Yet at another time he speaks of himself as being amongst that category of filmmakers who could be called poets of the cinema. For him there are two types of film director: those who recreate the world that surrounds them, and those who fashion their own world on film. He firmly believes himself to belong to

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[161] Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 69.

the latter, along with Bresson, Dovzhenko, Mizoguchi, Bergman, Bunuel, and Kurasawa; those whom he considers to be, amongst filmmakers, the poets.[162]

Tarkovsky, then, has a complicated idea of the 'poetic' as it applies to cinema. While he sees himself as a poet, and considers his methods to be an attempt at remaining faithful to the essential properties of cinema and using it to its fullest potential, he also uses the term to describe the type of cinema that runs counter to this ideal, that which in some sense *betrays* cinema. He uses 'poetic' to describe two very different, even contradictory things. However, I think it is not so much a case of two meanings for the same word, as one meaning complicated by a confused application, though not on Tarkovsky's part. The negative application of the term refers to the use of a literary poetics in film; a mistaken, in Tarkovsky's view, and confused use of devices like symbolism and metaphor in a medium where allusion is entirely unnecessary and superfluous. There is also a poetics of cinema, however, that relies upon the particular properties of the medium for its articulations. As literature is necessarily allusive, its words (the fundamental layer of the medium) pointing beyond themselves to something else, the articulations of its poetics are therefore complementary to the substance. A poetics of cinema would consequently rely upon whatever the substance of that form might be, and as we've seen, for Tarkovsky the substance was undoubtedly time itself.

The tension inherent in Tarkovsky's position regarding realism and formalism might therefore be eased by an elaborated definition of his 'poetics' of cinema. For him, the root of cinema lies in the objective technological observation and recording of reality (in this respect his perspective is very much in agreement with Bazin's), but the artistic impulse that drives cinema to become an art form requires that what is recorded be fashioned by the artist as a block of marble is by the sculptor - hence 'Sculpting in

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[162] Taken from conference footage in *Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky* (Leszczylowski, 1988), included on *The Sacrifice* DVD (Kino Video, 2000).

Time' (and in this respect the connection to Bazin's theory becomes more complicated, though perhaps not lost – it is somewhat rehabilitated by Daniel Morgan's recent rethinking of Bazin[163]). The artist exerts as much control as he can over the mise-en-scéne, the cinematography, and the editing, yet he stops short of that overt instrumentalisation of the moving image which serves to produce only visual narrative, full of metaphor and allegory. The principle of observation must remain intact and uncompromised.

How should we understand this middle ground between the extremes of realism and formalism that Tarkovsky seems to be forging? He appears to assert the primacy of the artist as a creative force, as an entity that, through the manipulation of the pro-filmic space and the shooting and editing of film, expresses their personal vision (based on their memories, dreams, way of seeing the world), while simultaneously asserting the primacy of the mechanical capturing of an enduring world, the inherent ambiguity of which carries over into the resultant film record.

We might suggest that this apparent contradiction stems from his belief in the fundamental temporality of cinema. The film artist sculpts the raw material that is captured time, manipulating it so that it is as close to their vision as possible. Yet in the first place their vision should not constitute a closed set of meanings, it should itself open out onto an infinity of potential meanings, and secondly, even if their intention is the closing down of ambiguity, the temporality of the image will spoil any such design. Time swamps meaning, inducing a simultaneous delay and stammering of interpretation. Perceptions and interpretations are abruptly truncated and left unfinished. Completion necessitates sacrifice - as soon as we think we have something, we have already missed the next thing. Meaning always lags behind, trailing in the moment's

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[163] Daniel Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin."

wake (the wake of the present). Cinema is neither pure creation nor pure mechanical (automatic) recording.

This conception of the interpretive process finds support in Hans Georg Gadamer's understanding of understanding. At the centre of Gadamerian hermeneutics is the idea of 'play.' One iteration of this concept is a to and fro motion that occurs between the viewer and the artwork. A fusion of horizons (the horizon of the work and the horizon of the viewer) takes place which entails both a pre-existent meaning in the artwork, and a creative reading brought to the piece by the viewer. Knowledge is not an objective quantity for Gadamer, indeed it is the scientistic tendency toward objectification of language and experience that he is railing against. Nor is it simply accumulated through perception (in much the way that a naively analytic conception of film studies might hope to extract a film's 'meaning' as knowledge). Rather, the confrontation between viewer and work constitutes a unique experiential event that results in a broadened horizon of understanding. With much experience one becomes wise rather than knowledgeable. The emphasis is taken away from the positivistic ideal of a determinate and verifiable understanding (interpretation/reading) of the work, and placed upon the dynamic interpretive relationship that is forged in the viewing. For Gadamer, a different, yet equally valid, reading of a work will occur each time we view it. Our experience of the work will continue to modulate through consecutive viewings due in part to the changing conditions of viewing, but mostly because of the change in what we ourselves bring to the meeting. Meaning is never set, and certainly not subject to some elusive 'correct' interpretation.

The hermeneutic circle captures this unfinished, always changing quality of aesthetic/interpretive experience, as it occurs even within a single reading. Gadamer, himself paraphrasing Schleiermacher, describes the hermeneutic circle as follows:

Fundamentally, understanding is always a movement in [a] kind of

circle, which is why the repeated return from the whole to the parts,

and vice versa, is essential. Moreover, this circle is constantly

expanding, since the concept of the whole is relative, and being

integrated in ever larger contexts always affects the understanding of

the individual part.[164]

I would argue that Gadamerian and Bergsonian thought converges at this point. The

incomplete and ever expanding whole of Gadamer's hermeneutics mirrors Bergson's

conception of duration (the ever-increasing Past), just as the circular relationship of

whole and part reminds us of the hierarchical shading of different durations into each

other, all taking part in a greater all-encompassing duration of the whole. Even more

significantly (and this is where Gadamerian interpretation takes on an important

temporal aspect) the Bergsonian concept of duration turns upon the idea of the

interpenetration of moments. Bergson argued against the understanding of time as a

series of discrete instants, as a linear time-line that could be rationalised into a series of

system-states. Gadamer argued against the conception of understanding as the

accumulation of a series of discrete knowledge items, suggesting instead that we think

of it as an ongoing reciprocal relationship between subject and object. Implicit in this

understanding is the fact that the subject and object exist in duration. The hermeneutic

circle is necessarily temporal. It describes a model of interpretation wherein the object

cannot be conceived of as given-at-once. Another way of illustrating the hermeneutic

circle concerns the interpretation of a single written sentence. "Hermeneutical

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[164] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Edition (New York: Continuum, 2003),
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interpretation is always an incomplete movement between whole and part. Making sense of a text is a complex process. As one reads part of a sentence one is at the same time projecting a totality of meaning upon the whole."[165] As we read each word our understanding of the sentence changes until we have read all of the words. Depending on environmental and attitudinal conditions we pre-empt the meaning in many ways before we even have a full sentence to interpret. And when we have, we still cannot understand the whole sentence without each word part, just as the meaning of the sentence cannot be gotten from the words on their own. Sense exists in the movement between whole and part, and understanding arises from the temporal act of reading. Hermeneutical understanding is understanding in time.

The concurrence between the two may not be as straightforward as would first appear based on my brief description, but, as different as they were in some respects, I do believe that both Gadamer and Bergson were trying to approach a very similar object, and in their willingness to construct radically different methodologies toward this end, they forged similar patterns of thinking. Both Gadamer and Bergson aligned themselves against an idea of scientific objectivity, of the universe as something that could be broken down into a series of discrete facts. And both turned to the idea of a continuum as alternative. For Bergson it was the continuum of duration, of the multiplicity of time and the interpenetration of moments. And for Gadamer it was the continuum of interpretation, the hermeneutic circle of the reader and the read, of consciousness interfacing with an outside world. Gadamer rarely speaks explicitly about time, but this is to a certain extent because temporality was always the unspoken implication at the centre of his work. The model of consciousness that he developed was necessarily a consciousness in duration.

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[165] Chris Lawn, *Wittgenstein and Gadamer: Toward a Post-Analytic Philosophy of Language* (London: Continuun, 2006), 43.

Richard L. Brougham observes a reciprocal connection between the two. He suggests that Bergson presaged the mid to late twentieth century modification of hermeneutics (and specifically the Gadamerian variant) in an article published in 1902 entitled "Intellectual Effort."[166] He writes, "Bergson not only anticipated hermeneutics as a means of interpretation; he also saw the hermeneutic circle as a fundamental modus of being, an ontological structure operant in the world." Brougham charts the progression from one kind of conception of the interface between consciousness and world and another kind that is formulated during the course of the article. Bergson moves from a Kantian view of a pre-existent 'scheme' that facilitates the perception of elements of the outside world, to a model of exactly the kind of feedback effect operating in the Gadamerian hermeneutic circle. In an effort to deal with the complicated relationship between the element and the context (the part and the whole) he resolved that both the content and the scheme must be in a constant process of reciprocal modulation. The connections between the thought of both men are powerful indications of the degree to which time may indeed be considered to be the condition of understanding.

Tarkovsky never goes into much detail regarding the interpretive process, but his descriptions of the relationship between meaning and the work of art reveal an implicit congruence, a probably intuitive agreement with the previously outlined model. As we have already seen, Tarkovsky placed the capturing of time at the centre of the filmmaking process, and for him film was unique amongst the arts because of this very property. For one thing, it offered both a distillation of meaning, and, paradoxically, an infinite multiplication of meaning. Film, though it is a medium, eliminates to a large

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[166] Richard L. Brougham, "Ontological Hermeneutics: An Overlooked Bergsonian Perspective," *Process Studies* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 37 - 41.

degree the need for mediation. One doesn't need to suggest, express or imply, one can simply show, and for Tarkovsky devices like metaphor and symbolism become redundant in such an atmosphere. Yet at the same time the use of captured time in this way allowed a great deal of ambiguity to slip in. In this way Tarkovsky shared some views with André Bazin, particularly regarding the relationship between the duration of a shot and its degree of ambiguity. He describes what makes a masterpiece a masterpiece in the following way (using a very indicative quote from Vyacheslav Ivanov):

A masterpiece is a space closed in upon itself, not subject to either cooling or over-heating. Beauty is in the balance of the parts. And the paradox is that the more perfect the work, the more clearly does one feel the absence of any associations generated by it. The perfect is unique. Or perhaps it is able to generate an infinite number of associations—which ultimately means the same thing. Vyacheslav Ivanov made some extraordinarily penetrating and apt comments on this when he wrote of the wholeness of the artistic image (which he calls 'symbol'): 'A symbol is only a true symbol when it is inexhaustible and unlimited in its meaning, when it utters in its arcane (hieratic and magical) language of hint and intimation something that cannot be set forth, that does not correspond to words. It has many faces and many thoughts, and in its remotest depths it remains inscrutable . . . It is formed by organic process, like a crystal . . . Indeed it is a monad, and thus constitutionally different from complex and reducible allegories, parables and similes. . . Symbols cannot be

stated or explained, and, confronted by their secret meaning in its

totality, we are powerless.'[167]

For Tarkovsky, the work of art, when it works properly, is a nexus of competing but

equally valid meanings, an opening out onto an infinity of possible associations. One

way of reading this description is to take it that the work of art suggests something to us

that we can't quite grasp, that we know is there but are unable to identify and assimilate

(like when a word is on the tip of your tongue, or a memory that you can't quite

remember). For Gadamer the encounter with the artwork (when approached

appropriately by the viewer) is characterised by an act of negation. We are presented

with a meaning that we hadn't expected, and we become aware of this meaning as the

demonstration of our own not-knowing. This occurs as an opening out onto what is for

the viewer the chaos of the unknown. Cinema is especially suited to this task because of

its temporality. The duration of the moving image allows little opportunity for the

uncondensed or unreduced identification, cataloguing and assimilation of possible

meaning. The moving image is a hermeneutic circle that imposes itself upon the viewer.

The sentence must be actively read, but the sequence may be passively viewed.

'Play' characterises the relationship between viewer and artwork also. For

Gadamer the model for all of our social rituals is the game, but it has a specific

resonance in its application to the meeting of the viewer and the artwork. The reciprocal

movement that occurs between the player and the game is also the to and fro movement

of engagement with an artwork. This stresses the continuously modulating relationship

between work and audience. Rather than seeing the work as something fixed that we

simply view, this model portrays the engagement with the artwork as involvement in a

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[167] Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 47.

process, in which the viewer plays a significant, creative role. However, this does not succeed in simply shifting the act of creating meaning onto the side of the viewer. The game itself has a power over the player. The player must play within its rules – it thereby delimits the field of play, constraining the production of meaning. The work of art exists not as an object to be viewed, but in the engagement of its specific kind of play.

> If we examine how the word "play" is used and concentrate on its so-called metaphorical senses, we find talk of the play of light, the play of the waves, the play of gears or parts of machinery, the interplay of limbs, the play of forces, the play of gnats, even a play on words. In each case what is intended is to-and-fro movement that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end. Correlatively, the word "Spiel" originally meant "dance" and is still found in many word forms (e.g., in Spielmann, jongleur). The movement of playing has no goal that brings it to an end; rather, it renews itself in constant repetition. The movement backward and forward is obviously so central to the definition of play that it makes no difference who or what performs this movement. The movement of play as such has, as it were, no substrate. It is the game that is played – it is irrelevant whether or not there is a subject who plays it. The play is the occurrence of the movement as such. Thus we speak of the play of colors and do not mean only that one color plays against another, but that there is one process or sight displaying a changing variety of colors.[168]

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[168] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 103.

The hermeneutic circle therefore applies to our experience of all art forms, and those experiences are therefore necessarily temporalised, even if the artwork does not have a fixed duration attached to it (like a painting). So what is special about film? If the dialogic form of experience is effective in all forms of art from the novel to music to dance, then what special application does it have in relation to film? And how can it help us to understand the special character of film, in contrast with other art forms, if it is a common trait?

Film itself is temporal and ceaselessly, relentlessly so. The flicker effect at the end of Gaspar Noë's *Irreversible* (2002) draws attention to itself, making it clear that we are watching a film. More significantly it suggests the steady relentless pace of the film running through the projector. A similar sensation is found at the opening. In a film about the inevitable onward flow of time (the film is also bookended by the phrase "Time destroys all things", once spoken, once written) could this possibly refer to the relentless, steady flow of time produced by the filmic apparatus? And further, in a film insistent upon continuing to show when you feel you've seen enough, a film determined to keep going though the viewer desperately wishes to move on, could this refer to the fact that film immerses the viewer in the steady flow of its time? That if playing the game properly (to walk out, drift off, or to actively amuse yourself in some other way is, in Gadamer's terms, to be a 'spoilsport') we are locked into the ceaseless onward march of images, dragged into the film's duration. The meeting of our duration with that of the film results in the suppression of one by the other. The film does not give us the chance to pause and process without risking missing something else, as other arts do. Again, this assumes a viewer who has willingly given himself or herself over to whatever the film intends to do with them. Films are not (necessarily) tools of mass hypnotism; they don't just pull in passers-by. But a viewer that attempts to engage fully with the work

will necessarily find themselves at a disadvantage. 'Disadvantage,' though on the surface an unremarkable choice of terms, strikes me as a particularly appropriate word here, especially in the sense of being the opposite of 'advantage' in a tennis match. Gadamer insistently describes the work of interpretation (and the experience of the work of art) as a kind of game, and the to and fro of the tennis match captures well the to and fro motion of play between subject and object. What's more, the idea of having the advantage – of the artwork being in the dominant position in this back and forth motion, a position in which the server may take their time, compose themselves, and, when ready, throw the best they've got at their opponent – is especially applicable to the moving image, which, because of its overriding temporality, is distinguished by its always having the advantage.

Time Pressure

Tarkovsky's belief in the centrality of time to the art of cinema found substantial, tangible form in his approach to editing. In the section entitled 'Time, rhythm and editing'[169] in his *Sculpting in Time* he describes how the director goes about creating different flows of time, different rhythms in the film. There is nothing particularly innovative about this declaration that film is rhythmic, that a film can possess characteristic rhythms, or shifting rhythms... What is innovative is Tarkovsky's insistence that the rhythm be created *within* the shot rather than by its conjunction with others.

In this sense he rejects the idea that editing is the dominant formal element of film, derisively adding "as if film were made on the editing table"[170] (interestingly, this

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[169] Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 113.

[170] Ibid., 114.

is exactly what Stanley Kubrick said – for him the film *was* made on the editing table).

The question is at what point in the filmmaking process the primary creative act occurs.

For Kubrick, it would seem, it is in post-production, when the raw footage is assembled

and edited, whereas for Tarkovsky it is at the shooting stage, when the mise-en-scène is

constructed, and the performance captured. It is difficult, however, to imagine many

directors, Kubrick included, *really* considering the shooting process secondary. This,

however, does nothing to lessen Tarkovsky's point: that rhythm in film is created by

controlling what is captured while the film is rolling, rather than imposing a rhythm on

the footage after the fact.

For that reason, Tarkovsky bases his editing method on a persistent regard for

the time flowing within each shot. While this might sound like an attractive, if

speculative, ideal, to him the time-flow was a very real and variable force. What he calls

the 'pressure of time'[171] colours each shot in a particular way, endowing it with a

characteristic intensity, velocity, or quality of duration. This has to do with how quickly

things are happening within the frame (characters or objects in motion), but not only

this, and not always including this. "The distinctive time running through the shots

makes the rhythm of the picture; and rhythm is determined not by the length of the

edited pieces, but by the pressure of the time that runs through them."[172] There is, of

course, a structural rhythm to many films, which is produced by the patterning of cuts

and the ratio of shot lengths – Tarkovsky isn't denying this, rather he is attempting to

explain how his own films work, and describing the rules that his ideal cinema would

follow. The rhythm in his own films is produced by the joining of different time-

pressures. In this sense the cut acts only as a link, a conduit or channel, allowing time to

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[171] Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 117.

[172] Ibid.

flow from one shot into the next, as if it were a liquid. Indeed Tarkovsky directly refers to it as such: "To take the various time-pressures, which we could designate metaphorically as brook, spate, river, waterfall, ocean – joining them together engenders that unique rhythmic design which is the author's sense of time."[173] Expressing the relief with which he finally discovered the correct (and final) shot sequence for *Mirror* he writes: "The material came to life; the parts started to function reciprocally, as if linked by a bloodstream…"[174]Elsewhere he writes of the error in editing together shots that have radically different qualities of time: "One cannot, for instance, put actual time together with conceptual time, any more than one can join water pipes of different diameter."[175] This characterisation of filmic time as having the qualities of a liquid, and of the editing process as the manipulation of the flow of time from the beginning of the film to the end, is a helpful way of thinking about time pressure, though it perhaps needs some drawing out.

It could be argued that recourse to the liquid analogy is just another means of spatialising time, and indeed a clear distinction between this and a more progressive way of thinking about filmic time is not immediately apparent. A liquid has physical form, but it is a physical form that is always shifting, in a state of constant change. Time is the condition of change. The analogy is accurate in another respect – we are inclined to say that time *flows*. A river flows from its source to its mouth, engaging the idea of linearity. Yet we can also examine the flow of the river at a microscopic level. We note how the rate of flow is modulated by the conditions of the river's progress. The changeable parameters include speed and volume – the water may rest in a stagnant pool, or gush furiously over rocks. In both of these senses the liquid analogy offers a

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[173] Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 121.

[174] Ibid., 116.

[175] Ibid., 117.

serviceable model for thinking about filmic time. It suffers only minimally from the problems (notions of stasis, fixed mass, and numericality) associated with spatialising terms.

We may link Tarkovsky's conception of filmic time back to Bergsonian duration, specifically his example of multiple durations co-existing and impinging upon one another (in essence flowing together). We could say that each shot has its own rhythmic duration, its own quality of time, that links with others, taking part in the constitution of the film's overall duration – the duration of the whole. Each shot taken in isolation would have a qualitatively different duration than when it is involved in the film's overall duration. Duration can be viewed from the outside or the inside. At a certain level of abstraction we see the elements of the film operating at different speeds, with different rates of flow. At a much closer level we may become bound to a specific duration, the duration of a single character who moves within and between other durations (as we are with the masked man in the Palais de la Danse sequence from *Le Plaisir*).

Tarkovsky is fond of proclaiming that if a film is made correctly at the shooting stage, it is only a matter of discovering the structure into which the shots themselves wish to be assembled. The shot, with its particular time-pressure, has an inherent propensity to join with another specific time-pressure, and the director's job is merely to find the right connection, as if solving a puzzle. The interesting thing about this doctrine is its implication for the classical narrative cinema. It strips away authorial intent at the editing stage, and would hinder most seriously the creation of a tight causal structure. The kind of art-cinema that Tarkovsky was interested in is much more forgiving when it comes to flexibility of sequence and logic.

Beyond this, Tarkovsky implies that a different kind of meaning can be created through the use of long takes, edited according to time-pressure – an unfixed, unstable, constantly changing significance, specific to the individual viewer. Taking the capturing of time as a guiding principle, film can create an image of real life, innocent of symbol or metaphor and yet capable of resonating deeply with the viewer, evoking an intuitive recognition more than a conscious understanding.

Sound Design

Before I go on to analyse Tarkovsky's practical application of these theories, I want to briefly register the important role that sound design played in his work. Several of his films represent properly audiovisual constructs, where sound is not merely subordinate to image, and dialogue not merely the carrier for words. For Tarkovsky atmosphere is at least as important as narrative, and one of the critical ways in which he constructs atmosphere is through sound. He uses diegetic sounds very precisely, often isolating and amplifying them. He introduces elements into the mise-en-scène that are logically justified, but serve primarily (in the context of the pro-filmic space) to produce a sound (or to anchor a sound added in post-production). This is mixed with non-diegetic sound that often seems to be restrained just at the point of becoming what would conventionally be called music.

Tarkovsky worked with two accomplished sound designers: the electronic music pioneer Eduard Artemyev (on *Solaris*, *Stalker* and *Mirror*) and Owe Svenson (on *The Sacrifice*). According to interviews with both, Tarkovsky was extremely specific about the kinds of sounds that he wanted, reportedly presenting Svenson with a list of 243 separate sound cues that he wanted for *The Sacrifice*. This meticulous attention to detail arose, I would suggest, from his conception of cinema sequences as totalised

audiovisual events. In cinema, image and sound both exist in duration - sound cinema is formed out of a temporalised audiovisual substance. The 'what it is' of sound cinema resists separation into distinct elements on the horizontal or vertical axis. But this fact can be more or less acknowledged and used by the cinema artist.

While I believe that Tarkovsky recognised and utilised this property, one of the most innovative ways in which he did so might appear at first to somewhat contradict this idea. He often used sound in counterpoint with the visual. Of course, counterpoint is a term borrowed from the field of musical composition and theory, and used regularly in the description of sound film before now. However, Michel Chion argues that the term is consistently used in an incorrect way.[176] According to him, many examples cited as counterpoint are in fact 'dissonant harmony' – they are straight contradictions or oppositions of sound and image, that play upon the literal and symbolic reading of both. Chion uses an example from Godard's *Prenom Carmen* (1983) to illustrate this. At one point we hear seagulls over an image of a subway entrance – this relationship can be reduced to a simple opposition of symbolic properties. Jarring disjunctures and discrepancies between sound and image can be very noticeable and draw attention to themselves, but they are also easily assimilated and explained away because they are often simply the inverse value of the straight syncing of characteristic sound with image. Sound moving in counterpoint with the image is a very different thing. True counterpoint consists in the independent movement of sound and image. Contextual sync points occur, producing the framework on which the soundscape is built, but around those strong sync points the sound may move away from the image, both in terms of time (moving out of phase) and in terms of content (sounds that can't be causally tied with anything within the frame or anything that we know for certain exists

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[176] Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 38.

beyond the frame). This becomes very sticky when we get around to talking about non-diegetic music, which is present to at least some degree in an awful lot of films. Surely this must fall within the category of counterpoint according to Chion? Not if we think about the relationship in another way. There is often a 1:1 relationship between music and image – one complements or reflects the other (we can think of the leitmotif, or even the orchestral stab that accompanies the literal stab, 'mickey mousing' etc.). Sound or music that moves in counterpoint occurs not as dissonance but as divergence. Not as harmony, dissonant or otherwise, but as a contrapuntal line. The simple correspondence and contradiction models aid the reduction of image and sound in duration to signifiers in succession, whereas the counterpoint model allows for the openness of image and sound in duration - a dynamic spectral relationship. However, Chion notes that these audio elements, while moving contrapuntally with the visual, have a simultaneous and strongly bound vertical connection with the visual, much more so than any other succeeding or preceding sound on the horizontal plane.[177] It is worth noting that Chion's example of true counterpoint is taken from Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972). What Natasha Synessios describes as 'polyphonic' in *Mirror*, might well be the same as what Chion considers to be true counterpoint.[178]

Chion's conceptualisation of audiovisual counterpoint is compelling partly because he is willing to recognise when two things are also different, even when their similarities are temptingly convenient. He writes:

If there exists something one can call audiovisual counterpoint, it

occurs under conditions quite different from musical counterpoint.

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[177] Chion, *Audio-vision*, 40.

[178] Natasha Synessios, *Mirror: The Film Companion* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd. 2001), 48.

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The latter exclusively uses notes – all the same raw material – while

sound and image fall into different sensory categories. If there's any

sense at all to the analogy, audiovisual counterpoint implies an

"auditory voice" perceived horizontally in tandem with the visual

track, a voice that possesses its own formal individuality.[179]

Sound moving in counterpoint with image results in an audiovisual montage, where

both things together produce a third thing that cannot be reduced to a simple sum of

parts.

Mirror

In order to illustrate and give form to the theoretical claims made so far I will

now look in detail at Andrei Tarkovsky's *Mirror*. I choose *Mirror* because it is

recognised by many as the practical culmination of Tarkovsky's theories about cinema,

and the centrepiece of his career. It is also a prime example of time-pressure at work in

the formal structure of a film. *Mirror* is distinguished not simply by the presence of

time-pressure (every film will have a time-pressure, even though it be constant and

inert), but by the degree to which time-pressure is consciously engaged as both a

textural, stylistic device and a structuring principle. The film presents us with the work

of a director engaging directly with an aesthetic potentiality that lies dormant in the

much of twentieth and early-twenty-first century cinema.

Natasha Synessios writes in her analysis of the film:

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[179] Synessios, *Mirror: The Film Companion*, 36.

In 1985, the year before he died, Tarkovsky said in an interview that

Mirror was the film closest to his concept of cinema. Indeed, it was

the gathering place of all his aesthetic and ethical concerns in his

chosen medium; his beliefs about the film frame, about rhythm,

editing and mise-en-scène, but also about artistic responsibility and a

human conscience all find a voice in this film. […] There is

tremendous freedom at the heart of *Mirror*: an ease of associations, a

constant ebb and flow in the images, an abundance of references,

textures, spaces, movements, and passages of suspended motion. More

than anything, it resembles a musical composition; it is polyphonic in

its use of disparate parts, but the sense of wholeness and harmony it

creates makes it akin to a symphony. Tarkovsky always maintained

that he used the laws of music as the film's organising principle. He

considered film to have much in common with the musical ordering of

material, where emphasis was placed not on *logic*, but on the *form*, of

the flow of events. And form for him was ultimately linked to time –

the duration of the passage of time in each shot. But he did not

approach time as an abstract, philosophical concept; rather, it was an

inner psychological reality, and he believed that one of the aims of the

film director was to create a unique sense of time in a film, which was

independent of real time.[180]

I will now describe in detail a quite lengthy sequence from early on in the film.

It consists of what several commentators consider to be the first two dream sequences

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[180] Synessios, *Mirror: The Film Companion*, 47-48.

and the intermediate phone conversation that bridges them. Such a large section of the film, as well as the broaching of several 'scenes,' might perhaps seem to exceed the normal requirements for a textual analysis sample, but in this case it is necessary, as the property that I am seeking to delineate is most readily identified in the shifts that occur across cuts, specifically those between scenes.

The sequence begins around 16 minutes into the film. A young boy (Fillip Yankovsky) wakes in his bed, and sits up. A low, muddy choral sound has seeped over from the preceding scene, and now we hear a birdcall, and the gentle jangling of something like metal trinkets or bells. The sounds seem to have woken the boy, but they may also simply accompany his waking. He is framed quite closely, the soft light and rumpled hills of bedding suggesting cosiness and warmth, while the sound adds a tone of mystery and portent. There is a cut to a black and white shot of a dense cluster of bushes and trees. Everything is very still; only the slightest sway disturbs the foliage. The camera remains relatively stationary for a few moments (though it is not still – it begins with a split-second truncated whip, and maintains a barely perceptible tremble), enough to breed a sense of wonder and curiosity about what is hidden, and what may emerge. Then it begins to track steadily to the left and backward, just as something like a gust of wind blows through the bushes, coming out of the forest and towards us. This is no ordinary breeze though – its effects are too localised and too strong. It suggests some force, or some creature, pushing its way through the branches and foliage. But the shot ends moments later, not allowing us time to identify or resolve, and we are back with the young boy, now also in monochrome and back asleep. He awakes and says "Dad!" He sits up, as before, the jangling sound repeated as he shunts his way down the bed and clambers out. We follow him from his bed as he walks toward the large opening that seems to lead to a main room in this house. A patch of white shoots across the top

of the screen, fired from behind the partitioning wall. It flutters as if it were a piece of fabric, perhaps clothing, but we are allowed only a fleeting glimpse before there is a cut to the next image.

So far the sequence has maintained a fairly steady time pressure. The choral sound, though low and slightly muffled, underpins the three distinct sections. The close-up of the boy in the comfortable and warm looking bed, and the distinctly early-morning quality of the light evokes a very particular sense of time passing. Tarkovsky relies heavily on the use of sensory cues to stimulate sense-memory, that is, a sort of automatic remembering of sensations produced by intensely tactile and evocative images. The audiovisual construct plays upon the experience of the viewer – the feeling of bedclothes, the experience of waking up too early in the morning to a silence broken only by birdcalls, the cool fresh light that comes soon after dawn, and the soft fuzziness of senses still groggy from sleep. These sensations will be stored away and dormant in many viewers, and part of the power of Tarkovsky's images lies in the energy given over to the meticulous construction of these tactile images, and the time given over to their development. The film provides us with sound and image, and the viewer ensnared by the sense-image fills in the touch, smell and taste from memory. In line with Tarkovsky's interpretative model of 'infinite associations,' the evoked sense-memory will be different for each viewer, modulated by individual experience. This scene provides a root note however, and determines a distinct rhythm of time.

The black and white middle section of the wind in the forest represents a momentary surge of time pressure. The force of the wind pushing through the bushes visually embodies this surge, but other factors contribute also: the camera launches into motion just before the gust, and the crispness of the black and white image, as well as the excessive high-contrast detail contained within a mid-shot full of leaves and

branches weigh against the softness of the previous image. The third image, back with the boy, is monochrome, not quite as harsh as the second shot, but the tone has certainly changed since its first iteration. The flow of time through these three shots fluctuates slightly. The root note of the first image is modulated by the second to become the third. A more marked shift in speed and tone occurs between the third and fourth images however.

The piece of fabric that momentarily flits across the top of the screen marks a temporal fissure, a sudden shift in gears. We cut immediately to another black and white image dominated by the bare shoulder of a man (Oleg Yankovsky), already in motion. His shoulder is in the bottom right of the screen, the brightest element in the frame. His head, and hand holding a ladle, fill up much of the rest of the frame. He moves slowly, pouring liquid from the ladle. In fact, as the movement progresses and he begins to pull away we notice that the speed is unnatural. A touch of slow motion is detectable – not so much as to overburden the image with its effect, but enough to inflect it with a certain strangeness. The abrupt cut from the last shot is also accompanied by the sound of water pouring from his ladle, which sounds very close, set in relief against the otherwise intense quiet of this space. When finished pouring he rises from his stooped posture in a sweeping motion, moving from the middle of the screen out to the right in an arc, in the process revealing a window and deep alcove, and a small flame, as of an oil lamp, behind him. The flame undulates, an effect produced by the slow motion. The camera pans down and to the left to reveal what the man was pouring the water into. There is a woman (Margarita Terekhova) washing her hair in an extremely wide basin that stretches from the foreground back into the middle of the frame. The soundtrack is completely silent during the reframing gesture, There is something unearthly and weird about this image of wet hair emerging, seeming to grow out of a pool of dark water (fig.

4.1). It is frightening, though there is nothing really scary or terrible actually happening – it's just someone washing their hair. Yet the intersection of the black and white high contrast image, the slow motion, and the fact that the wet hair totally obscures her face (a trope that we also see used for its eerie quality in *Ringu* (Nakata, 1998)) creates this curious sensation of the weird. Her hands slowly follow the line from the back of her head down to the loose strands of hair, which she fans out. As she does so we hear again the distinct, close sounds of water, now dripping/sloshing. However, though the effect of slow motion undoubtedly modifies her movements, it seems to have no effect on the sound. This adds a whole other layer of strangeness. The temporality of the sound track and the image track don't match, yet at the same time they seem to be synchronised.

fig. 4.1 - *Mirror*

This is where Chion's understanding of 'counterpoint' as the relationship between two independently moving lines is particularly useful. Tarkovsky's use of contrapuntal sound is one of the central means by which he modulates the flow of time in *Mirror*. The choral sound over the first shots mentioned above had the effect of

altering the cadence of the image, and changing the impression of its speed slightly. The dripping sounds that accompany the woman washing her hair present a specific type of counterpoint. Here sound and image, though casually linked, diverge temporally. The image moves too slowly, while the sounds produced by the image run at a normal speed. There is an elastic relationship between sound and image here, the stretching occurring on the horizontal rather than the vertical plane. The rhythm of time in this shot is forged within the tension between these two factors. The slowed down speed of the shot alters the quality of motion within the shot. The man's sweeping movement out of frame, and the woman's hand movements as she fans her hair constitute the successive focal points of the shot, and display the most obvious effects of slowing down (we have a particular sensitivity for aberrations of speed when it comes to the body – but then what is more familiar to a human than a human body?), but there are other elements of the mise-en-scène that display these effects in a way that is less readily noticeable, but still manage to alter the viewer's impression of time in the scene. I have already mentioned the undulating flame in the background – there is also the water in the giant basin that ripples and sloshes in lugubrious waves. Another recurrent device of Tarkovsky's is the use of natural, elemental images as a means to inflect a sequence in some way. Water flows, drips, gushes and rains (and later on in *Mirror* the vast pure whiteness and boot-crunching sounds of snow will characterise a place and time). Fire is sometimes shown within the same image as water: in this particular scene, but also in the shot of the barn burning down while rain cascades from the lip of the roof under which the camera shelters; in *Stalker* (Tarkovsky, 1979) when lumps of ash smolder with a rhythmic pulse amidst pools of water in the mysterious 'Zone' (fig. 4.2); and in the spectacular scene near the end of *The Sacrifice* (Tarkovsky, 1986), when flames billow from a house surrounded by pools of water and mud (fig. 4.3).

fig. 4.2 - *Stalker*

fig. 4.3 - *The Sacrifice*

Indeed mud in its many variants is one of the most frequently employed shades

of Tarkovsky's palette. Wind, as we have already seen, features prominently as well.

There are two other moments in *Mirror* in which a gust of wind seems to take on a

supernatural, or at least portentous or strangely significant quality. Wind is invisible,

and in this way has a certain affinity with the idea of time-pressure. The element itself

cannot be seen, but we identify it through its effects – the things it moves, shakes and

blows over, as well as its range of characteristic sounds. In the first post-credits scene a doctor (Anatoli Solonitsyn) walks away from Maria (Margarita Terekhova) and the dacha that features throughout the film. Just as he turns and looks back a powerful gust of wind rolls through the long grass of the meadow, a wave of natural power that makes it all the way to the grass immediately in front of the camera. The other instance is towards the end of the film when the first image of the wind in the forest is repeated and expanded. The camera pan continues further this time to show us the wind scattering items from the top of a rustic wooden table that is outdoors amongst the grass. The next shot seems to continue to follow this gust which is now chasing the young boy around the dacha. Slow motion is used extensively in these shots also.

Very often these elements, and their juxtaposition, serve as ways of producing a specific type of time pressure. The content of the shot can be as effective in this sense as camera movement, motion speed, and sound. As I've mentioned before, textural surfaces are shot in such vivid detail to allow them to evoke sense-memories. Wind, water and fire move and flow within the frame. They can embody power, speed, and literal invisible pressures at work within the film world.

Fire is just one of the elements used by Tarkovsky (Robert Bird constructs an entire study of Tarkovsky's films and aesthetic around the elements - his personal favourite, and the one he believes to be most pervasive and bears most significance for Tarkovsky, being earth[181]), but the way he uses it evokes one of the key themes of the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus. Fire in Tarkovsky's films indicates the flow of duration, the evanescence of time; flames billow and embers pulse. One of Heraclitus' main concepts was the idea of 'Nature's Bonfire.' He used fire to express the way that he believed the universe worked - a process of constant change. Fire captures both the

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[181] Robert Bird, *Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008).

idea of constant destruction and process, and of the impossibility of distinguishing the ending of one state from the beginning of another. Can you imagine breaking flames down into discrete sections? One of his written fragments translates as: "This world neither any god nor man made, but it always was and is and will be, an ever-living fire, kindling in measures and being extinguished in measures."[182]

For both Bergson and Tarkovsky time passes as a process of continuous change - one alteration is not distinct from another, so any determinations as to beginnings and endings must be arbitrary. How do we decide where one process stops and another begins? There is a fundamental difference between a conception of time as the successive series of states of a system, and as a single continuous process. The question becomes less one of arbitrariness, and more one of perspective. One conception sees time as a vast, unfathomable accumulation of states (this was so then etc.), the other as a singularity, a monism - just one thing. That one thing can be either gigantic or tiny, depending on the point from which you are looking at it. It is this way of conceiving of time that links Bergson and Tarkovsky, and now, it would seem, Heraclitus, who holds a roughly two and half thousand year precedent.

His other catchphrase was *panta rhei* - 'everything flows'. Nothing is ever at rest, ever in a constant, unchanging state. Everything is rather in a constant state of change (even if it appears to be immensely solid and everlasting like a mountain - this again depends on perspective. A mountain would certainly appear immensely solid and permanent to an organism of a height about 5 - 6 feet, with a life span of around 90 years). Nietzsche, in an attempt to illustrate this idea of Heraclitus' performs a short thought experiment, imagining that we decelerate the speed of a human being's lifetime by a factor of 1,000,000:1, so that they would live for what would be (by our present

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[182] Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 2006), 61.

standards) a monumentally long time, and would only be capable of making (by Nietzsche's count) 189 perceptions per year. Our perspective on permanence would alter significantly, "every shape appearing to us as persistent would vanish in the superhaste of events and would be devoured by the wild storm of Becoming."[183]

In *Mirror* a barn burns and in *The Sacrifice* it is Alexander's (Erland Josephson) home. The latter constitutes part of the eponymous sacrifice, the burning representing both the destruction of the house as well as his hitherto comfortable life. Things change, nothing stays the same. Destruction passes into creation, as the wet green landscape surrounding the house seems to await the waning of the flames, quietly threatening to consume the ashes and reclaim the earth. In the final images of the film Alexander's son Little Man (Tommy Kjellqvist) waters a dead Ikebana tree in what is on one level a somewhat blunt metaphor about faith, and on another a sophisticated and somewhat confusing image of the paradox of death passing into life and life in turn passing into death. Heraclitus again writes "Everything is an exchange for fire, and fire for everything – as goods for gold, and gold for goods."[184]

Saba, decay, and patinas of wear

Let us return to our analysis of the sequence from *Mirror*. The woman washing her hair begins to stand up and the camera pulls back to place the full length of her body in the centre of the frame, widening out to show us more of the room (fig. 4.4). We see walls encrusted with a slimy, lumpy substance, some of which glistens and some of which disappears into shadow. A wardrobe fills the left midground of the frame, its front dominated by a large mirror. The high contrast image is full of glimmery light. The

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[183] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 61.

[184] Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 61.

flame that we saw earlier (which is joined by a companion flame very near to it) is

reflected in the mirror, thereby flanking her on both sides. The walls are wet and glisten

fig. 4 - *Mirror*

in the dim light to reveal their intensely textural surfaces. These kinds of aged and

decaying surfaces can be found throughout Tarkovsky's oeuvre, though most notably in

Mirror and *Stalker*. Tarkovsky himself sheds light on the thought behind this stylistic

trait. In *Sculpting in Time* he reveals his interest in the Japanese concept of *Saba*. This

consists in the visible investment of time in an object – signs of age, wear and tear,

evidence of time's effects. He borrows this quote from the Soviet journalist

Ovchinnikov:

> It is considered that time, *per se,* helps to make known the essence of
>
> things. The Japanese therefore see a particular charm in the
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> evidence of old age. They are attracted to the darkened tone of an
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> old tree, the ruggedness of a stone, or even the scruffy look of a

picture whose edges have been handled by a great many people. To

all these signs of age they give the name, *saba,* which literally

means "rust." *Saba,* then, is a natural rustiness, the charm of olden

days, the stamp of time. [—or patina—A.T.][185]

Tarkovsky provides clarification of his own understanding of the concept with the

addition of the word 'patina.' And indeed in many other scenes of the film wherein the

surfaces are not so visibly decayed and overgrown with slime, we see the patina of

wooden floors, benches, and tables (the worn grain of wood is passionately displayed),

and of stone, concrete and earth. This investment of time in the object, which could be

identified visibly, as well as the heterogeneity and plurality of types and effects of

aging, allowed Tarkovsky to embed temporal signifiers within the frame in yet another

way. For him this was simply another kind of stylistic manipulation that involved time

itself at the level of substance. He follows the above quote with the following: "In a

sense the Japanese could be said to be trying to master time Aesthetically."[186]

The white shift the woman wears makes her stand out in the frame, like a candle

flame herself, her central position setting her forward against the angled backdrop. As

she rises she shakes the water from her hands. This movement is made into a sort of

strange ritualistic dance by the slowness of her motion. Additionally her movement

reacts with that of the camera, which draws back at a composed, steady speed that

complements her dance. The camera throughout this shot appears to be subject to the

same rhythmic forces as everything else. It lurches as if falling on a downbeat, and

lingers as if lugubriously floating between beats. An electric light lying mysteriously

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[185] Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 59.

[186] Ibid.

upon the floor glows and fades, its pulse perhaps a direct visual key to the rhythm or time-pressure of this particular shot. A prominent bulb hanging above her head remains unlit.

Before the camera drew back the soundtrack was dominated by the prominent, un-slowed sounds of water dripping, but as it begins to move another sound emerges, growing in intensity in direct correlation with the movement of the camera. This sound is vague and abstract, sounding if anything like machinery in the distance crossed with the buzzing of a swarm of bees (perhaps a swarm of machinery?). It is *almost* the sound of something, yet we can't quite put our finger on it, so while retaining the qualities of a 'real' rather than synthetic sound, it gains the affective resonance of an abstract atmospheric pad.[187]

A jarring jump cut conducts us to a similarly framed (though not exactly the same) shot of the room. The woman disappears between these shots, and the quality of the image itself seems to somehow change, as if a different film stock were used, or a different speed or exposure. A bell rings once and chunks of the ceiling fall amidst a cascade of plaster debris and water. Synessios asserts that because of the slow motion "we are able to experience the *weight* of the ceiling plaster as it splashes on to a water-filled floor, the *fragility* of the small flame burning on the stove in a corner, the *lightness* of the rain, as it falls on to Maria's shoulders."[188] Weight, fragility and lightness are all qualities that can be suggested through relations of objects within the mise-en-scène (the way they react with each other) and through connotative aspects. What Synessios is suggesting however, is that these qualities are 'experienced' through

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[187] I use the term pad here in reference to a type of sound produced by polyphonic synthesizers. A pad is a sustained tone, or a kind of sustained harmonic cloud of tones. It can sound something like an organ or a string section, but more often, it doesn't simulate any kind of real-world referent – it is rather abstract musical sound.

[188] Synessios, *Mirror*, 50.

the image directly – their motion has been slowed allowing us to witness their physical/ spatial existence in duration, translating visually their characteristic weights and resistances. These qualities equate to forces that constitute components of the time-pressure of this particular shot, a time-pressure that is noticeably different from that of the previous shot. Though of a similar type, the difference is effected by the change in sound (the shift is built up to by the increasing intensity of the machinery-swarm sound), the change in grain and quality of the photographic image, the sudden absence of the human element, and the 'feeling' of the falling debris and water. This change in time-pressure is interwoven with the suggestion of different times in the same room. The first shot seems to be of a time *before*, a continuity of hair-washings that constitutes the everlasting present in the dream-life of the child, while the second shot seems to be the *after*, the breakdown and destruction of this present (a simple correlation might be drawn between the innocent wholeness of the time before Alexei's father leaves for war, and the destruction of this ideal by his departure).[189]

As the lumps of plaster fall another element surfaces in the soundtrack – another vague snippet of choral music, this time what sounds like the ominous baritone rumblings of Buddhist monks. This sound never breaks free enough to become distinct however – it remains simply a component of the soundscape of this scene. There is a cut to a medium close-up of Maria in profile, that tracks with her as she walks through the room, rain and pieces of plaster continuing to fall around her. Her face is somewhat obscured because she is running her hands through her hair, but when her expression is finally revealed clearly we see that she is smiling, her contented look contrasting with the increasing tension of the ominous soundscape (which now seems also to include

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[189] It could equally well be suggested that this sequence represents the child's dream rationalisation of his parents' sexual relations. However, these interpretations need not be mutually exclusive.

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strings), and the surrounding chaos. The aural tension subsides to be replaced by the trickling of water once more. There is a bird call (the same as the one we heard at the beginning of the sequence) and the camera begins to pan away from Maria. Her image remains with us for a few moments even though she has left the frame - we pan past a mirror in which she is reflected. The camera progresses away from her in this order: real image; weak reflection; blackness. This blackness becomes wall, more glistening time-decayed surface. The pan comes to rest on Maria again, who is somehow on the other side of the room now. This spatial paradox is disorienting, and contributes to the haziness and uncertainty of this part of the scene. The very geography of the room seems to become uncertain, to melt into the impossibility of dream. This is compounded by the following shot, the lines and shapes of which appear impossible in a different way. This image seems as if it might have been constructed through photographic superimposition, as this effect often makes the lines and shapes of objects seem to become two-dimensional, and allows for impossible configurations within the frame (fig. 4.5). Yet we come to realise that this not in fact optical trickery achieved at the post-production stage. This strange effect is produced within the room through the use of reflection.

fig. 4.5 - *Mirror*

Several different planes appear to coincide, and the multiplication of arch shapes at different angles makes it look somewhat like a cubist painting, while the impossible configuration is reminiscent of surrealist work. The inset window arch on the left is matched with the flat, partially transparent arch in the centre of the frame, which itself has a weaker reflection hidden behind it (though it could also be an inset which would indicate that this arch too is three-dimensional). This arch appears to consist of a landscape painting, with a tree in the foreground left, and through this painting we can see the plaster cornice at the back of the room (though it is unclear at this stage which is the reflection and which is the reflective surface). The painterliness of the frame is compounded by the glass filled with long-stalked flowers on the table in the foreground right. Reflected within the arched painting, emerging like a ghost, is an old woman. This shot and the previous one were linked through an eye-line match, suggesting that this old woman is the impossible reflection of the younger. Here Tarkovsky plays with time in another way, though it is not unconnected with the concept of *saba*. The subject's youth and the image of her old age are contained within the same space. The impossible spatial configurations of this scene are joined by an impossible temporality. As the camera tracks in we realize that it is the room itself that is the reflection. The shiny surface of the painting would seem to be the only real element within the frame, and this suspicion is confirmed when a hand emerges to wipe the condensation from that surface.

The next two cuts present a significant shift in time-pressure, almost like a release. The pressure accumulated through the close, incessant trickling sound and the growing sense of portentous and meaningful images is dispelled with the sudden return to colour, extensive comprehendible space, and a change of sound. A brief intermediate shot of a hand shielding a burning twig gives way to the interior of a city apartment.

That single fleeting shot of the burning twig acts as both buffer and interface,[190]

allowing a smooth and appropriate transition between very different time-pressures. The

camera pans slowly from left to right showing us curtains, windows, a chair, a poster for

Andrei Rublev (Tarkovsky, 1971), a wood and glass cabinet, and walls on which the

plasterwork is extremely rough and unfinished. Some of the windows are open and it

appears to be a calm and pleasant day outside. A phone rings somewhere. Its tone seems

to reverberate in a large, uncluttered space. Thus the opening out of space on the visual

track is matched by a feeling of aural space on the soundtrack. We hear a man answer

and we find that it is his mother who is calling. As they converse (somewhat tetchily)

the camera continues to move. This is obviously an apartment in which someone

currently lives (half-drunk glasses on windowsills and coats on hooks), but it seems to

be precisely ordered and maintained. It feels like a recreation, a working and living

space frozen at a point in time to convey something of the character of the inhabitant(s).

The items contained within the apartment, though they do not bear any direct

significance based on what we have already seen, do seem to possess resonances, traces

of lived time. They have been arrested in process and extracted from the flux of time to

be observed in this liminal-temporal space. The one exception to this rule is the poster

for *Andrei Rublev*, which points to something of a temporal conundrum. First of all it

works to connect the owner of the apartment with Tarkovsky himself. *Rublev* was made

in 1966, but not widely released until 1971. It was considered a masterpiece, and at the

time of shooting *Mirror* it was still seen as Tarkovsky's masterpiece. It is about a

Medieval Russian icon painter and is set in the fifteenth century. Its presence in this

scene points backwards in time to the film's production and rapturous reception, and

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[190] It is a buffer in the sense that it is a boundary between the two shots, sealing off one time-
pressure from another, and an interface in the sense that it simultaneously facilitates flow
between the shots, allowing the time-pressure a moment to modulate before the next shot.

registers the trauma incurred by the torturous four-year period in which its future was in question. It also points back farther, to the content of the film – the turbulent history of Russia, and the continuous question of the role of the artist in society. At the same time it is anchored in the present, as the current resident of the flat is obviously living in a time that has already seen the release of the film. The poster figures the film and its production as a memory, but one that lives on with the protagonist. In this way the poster represents the folding of layer into layer of time, and operates as an image that stands for the temporal mode of the film as a whole.

The pan ends at a doorway that reveals a direct line deep into the rest of the apartment. It pauses momentarily before beginning its unhurried progress along this line. The other rooms feature similarly textured surfaces – rough and decayed plaster on walls, but well kept, as if those marks of age and time are valued in this house. Varying pastel shades unify the colour scheme, but it is the patterns of corrosion and deterioration that are most striking. The variety of patinas visible – of walls and wood – imbue the apartment with the sense of lives lived within, suggesting time and history may have worn away the original finish.

The apartment is empty, though we may have believed that the phone was ringing somewhere in the vicinity, and therefore that Alexei (who answers it) is somewhere here too. However, we discover no one. Also, our relationship with the sound of the conversation never changes (in terms of volume and distance) though we move from one side of the apartment to the other. Angela Truppin calls these qualities of a sound (along with timbre, reverb and frequency) its 'spatial signature.'[191] These qualities of a sound situate it within a world, and go some way toward designating the kind of world that it is, even if there is no image to go with it. We gradually get the

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[191] Angela Truppin, "And Then There Was Sound: The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky," in *Sound Theory Sound Practice,* ed. Rick Altman (London: Routledge, 1992), 241.

sense that the time of this conversation does not necessarily correlate with the time of our movement through the apartment. In fact the juxtaposition of the conversation with the vacant, frozen apartment makes this languid process through Alexei's home feel like a non-time, a site out of time.

The extremely slow and smooth advance of the camera, the absence of life (apart from the pigeons on the windowsill), the growing sense of disjunction between sound and image, and the characteristics of the apartment itself – its order, patinas of wear, colours and airiness - combine to create a time-pressure very different from the one that preceded it. Its rhythm of elaboration, and its pressure of representation are much more subdued and meditative.

The conversation ends on an unhappy note – his mother hangs up on him – and the camera continues its approach toward a curtain-shrouded window. The sort of melancholy dreaminess that pervades this scene is strengthened by the fact that it keeps going even after the conversation has ended, a measured silence preceding the click of the receiver being replaced followed by an engaged tone continuing for almost ten seconds, finally giving way to an abstract metallic/wind sound. As the camera reaches the curtains we cut to the next section of the sequence, once again a startling change in time-pressure.

From colour and a calm, restrained style we move to black and white and a frantic style marked by fast movement and off-centre framings. A woman (the same woman who was washing her hair) is running from the camera. We hear the sound of a bus or tram and a voice shouts "Printing-house. Next stop: Serpukhovskaya." She is running down a tree-lined avenue, and as she turns in to the right the camera twists to follow her, still hurtling along in the same direction. It zooms in to a medium close-up so that the obstacles in her way become obstacles for our vision – parts of trees, fences

and gates that must be dodged and weaved around. A torrential rain begins to fall as she crosses another road. The woman's anxiety is conveyed through these elements of style and mise-en-scène. So far the sequence is tainted by a feeling of wild and unwieldy forces, of uncertainty and agitation. Time in this part of the sequence is coloured by these forces – the sense of urgency and threat translating to speed and nervous energy. Once she gets inside the building it becomes gradually clear that this is a printing works, that she is a proof-reader, and that a terrible and, in the context an official publication in Stalinist USSR, very dangerous mistake may have been overlooked. The woman (followed by two other workers) hurries through hallways strewn with huge rolls of paper and large rooms filled with workers and the clacking of printing machines. We follow her, mostly from behind, as she searches for the proofs, her apprehension gradually shared with the viewer through our involvement in the extended searching process. Time is manipulated throughout this section. A barely perceptible cut excises the time it takes for a workmate to be called. Time is slowed down while the clacking of the machines remains at normal speed. We have seen this technique already, but it has a very different effect in this section of the sequence. Slowing down the action when the tempo had been built up so effectively already would seem a counterintuitive choice, yet the effect is all the more striking for this contrast. It is our view on the event that is being slowed down, and not the event itself. So while the impression of urgency is maintained we gain a fascinating glimpse at both the inside and outside of the event, in terms of action, character, and emotion in duration. It allows us to see the event not just from a point of view aligned with her agitated perspective, but from an external aestheticised perspective. It simultaneously succeeds in conveying an impression of those moments of great excitement or distress in which time seems to slow down, when senses become ultra aware.

Found Footage

Staying with *Mirror*, Tarkovsky offers us a way of thinking about time pressure as a quality inherent in any filmed material, rather than simply characteristic of his own mode of filmmaking. Newsreel footage is interpolated into the film at several points, functioning on at least one conspicuous level to incorporate this personal history into a much broader national and even international history (while at the same time their presence is rationalised and necessitated by their applied force upon the personal). Tarkovsky had no hand in the recording of any of this footage, and we can be fairly certain in our assumption that the documentarians weren't consciously thinking about time-pressure while planting their tripod in the mud of Lake Sivash or recording the Soviet aviator Valeri Chkalov returning from his famous flight over the North Pole.

Yet these found footage sections are imbued with an equal valency of time-pressure to the section already analysed in detail. The cuts from the fictional world of the film to the historical recordings represent significant shifts in speed, sound and colour. We move from the contemporary Moscow apartment where the Spanish refugees are visiting to the sudden interposition of sepia-toned footage of the Spanish civil war – civilians dashing about at a faster that reality speed, bomber planes, explosions and dockside farewells. The soundtrack consists at first of an up-tempo Spanish song, that intereacts with the high-speed running of the civilians and the rapid editing of various images of devastation to create a sort of melancholy tone that looms much more quietly and slowly than the surface level of speed and almost perverse frivolity. This gives way to the beautiful and slightly surreal images of hot air balloons accompanied by Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. There is one main balloon (which was used in a record-breaking flight into the stratosphere[192]) and several much smaller ones. The successive

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[192] Synessios, *Mirror*, 63.

shots in this part of the sequence consist of various configurations of the balloons. The camera points up into the sky for most of the shots, the balloons placidly hovering or floating gracefully. Again the dominant factors that produce the specific time-pressure of this sequence are: the sound (the Pergolesi becomes extremely affective in conjunction with the images); the content (the bulbous forms of the balloons hover like great inflatable mushrooms suspended in the sky); the movement (the balloons hover majestically, their balloonists dangling ineffectually from long ropes); and the editing (which seems to stay with each image just long enough to accentuate its poetic rather than documentary connotations). The rhythm of time in this section differs markedly from the Spanish civil war section, another sudden shift of gears having taken us from one to the other. The final image of the main balloon seems to catch it in the middle of a strangely beautiful movement – it sails upwards in a diagonal arc, some sort of instrument suspended from its top-left twirling in harmony as it goes.

Before we leave the newsreel sequence and return to the fictional world of the film there is one more brief section. Its beginning is marked by the entrance of choral voices in the music. It consists of just two short shots of what may be a parade through a city street (though it is really the welcome given to the aviator Valeri Chkalov after he was first to fly over the North Pole[193]). In the first the frame is full of movement, as thousands of leaflets fall about the car on which the camera is mounted, as it records another car that hurtles along behind. The second is a static high-angle shot from the window of a building, an abrupt jump from the centre of the celebration to a distanced, almost God's eye view. Again the sombre intensity of the music undercuts the jubilation in the images, while at the same time their very nature as grainy historical recordings of

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[193] Ibid.

intense human energy and joy (whether it be misguided or not) make it the perfect visual accompaniment.

Conclusion

During the course of this analysis I have shown that time is an element of film style that can be actively and consciously employed within the affective, thematic and narrative framework of a film. Tarkovsky controls the time-dimension of the recorded images by controlling the speeds, rhythms, and qualities of various other elements of the film's construction: mise-en-scène; editing; performance; cinematography; and sound. Time is inscribed in objects within the image - in speeds, momentums and rotations of camera movement; in rhythms of editing; and in the rhythms and spatiotemporal characteristics of sounds. A piece of recorded footage has an intrinsic time-pressure, but this time-pressure may be manipulated at both the pro-filmic and post-production stages; by controlling what passes before the camera, by applying effects afterwards (such as slowing motion, colour-grading etc.), and by placing that section of footage into a relationship with others (of varying time-pressure) within a sequence.

I have also demonstrated that it is possible to talk critically and coherently about this esoteric aspect of cinema. The words we use to describe a sequence often say more than we mean them to, and yet less than is necessary. Conventions of discourse that pertain in our everyday interaction with reality naturally cross over into our discussion of aesthetic objects, and yet the possibilities presented by the temporality of cinema allow for a reciprocal process. Cinema has the power to reveal the ways in which temporality infects every facet of our world, in which it is the condition of our understanding, our consciousness, our environment, and our physical existence.

If we endeavour to understand how films that actively make use of the temporality of cinema (and those that don't) work, then we must employ a terminology that is appropriate, that accentuates the temporal and eschews the tendency to conceive of things in predominantly spatialised and static terms. The Tarkovskyian concept of time-pressure; Chion's understanding of 'counterpoint;' a renewed focus on the movie as a properly audiovisual construct; the opening up of the category through the use of the descriptor 'moving images' and the rehabilitated term 'cinema;' increased attention to process and flux and the duration of objects and movements (and a reciprocal reduction of statements that conceive of the moving image in predominantly static terms) – these suggestions could serve as the basis from which a workable and productive language for discussing the temporal dimension of cinema might be established.

Conclusion

> "Time flies like an arrow,
>
> fruit flies like a banana."
>
> - Groucho Marx

The temporality of the moving image is not just its basic condition, but also an alterable stylistic parameter. As I argue in the introduction there is more to the temporal stylistics of cinema than the length of shots and the rhythm of editing. I observed that this aspect of film style suffers from a history of neglect in the field of film studies and I proposed that a renewed interest in this area would provide a much-enhanced understanding of how films work, of how the seemingly indefinable 'feeling' of certain scenes or whole films is constructed. Such an understanding would allow us to look back on more than a century of cinematic art with perhaps a greater sense of how it does what it does.

I sought to show that each of the main film styles has its own characteristic way of stylising time, and no one is necessarily more potent or important than any other. In chapters one, two and three I explored the ways in which time has been activated as a parameter of the stylistic matrix of film in three broadly defined film styles. The central body of research also suggested that these styles may be defined by the characteristic ways in which they treat time. Not only are there specific stylistic traits attributable to each style, but each is also characterised and defined by its particular approach to the stratified amalgam of time layers active during the presentation of the fiction film. In

conceptualising this aspect of the film experience I have constructed (taking my lead from Béla Balázs) a model that consists of three separate time-layers: the time of the fictional event; the time of the film sequence; and the time of the viewing (which follows after the film yet is also simultaneous with it).

Throughout there has been a effort to discover a suitable vocabulary for describing and discussing the temporal qualities of a shot, sequence or scene, and, using the work of Andrei Tarkovsky as a springboard, I have begun to integrate terminology specific to the temporal dimension of film into textual analysis. In the final chapter I looked closely at his film *Mirror*, partly because his theorisation of cinema as a primarily temporal art-form undergirded and inspired much of the present work, and partly because it seemed necessary, having surveyed the treatment of time across three broad categories of film style, to analyse in depth the work of a single filmmaker who consciously and creatively engaged with the stylistic potential of filmic time. Tarkovsky pushed the stylisation of time out into the open. His long wandering takes with their internally produced temporal rhythms, speeds and textures made apparent the aesthetic potential contained within the formal manipulation of filmic time. My purpose here has been to demonstrate that Tarkovsky is not an exception, that this property is contained within a vast range of cinema, even though this may not at first be apparent. I wished to make clear also that this property is by no means latent, but operating even when it seems that neither the filmmaker nor the viewer are overtly concerned with the flow of time. The continuity-editing chapter in particular demonstrates that even within a stylistic category that is associated with an effort to control and neutralise the time and space of the film world the flow of time is constantly modulated in subtle ways. The stylistic decisions made during the course of producing a continuity-edited scene may be understood and represented as serving more concrete and transparent functions, but

their effects may be identified as arising from the way that we experience and intuit the flow of time in that scene.

I mentioned the 'feeling' of a scene - this is something that was not explicitly articulated in the body of the thesis, or at least this wording was not used. I had a sense, at the outset of this research, that the indefinable 'feeling' of certain sequences was somehow bound up with the experience of time, both the time of the film world and the film viewing. The difficulty in finding the appropriate words to describe the temporal-stylistic dimension of cinema seemed analogous with the inability to describe what it was about certain sequences that made me feel the way I did. It seems obvious now that these issues are indeed the same. This 'feeling,' I would argue, is the conglomerate of stylistic elements working together in duration to produce a specific and constantly changing/modulating quality of time. The approach and idiom established in this thesis, therefore, has significance not just for those interested in temporality and cinema, but for film aesthetics in general.

This project has aimed to analyse the stylistic use of time at a low level across a range of cinema. It is intended to provide a base for further enquiry, to open up new ways of thinking about and understanding old and new cinema, to uncover interesting uses of time in unusual places, and to provide a way of accounting for the seemingly inexpressible feelings and resonances that certain sequences produce in us. Such knowledge, once achieved, helps us to understand something about both ourselves and the art that we make. I will now end by outlining some of the possible lines of enquiry leading away from this project.

Slow Cinema

While one of the central goals of this thesis was to show that temporal stylisation occurs across a range of film styles, a distinction may still be made between the kind of cinema that uses time as an equal or lesser element within a formal framework and those that actively foreground the temporality of the moving image as an aesthetic principle, a mode of enquiry and expression. I have stayed largely away from contemporary arthouse cinema,[194] of which one particular trend (stretching from at least the early nineties into the present) has particular significance in this respect. This 'wave' has come to be known as 'contemplative cinema.' While geographically dispersed these films share certain distinct formal characteristics, such as a preponderance of long takes, tracking shots following characters through streets or halls, along plains or beaches, and a slow (sometimes seemingly non-existent) development of plot within these long sequences. The progenitors of, and main influences on, this wave are Tarkovsky, Akerman, Alain Resnais, and Chris Marker (though it is Tarkovsky who is most often cited). Contemporary directors working in this vein include Hou Hsiao-hsien,Tsai Ming-liang, Alexandr Sokurov, Gus Van Sant, Jose Luis Guerin, and Béla Tarr.

This area is still under-served in terms of concentrated critical analysis, though such a project is currently being undertaken by Matthew Flanagan, his opening gambit arriving in "Towards an Aesthetic of Slow in Contemporary Cinema,"[195] as well as by

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[194] This was partly in an effort to maintain a sense of comparability between categories. To embark upon a discussion of a whole sub-genre within the Long Take category would be to unbalance the structure of the whole thesis. Also, my method throughout has been to analyse key examples and limit cases that demonstrate the major characteristics of a particular category's temporal stylistics. While this loose genre contains a wide range of uses of the long take (and would provide a rich source for the study of long takes already mentioned) it is rooted in the mode of the Tarkovskian/Akermanian long take.

[195] Matthew Flanagan, 'Towards an Aesthetic of Slow in Contemprary Cinema,' in *16:9* no. 29, November 2008. Available at http://www.16-9.dk/2008-11/side11_inenglish.htm

the editors and contributors of the recently established journal *Unspoken*[196]. Much of

this work discusses time predominantly in terms of speed. The 'slowness' of these films

and their focal sequences is often what seems to define them for audiences, attracting

some and putting off many others. And most of the scholarly work done on them has

engaged with this idea, examining the aesthetic effects of this slowing down. This study

differs somewhat in that speed has not been the primary optic through which time is

considered. To accurately describe cinematic time in terms of qualities has been my aim

throughout. Speed was just one parameter within a matrix of qualities available to

invoke. Throughout there has been an effort to produce a description of the texture of

time, the sensuous surface of its image, and the tonal density of its flow. This has

allowed me to look with equal interest at films that are not characterised by their

slowness or fastness, those that risk being ignored by discussions of cinematic time

precisely because of their seeming ordinariness.

Transmedial Temporalities

In the introduction I mentioned the bridging effect of focusing on temporality as

an essential element of the moving image, and in the final chapter I produced a

definition of the moving image based upon the characteristic of duration. This is not an

essentialist gesture in the restrictive and often negative sense in which such theories are

usually understood. Instead of inscribing and limiting it forges links, allowing us to

discover affinities and family traits across a range of variously disparate time-based

media, both new and old. This mode of transmedial exploration offers a potentially

exciting and productive enterprise.

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[196] *Unspoken: Journal for contemplative cinema.* Available at http://unspokenjournal.com

While such a study would be primarily concerned with identifying and examining the loops of influence between media forms and objects, the temporal stylistics of other forms of moving image also need to be investigated in their own right and on their own terms - from the documentary, to pornography, to anime, to television (though such work has already been pursued by Charlotte Brunsdon and others[197]) to the vast and unwieldy world of home movies and user created content on sites such as Youtube. By registering and analysing the differences in the way that time is presented and stylised across these genres and media such work might serve to test the notion that there is an innate and natural mode of temporal perception that is automatically mirrored in audiovisual time-based media. Not to mention the knowledge and understanding to be gained from identifying the characteristic temporal mode and stylistics of each form in isolation.

Cultural Temporalities

The glaringly obvious omission from this study is of course a consideration of the ways in which the relationship between film style and temporality changes from culture to culture, and from period to period. This study has remained relatively agnostic in its treatment of texts from different places and periods (though the range of the chosen corpus does not include examples of Asian, Bollywood, African, South-American, or Antipodean cinema). Surely a fruitful avenue of research would consist in the study of shifts in the representation of time; the representation of a protagonist's relationship with time; and the variations in the presentation of the flowing present (i.e. regional and periodised understandings of 'continuity'). One form this work might take

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[197] See Charlotte Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes: Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 15 - 17; and Mary Ann Doane, 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe,' in *New Media, Old Media* (London: Routledge, 2006), 251 - 264.

would be the theorisation of national and historical time as it manifests itself within the stylised presentation of time in the moving image. Might one of the defining features of a national cinema lie in its construction of time? And how might we link this to the other defining characteristics?

David Martin-Jones has already begun this work in his analysis of the sublimation of national trauma and confusion into the representation of time and identity in film.[198] My work here adds to this by demonstrating both the range of temporal stylisation and the fact that it occurs not just as the expression of trauma, but as the intrinsic underlying mode of expression in cinema. Temporal stylisation is by no means exceptional - it is rather the particular uses made of this stylistic spectrum that may become exceptional.

The cultural and conceptual dynamics of temporality already play a role in the fields of anthropology and sociology (indeed one of the most fertile and vibrant loci of the contemporary study of time is at the nexus between sociology and business studies). Nevertheless, the study of the stylised re-construction of time on screen, in all its variety, has much to offer these disciplines.

The pioneering work of Sol Worth and John Adair in *Through Navajo Eyes*[199], for instance, demonstrates the potential for research within the field of anthropology in particular. They studied the results of a project wherein a group of Navajo adolescents who had no experience of TV, film or other forms of audiovisual media were given film cameras and instructed to make their own short films. Such a study provides insight into the way that people think about, understand, and construct a moving image of the world around them for others to see. In this case the perceived 'naturalness' of dominant

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[198] Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*.

[199] Sol Worth and John Adair, *Through Navajo Eyes: An Exploration in film Communication and Anthropology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

conceptions of time, causation and continuity was disturbed by the practical output of the young Navajoes. It also demonstrated that culturally specific understandings of time and causation could be effectively expressed through audiovisual narrative. Locally produced community movies show that there are indeed different ways of conceiving time and relating to shared and personal duration. While this was a unique study, conducted under exceptional conditions, it should be possible to conduct similar studies of locally produced film, video and television from all over the world (and not just that of the third world or minority cultures. The 'different' is by no means confined to these loci - while national and transnational television networks hegemonically construct the 'standard,' an enormous variety of local and subcultural production simmers underneath) with a view to identifying and analysing those differences. Moving image technology has never been so widely and cheaply available[200], and its controlled and uncontrolled use within communities presents a rich ground for the study of temporal perception and representation.

Individual Elements of Film Style

In this study I have endeavoured to consider all aspects of film style in relation to their effects on the sensation of temporality. However, there is a noticeable concentration on editing. Therefore, it might prove beneficial to undertake individual studies of the other elements of film style. One might examine the effect of lighting on the speed and quality of time in a scene for instance, or the temporal qualities that radiate outward from an actor's performance (the catalysing mania of Klaus Kinski or the calming serenity of Chishu Ryu). And sound, of course, wields a significant

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[200] Aside from the obvious proliferation of cheap DV camcorders and video phones (such as the iPhone), international initiatives such as the One Laptop Per Child scheme and the Flip Video Spotlight program suggest that a vast wealth of data will quickly, and perhaps only temporarily, become available.

individual force on the temporal stylisation of film (as exemplified by Michel Chion's work on the subject). It undoubtedly requires a fully fledged study of its own to explore this complex relationship, a study that could build upon Chion's work in synthesising the existing theorisation of musical time with the study of film.

In the long take chapter I took the first step in delineating the different types of time constructed through the use of the long take. While I have presented an encompassing characterisation of the temporality of the long take, more work needs to be done to explore and examine in greater detail the wide range of possible applications within the category. Forms such as 'Dramatic Time,' which I describe within chapter three, would benefit from further analysis, but it is particularly the work of identifying and distinguishing between uses that needs to be continued. Such a study might examine the functions and modes of a range of very different sequence shots. The utilitarian long takes of George Cukor[201] would surely be found to be of a different mode entirely to the overtly choreographed, mobile vistas of Miklos Jancso.

Philosophical Work

While temporality and the perception of time has long been a concern of philosophy, and the field of film-philosophy is currently flourishing, there has not been a great deal of work on the temporality of cinema in relation to film-style outside of the Deleuzian conceptualisation of the Movement-Image and Time-Image. The connection and disjunction between the experience of viewing the film sequence and the representation of lived time presents a rich vein for the exploration of modes of being, ways of representing the world, time, subjectivity, and identity.

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[201] See Edward O'Neill, "Notes on the long take in George Cukor's *A Life of Her Own*," *CineAction!* no. 50 (September 1999): 60 - 69.

The significant question here is: what does the way we present time on screen tell us about the way that we understand time? Moving beyond this we might even ask whether film contributes to our understanding of time, opening up new ways of perceiving a temporal world and of conceiving temporality. John Mullarkey's recent *Refractions of Reality*[202] sets out the work that has already been done on this subject (primarily by Giles Deleuze and Alain Badiou) and constructs his own compelling argument for the unique capability of film to make or help us think, to add to, enhance, or help us examine and understand our own temporal existence. Using Jacques Ranciére's concept of 'fabulation' he demonstrates that it is through the time it takes for events to happen on screen that the film engages and activates our understanding. Movements, and the time that they take to unfold, are for him the central affective and conceptual force of cinema. He describes the event of watching the film in a way that accords well with my own description based on the Gadamerian concepts of 'play' and the 'fusion of horizons.' The viewer's "affective engagement" with a film operates as an exchange, a refraction of light/thought/meaning that is unique to the specific instance of viewing, and is bound up with the nature of cinema as a temporal art-form, and the film as a work that to some extent imposes its duration upon the viewer. In watching the film we become aware (indeed are made aware) of temporalities outside of our own, and our duration merges or fuses with that of the film. Mullarkey uses the image of a cube of sugar melting into and soaking up a coffee in Kieslowski's *Three Colours: Blue* (1993) to illustrate; "We dissolve into the film's duration just as it mixes itself with ours, emerging as an object for us as this happens."

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[202] Mullarkey, *Refractions of Reality*.

Gendered Time

Looking back over this thesis a striking pattern emerges. It was in no way intended, nor was I conscious of it until after the majority had already been written. My choice of particular film sequences was a necessary but sometimes uncertain process. Every film has time in it, so how does one choose, from more than a century worth of cinema, the best films to discuss? The final set results from an effort to utilise examples that were either sufficiently indicative of wider tendencies, or which helped to locate the limits of a particular stylistic category's use of time. The specific thematic and narrative content of several of these examples, when seen in relation to one another, indicates something beyond their original purpose.

The examples in question come from the long take and continuity editing chapters, the films being *Jeanne Dielman*, *Le Plaisir*, *Pickup on South Street* and *Rio Bravo*. What these examples indicate is a gendering of time, or a least the representation of gendered experiences of time. This aspect undoubtedly requires further research into the ways that the stylised presentation of time represents the gendered experience of time. There are two distinct facets to this issue: the possibility for expressing gendered experience; and the construction and representability of the gendered experience of time.

In *Jeanne Dielman* and *Le Plaisir* we are presented with images of the female as enclosed within a world that is incomprehensible and impenetrable. Jeanne's relationship with her own time is meticulously and determinedly shown, yet it remains unknowable and mysterious. As we share in her everyday tasks her world, and her understanding of that world, still feels unshareable. In *Le Plaisir* the world of the Maison Tellier is physically impenetrable, a mysterious feminine world to which entry is barred. Undeterred, the mobile long take figures an undeniable urge to know, to look

in, to get in. The function of this house is to offer respite to the male inhabitants of the small town, to provide them with a temporality differentiated from that of the normal drudgery of everyday life, a fantastic time outside of their own. In *Pickup on South Street* we witness an effort to convey Mo's tiredness, stoicness, aloneness. Allowed entry into the temporal bubble of her apartment we are presented with a moving image of the way that she conceptualises and lives her own time. What do these examples tell us about the way that the image of women's time is constructed and, conversely, how the image of femininity is used to construct a particular sense of time?

In contrast with these examples, *Rio Bravo* was chosen because it presented the time of a particular class of character - the active agent who shapes a world (both the fictional and the film world) around them. It is unsurprising that the active agents in the chosen specimen are predominantly male (though Feathers does offer a more complicated instance). Much was made, in this section, of John T. Chance's relationship with his own time, and the way that this is expressed through the temporal stylisation of the film, yet one aspect that wasn't broached was that of his masculinity. Again, we might ask: how does the temporal stylisation of a film express a gendered experience of time, and how are all the connotations of gender employed to construct specific senses or qualities of time?

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