FILM APPRECIATION

DR. YELIZAVETA MOSS &

DR. CANDICE WILSON

FILM APPRECIATION IS DEDICATED TO THE REMARKABLE FACULTY AND STUDENTS OF THE CMJ DEPARTMENT AT UNG. THANK YOU FOR INSPIRING US TO TAKE ON THIS PROJECT.

Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to acknowledge and thank those film professors and students who have reviewed the project and contributed to its content. Thank you to the faculty insert contributors Michael Lucker, Dr. Tobias Wilson-Bates, Alex Lukens, and Dr. Jeff Marker. Thank you to the students who contributed their essays as writing samples, Hope Gandy and Eric Azotea. And thank you to the students who piloted the textbook and provided feedback: Abby Cortave, Peyton Lee, Carley Martinez, Marissa Oda, Danna Sandoval, David Sutherland, and Elise WIlkins.

THIS TEXTBOOK IS AN OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCE WHOSE DEVELOPMENT WAS FUNDED BY AN AFFORDABLE LEARNING GEORGIA GRANT.

ATTRIBUTION CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSE
HTTPS://CREATIVECOMMONS.ORG/

Contents

INTRODUCTION 4

I. FILM HISTORY 7
2. NARRATION 28
3. MISE-EN-SCÈNE 44
4. CINEMATOGRAPHY 59
5. EDITING 79
6. SOUND 91
7. GENRE 104
8. BEYOND GENRE 116
9. WRITING FILM ANALYSIS 130

CONCLUSION 139
GLOSSARY 141

What is Film?

Since the early 1900s, filmmakers and theorists have argued over the question of what differentiates film from the other arts of literature, painting, theater and photography. **Film**, also known as **cinema**, or **movies**, refers not just to moving images and the telling of stories, but also to the celluloid or film stock upon which these moving images were printed. For well over a century, film has profoundly impacted our world and the ways in which we perceive ourselves and others. However, we have also had an impact upon the medium. Surrounded as we are in society by a constant barrage of images from television, cell phone and computer screens to digital ad screens in subways, department stores and airports, moving images have become so ubiquitous that we fail to recognize how trained we already are in reading images. We often neglect to give these images the careful, critical consideration they require to develop an appreciation for their construction, and the different kinds of audiovisual experiences in which they invite us to participate.

Film **celluloid** is composed of **frames**, still images that together make up the entirety of a film. The practice of framing a subject or a shot within the 'frame' of the camera's rectangular shaped viewfinder delimits and directs our vision. For instance, a camera can move to follow a young girl home from work late at night. This young girl can be positioned in different ways within the camera's rectangular viewpoint to be 'read' in a framing of the shot. As we follow film history, we see the development of our cinematic sight from an **objective** stance where we are held at a distance from the screen, to a **subjective** one where we begin to perceive the emotions or aura of things. Today, cinema constantly moves between these two states of objective and subjective positioning of the spectator. But it also interacts with a third state—the invisible. Invisible processes, such as the story world off-screen or outside the camera frame, and the cultural, political, economic, technological and industrial events constantly occurring in the real world off-camera, influence both the content and the appearance of the films we watch and the ways in which we consume them. In this way, there is always an inside and outside the frame, what we can visibly see and hear, and what works outside of our vision on the image.

Imagine, for example, the aforementioned young girl who is walking home alone at night. She seems tired, but unworried as she hurries home. The camera keeps her clearly visible and to the front of the frame, but over her shoulder, in the background, an indistinct figure follows. Why are we concerned? What is behind her? A harmless passerby, a serial killer, a supernatural monster? The director deliberately prevents us from knowing for certain, which makes the figure looming behind the young girl more threatening. Positioning the girl in the foreground brings her closer to us, so that we try to understand what she is feeling, and begin to align ourselves with her perspective. While her face is in focus, naturally attracting our gaze, the blurred figure in the background takes on a more ominous cast, removed as it is from the familiar and the human.

Through the choices the director makes, we begin to shift from a purely objective view (the visible) where we watch a woman walk home, to a more subjective viewership where we begin to feel uneasy as we are emotionally influenced by subject positions and the structural elements that make up the film. Film physically moves us. When the hairs on our arms raise or we leap from our seats in fear, when our faces contort with anguish for a character, and our chests heave with a sudden intake of breath in shared shock over the death of a beloved character, we are emotionally moved by the communal experience of cinema. But, we also move cinema in turn by suspending our disbelief, and immersing ourselves fully into the wonderland of film sound and image. Even as clearly and carefully constructed as a film may be in its effort to critically direct its meaning and influence us emotionally, the film audience ultimately makes the leaps and connections in cinema driving the film forward. We bring our own experiences and understandings to the film, making cinema not just a communal experience but also an intensely personal one. What moves us may not move another.

For French philosopher Roland Barthes, one of the chief ways in which cinema separates itself from an art like photography, is in its ability to fully immerse audiences into the screen so that they forget they are watching a film (also called "**suturing**"), and to have the audience see themselves projected onto the screen, an ability that cinema depends upon. This cinematic world, one imagined by a director or character, can seem very familiar to us, entwined as we are within the screen and with the character. Cinema can embody us within the screen, where we adopt the vision and point of view of characters. Simultaneously, it can hold us at a distance allowing us to examine the social norms in which we participate and take for granted.

Roland Barthes speaks to the double nature of cinema, one that produces an 'enthralled spectator' and forms the basis for the promise of a shared community, a community where we all touch and are touched by images. This enthrallment by the moving image points to a darker aspect of cinema— its insidious ability to manipulate and encourage mass audiences to consume harmful images and ideologies. For example, *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915) and *Triumph of the Will* (Riefenstahl, 1935), both instant successes on their release, used the emotionally persuasive craft of cinema to bolster white nationalistic pride through heroic Christ-like representations of the Ku Klux Klan and Hitler respectively. Mainstream cinema, films geared towards wide release in theaters and marketed to wide audiences with the aim of attaining the greatest revenue, tends to adhere to a dominant system of belief that largely neglects stories told from marginalized perspectives and outside the Hollywood narrative system. In this way, even 'light' fare, like romantic comedies, Marvel superhero movies and Disney animations, can participate in producing narratives that privilege heterosexuality, monogamy and marriage as well as certain races, religions, ethnic groups, genders and their way of life over others. Think here, for instance, of how many films you have seen that feature a queer character at its center? Or a practicing Muslim character as its hero? What do they wear? In what language do they speak? What is typically represented as social reality in the mainstream cinema of your country?

We can think of film as constantly moving between dream and disruption. The dream machine of cinema allows the spectator to imagine that the intoxicating images on screen are true representations of reality. The destabilizing cinema, on the other hand, shakes the

audience out of its stupor through violence and fear, stark documentations of reality or a self--aware camera that demands audience participation in its production of meaning. In *Funny Games* (Haneke, 1997) for instance, characters on screen constantly interrupt the action (breaking the **fourth wall**), and taunt the cinema audience, making the spectator complicit not just in the torture of the family on screen, but so too in the mass production of these grisly images. The audience is made to feel uncomfortable in their casual pleasure taking in such violent images. The cinema spectator thus always walks a tightrope between pleasurable absorption in the image and distrust of the image. By learning to appreciate film, we not only gain new insight, but also a new ability to perceive and challenge representations of the world. Peering through the frame of the camera, we see our own selves through the eyes of others across the globe.

Sherlock, Jr. (Keaton, 1924)

FEATURES OF THIS TEXTBOOK:

* IMAGE BOXES IN GOLD ARE HYPERLINKS TO ONLINE VIDEO CLIPS.

*CHAPTER CONTENTS PAGES LIST AND LINK TO SECTIONS.

* BOLDED TERMS IN CHAPTERS ARE SUMMARIZED IN PEACH BOXES AT THE SECTION'S END AND IN THE GLOSSARY AT THE BACK.

Celluloid: A malleable thermoplastic. Used in cinema as photographic film stock.

Frames: Still images that make up celluloid film.

Objective filmmaking: Distances the audience from the story's action and the characters's experience.

Subjective filmmaking: Involves the audience in the story action and character experience.

Suturing: A film theory term that describes the process of immersion, whereby the audience is "stitched" into the film by becoming emotionally invested.

Fourth wall: The screen through which the audience watches film. "Breaking the fourth wall" makes it appear as though characters are addressing the audience directly.

CHAPTER ONE

FILM HISTORY

SILENT CINEMA **8**
- PRE-CINEMATIC TECHNOLOGIES 8
- EDISON, THE KINETOSCOPE, LUMIERE BROS 10
- THE ACTUALITIES 13
- GEORGES MELIES 14
- CLASSICAL STORYTELLING 15

WWI & INTERNATIONAL AVANT-GARDE CINEMA **23**
- FRENCH IMPRESSIONISM 21
- DADA & SURREALISM 23
- GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM 25

SILENT CINEMA: The Beginning of Film Form (1895-1928)

Film history begins well before the invention of the motion picture camera. To understand how and why the film industry has grown to become the primary mode of artistic expression in the world, we must first carefully trace the path of early cinema, which developed the movie standards that we use today. Cinema storytelling became standardized remarkably quickly – within the first two decades of its existence. The rules by which we make film today are more or less these same rules, which were developed out of industry competition, global wars, audience reception, and incorporation of radical art movements. These historical influences on the film industry in its early stages developed a sturdy film form.

The first element in this film form is the technical aspect of watching moving images. Cinema does not literally show us movement, but it does show us a fast succession of still images. The origin of cinema lies in our need for this illusion of motion and the subsequent industry race to create a movie camera capable of recording and projecting images for the viewing pleasure of its audience. This movie camera would have a light source to capture a series of images composed of 'frames' onto a flexible, and reproducible celluloid. The cinema apparatus would also need a projecting medium to create the illusion of motion by playing these frames back at a specified speed or frame rate (the number of frames per second). In this way, cinema can be thought of as still images set into motion, and thus the story of cinema also becomes the story of animation, of photography, and the development of other technologies. While the movie screen appears as a seamless flow of images, it is in fact dark part of the time. The optical phenomenon known as '**persistence of vision**' and its counterpart, the **phi phenomenon** — the mental act of suturing the gaps between frames or images – aids in the appearance of a constantly lit screen and the continuity of the image. Before the advent of photography, many early optical devices exploited the specialized way in which humans process light to trick the eye into conceiving motion.

Pre-cinematic technologies (6th c – 1890)

There were many different pre-cinematic devices using light sources to project images that paved the way for cinema— from the camera obscura as early as the 6th century to the magic lantern in the 18th century. The **camera obscura**, also often known as a pinhole camera, was basically a box with a hole on its side that reproduced a naturally occurring optical illusion. Light from an image set in front of the camera obscura passes through the hole, reproducing and inverting the image within the opposite surface inside the pinhole camera. The **magic lantern,** on the other hand, was one of the earliest projectors of images onto a 'screen' or wall. It used a concave mirror to project light from a light source through a rectangular sheet of glass or paper containing the image to be screened. A lens at the front of the lantern would then focus the image.

Camera obscura

Magic lantern

Phantasmagoria

The 18th century also saw the appearance of **phantasmagoria**: a type of horror exhibition chiefly produced through the magic lantern that projected images of demons and skeletons onto walls, smoke, and transparent curtains to frighten its audiences. From its inception the pre-cinematic device operated as a medium of light and film, introducing ideas of phantasms or ghosts embedded within the very structure of the medium. The idea of ghosts in film introduces a defining way in which cinema began to be imagined as a tool to represent or re-imagine and interpret reality. In light of the phantasmagoria, we see one of the earliest aims of the cinematic device as entertainment. The first films of cinema, though, would provide a document or archive of the ghosts of the past, from the people, places and events that were recorded onto celluloid.

Zoopraxiscope

The invention of **photography** (1820s -1880s) and other pre-cinematic effects such as the zoetrope (1834) in the 19th century brought about a seismic shift in the possibilities of the cinematic apparatus. Photography in particular brought the celluloid technology to make images not only reproducible but also more accessible to the masses. During the mid-1800s to the 1880s two men, English professional photographer Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904) and French physiologist Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904), were using photography to study the locomotion (movement) of humans and animals. Both men aided in the evolution of motion photography by developing breakthrough camera techniques that set individual images into motion. Muybridge used dozens of cameras to capture motion across separate negatives placed in sequence to each other. In 1879 Muybridge projected these still images in rapid succession onto a screen for the first time from an invention he called the **zoopraxiscope**, an important predecessor of modern cinema. Muybridge can thus be credited with creating some of the first moving pictures. His contemporary Marey used **chronophotography** to depict movement through multiple exposures onto a single photographic plate. Marey designed a camera called the fusil photographique or "photographic gun", which allowed the user to take individual shots rapidly. As one of the earliest camera devices to record sequential movements, Marey's photographic gun was one of the many important steps towards a fully functioning movie camera. Muybridge and Marey's experiments into chronophotography— still photographs that recorded movement—are understood as laying the foundation of cinematography.

Chronophotography

While Muybridge and Marey set the template for moving pictures, the need for a cinematic device capable of recording movement instantaneously grew. This early movie camera also had to be portable, allowing budding filmmakers and film exhibitors ease of travel,

Marey photographs

access, and exhibition. In 1889, American entrepreneur George Eastman engineered celluloid 'roll film' which became the industry standard. Prior to Eastman's more durable and flexible emulsion-based celluloid, paper sensitive film and glass plates were the norm for experiments in photography and movement. The crucial invention of **celluloid** technology would allow for the filming of longer subjects, and the easy transfer and exchange of films. All that remained to achieve cinema, as we know it, was the rapid development of the movie camera apparatus. The rise of the technology, which lead to the creation of the first movie cameras, occurred akin to an arms race, where the desire to create a recording and projecting medium, which set images to motion, was also tied up in the financial possibilities of cinema.

An interesting figure during this time in film history is Frenchman Louis Le Prince, who lies at the center of an enduring mystery that has never been solved. Le Prince worked in England and is credited with shooting what may have been the first moving picture sequences as early as 1888. In 1890, at the eve of his first public demonstration, he mysteriously disappeared with all his patent applications allowing other inventors to outpace him and be attributed with the invention of cinema. While Le Prince's work arguably did not influence the commercial development of cinema due to the secrecy around it, his presence sets up an argument for the first films emerging in England, Leeds, rather than that long held thought the cinema began in America and France.

Persistence of vision: The effect of an afterimage on the retina persisting after an image has been shown. This allows for sequential images, as in optical toys or in film, to blend together to appear to be in motion.

Photography: The creation of permanent images with light on a light-sensitive material, often an emulsion on paper or celluloid.

Chronophotography: Photography that captures a quick succession of movements in several images. Originally used for scientific study of body movement.

Celluloid: A malleable thermoplastic. Used in cinema as photographic film stock.

Edison, Kinetoscope, and Lumière Brothers (1891 – 1895)

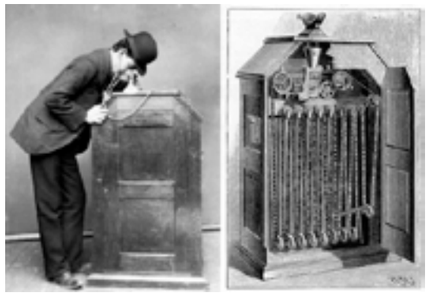
Cinema technologies were invented in different countries at different times, but the earliest date has been set at 1891, with the American inventor Thomas Edison's Kinetograph camera and **Kinetoscope** viewing box: a type of peep show device, activated by putting a coin in the slot. Edison's assistant, W. K. L. Dickson is credited with much of the work patented by Edison and was key to the formation of the first machines capable of recording and screening moving images. But it would be Dickson's four-hole-perforation of 35mm Eastman roll film that would change the course of film history. These perforations on either side of a film frame permitted the film to be pulled by gears through both the camera and viewing apparatus and would become the standard in the industry. Edison built a studio called the Black Maria (pronounced *'Mar-iah'*) in New Jersey, named after its resemblance to the cramped black police wagons that transported criminals, to create numerous shorts

Black Maria

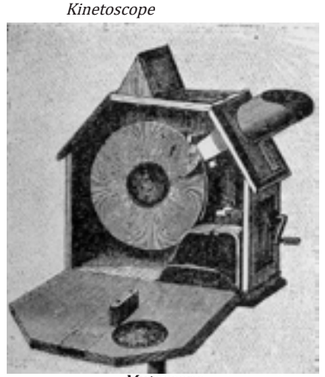
such as *Fred Ott's Sneeze* (1894), the first movie to be copyrighted in the United States, *Annette Dances* (1894), *The Boxing Cats* (1894), one of the earliest forms of the cat video now popularized on the internet today, and *The Kiss* (1896). The stage was set for the film industry in the United States to be born on the East Coast, and more specifically in New Jersey.

Many of Edison's earliest films were filmed by William Heise and Dickson, two of the most prolific filmmakers marking the beginnings of cinema. These early films produced within the Black Maria were characterized by black backgrounds and sunlight from the studio's roof, which opened to allow for natural lighting. Because recording these films required a bright light source, Edison had the revolutionary studio built on a revolving track to follow the movement of the sun for optimal lighting throughout the day. These continuous one-shot films were often short, no more than around 20 seconds in length, with a fixed frame that kept the audience at a distance, as observers of life. Edison's films ran the gamut from comedic to intimate snapshots of life, often featuring notorious figures like Annie Oakley and other people and places of note. In seeking to document reality these first films eventually began to introduce the idea of cinema as more than just pictures that move, but rather moving pictures that told a story.

By 1894 Edison had Kinetoscope parlors across the U.S. and Europe. Each machine, though, could serve only one audience member at a time, since it could only fit one set of eyes in the peephole, and was limited to exhibiting a single short film. Although popular, the Kinetoscope's days were numbered by the continued race by inventors to discover a commercially viable way to project films to large groups of spectators. Germans Max and Emil Skladanowsky, for example, developed the Bioscop movie camera and projector in 1895, which utilized two strips of film rather than the standard 35mm single strip film. They are credited with projecting a program of their own films to a paying audience in Berlin almost two months before the Lumière Brothers' famous first film-projection for a public audience at the Grand Café in December 1895 Paris. In 1895, Dickson also left the employment of Edison to partner with inventor Herman Casler, Henry Norton Marvin and Elias Koopman in the American Mutoscope Company, which by 1908 would become the Biograph Company. Dickson and Casler would invent the **Mutoscope**, a type of flip-card peep show device that would provide direct competition as a cheaper alternative to Edison's Kinetoscope. By 1896, Dickson and his partners would launch their own Biograph camera and projector in their continued attempt to wrest control of the American film market from Edison's monopoly.



Kinetoscope



Mutoscope

Although the Edison camera was patented as the first motion picture camera, the official birth of cinema is often considered to

be 1895 with the Lumière Brothers who successfully were both able to record a series of images on a flexible, transparent medium (35 mm nitrate-based celluloid film) as well as project the sequence in a system accessible to the commercial growth of cinema domestically and internationally.

Inspired by the Kinetoscope, in 1895 Frenchmen Louis and Auguste Lumière debuted the groundbreaking Cinématographe. The **Cinématographe** operated as a recording camera, printer or developer of the filmed images, and projector, while also being small and portable, making it the first all-in-one commercially viable film camera. Importantly, the machine used a slower exposure rate of 16 frames per second, a rate that would become the standard international film speed, as compared to Edison's application of 46 frames per second to his cinema apparatus. Using the Cinématographe, the Lumières filmed their factory workers leaving at the end of the day. The resultant film, *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895) is considered to be the very first motion picture made with this innovative machinery. By the time of the Lumières' celebrated first film screenings for a paying audience at a café in Paris, the Lumières had a program of ten films that met with wide public acclaim and economic success. These films allowed a glimpse into early documenting of everyday life from August Lumière and his wife feeding their baby, to the arrival of a train, and men playing cards. Others showed early comedic skits like a young boy tricking a gardener into spraying himself with a hose by stepping on it.

Like Edison's first films, the Lumière Brothers' first films were single moving scenarios taken in one shot, composed like a photograph or painting, and short in length, usually under a minute long. The Lumière films, though, were marked by their ability to easily take their camera to the streets, resulting in on-location shooting, and films composed of simple settings and narratives that often focused on nature or everyday people. By 1896 trained cameramen and projectionists were sent across the globe with the Cinématographe to find new subject matter to shoot, and to show their films to new, appreciative audiences, thus launching the beginning of film history in many other nations.

Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory (Lumières, 1895)

The Arrival of a Train in La Ciotat Station (Lumières, 1896)

The Actualities: Cinema as realism

These earliest films created in the 1890s revealed an awareness of an audience and sought to create something amusing or actual for their entertainment. In this way, most of the films were non-fiction or **actualities**, what might be considered an early antecedent of the documentary, that presented real settings and events for audience viewership. Some actualities, such as the traveling actualities where the camera is attached to a vehicle, provided the first examples of camera movement in cinema. For instance, Canadian James H. White's *Panoramic View of the Champs Elysees* (1900), made for the Edison company, presents its mobile view from what appears to be a horse-drawn carriage. Films of foreign lands and news reels also constitute actuality films. The fiction film, especially the simple comedy, was also an important genre for these early films.

Early films had no introductory titles, credits or intertitles, which contributed to the loss of many of these films in the annals of film history. Many films consisted of a variety of shorts from different directors spliced together in a reel without individual identification, and maybe stored in someone's home, office or studio. Although most early films of the 1890s consisted of a single continuous shot, some filmmakers filmed different shots of the same subject which could then be screened separately, spliced into other shorts, or run all together creating a type of multiple shot film dependent on the needs of the exhibitor. The exhibitors of these early films were the first editors because they often had the sole power to decide which shorts would be shown in a reel to audiences and in which order.

By the end of the 1890s, films were becoming longer and exhibiting multiple shots, requiring producers and directors to begin exploring new ways of telling stories through early forays into editing. Though these early films are now called "silent films", they were not silent at all. In fact, these first films were typically accompanied by some type of live or recorded music. Pianists, musicians, and sometimes whole orchestras would play sheet music or improvise for movie audiences. Many also used phonographs to provide music for their film shorts, especially Edison in his Kinetoscope parlors.

With the demand for film as entertainment, many other film studios rose to provide competition with new cameras and movies to take hold of the budding industry within their respective countries. In France, for example, Pathé Frères was founded in 1896 and by the early 1900s became the largest vertically integrated film company in the world. They would create the lightweight Pathé camera, based on the patented Lumière design in the early 1900s, which would dominate the global industry well into the end of the 1910s. Gaumont Film Company, founded by inventor Léon Gaumont, produced their first films in 1897 and quickly became the chief rivals of Pathé Frères. Alice Guy-Blaché, the industry's first female director, quickly rose through the ranks in Gaumont's company to become the Head of Production from 1897 to 1907 directing the host of the company's popular actualities. Between 1910 and 1914, Guy-Blaché was the first woman to own her own studio plant, The Solax Company Studios — the largest pre-Hollywood studio in America — in Flushing, New York from where she directed and produced hundreds more shorts and eventually feature length films. From Italy, to Denmark and Japan, film industries and cultures thrived, opening the door to new ways of understanding cinema as a product not just of realism but of fantasy and storytelling.

In 1896, the Lumière Brothers screened the now infamous fifty-second film *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de la Ciotat* (*Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat Station*) to Parisian audiences.

The film showed the everyday scene of a train pulling into a station and passengers boarding and disembarking. Despite the familiarity of these actions, audiences reacted with fear and delight at seeing this mundane scene captured on film. One founding myth of cinema is that audiences ducked their heads when the train approached the screen's limits, as though it would burst out of the wall to hit them. This famous anecdote of spectators running, screaming from the sight of an approaching train has taken on the status of urban legend and has been undermined by many critical film scholars.

It is easy to hear this urban legend and assume that early spectators had a childlike relationship with the screen, where they were unaware of the artificiality of movies and took the images too literally. But film scholars disagree with this assessment of early cinema goers. Tom Gunning sets forth a concept of a '**cinema of attractions'**. It can be difficult as students of cinema to see where the attraction lies in these first black and white early film shorts containing little plot, movement or stylistic development. The idea of early cinema as a 'cinema of attractions' considers how new experiences of space and time in modernity (technological revolution, railway developments, electrical and communication systems, the new automobile, the increase of a global society) and the shock of an emerging modern visual culture affects the way in which these early spectators perceived the screen.

READ TOM GUNNING'S ESSAY

Rather than laughing at the naiveté of these first spectators who 'believed' what they saw on screen, as students of cinema we can think about why might the spectator have been affected by the technology of this new medium. For Gunning, the basic aesthetic of early cinema was the visual shock rather than narrative. The early cinema spectator were thrill seekers, standing their ground in the face of a rapidly approaching train, not helpless naïve children. They delighted in the imaginary threat of the train. Of early cinema, one of the most popular genres were films of approaching vehicles, suggesting that spectators were attracted to the visual shock of cinema, rather than a blind terror.

There is an awareness of the audience in these films that actively attempt to visually startle. In *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de la Ciotat*, for example, even though the camera itself does not move for the length of the film, it is deliberately positioned so that the tracks approach it at a diagonal. This framing causes shifts in shot size based on the train's movement alone — from long shot, to medium to close-up. The camera angle creates dynamic shot that increases the tension of the everyday train pulling into a station and creates the thrilling sensation of a train racing towards its audience. These early films posit an understanding of cinema as astonishing spectacle that holds the ability to fascinate audiences.

Actualities: Early non-fiction short films that were often composed as static one-shots. The first films in cinema history were actualities.

Cinema of attractions: Concept developed by theorist Tom Gunning to describe how early moviegoers were attracted to cinema primarily as a shocking and exciting new technology.

Georges Méliès: Cinema and the magic tradition

Georges Méliès is considered by many to be one of the most important filmmakers in the early years of cinema because he shifted away from the moving photographs of Edison and the actualities of the Lumières towards story and narrative expression. He was exceedingly successful both in France and internationally during his career, and he was often imitated or illegally pirated by filmmakers like Thomas Edison who was resentful at the competition in the market. Because he controlled all aspects of his film production – screenwriting, directing, acting, producing, and distribution – many today consider Méliès to be the first auteur of cinema.

Méliès was present that historic day in 1985 when the Lumière Brothers stunned audiences in Paris with their Cinématographe and its program of films. Inspired, but unable to purchase the machine from the brothers, Méliès procured his own camera-projector from British inventor Robert W. Paul, and small film studio called the Star Film Company. In 1896, Méliès soon began screening his own films to audiences. Initially one-shot reel films of no longer than a minute, Méliès' early films quickly became marked by his use of **special effects** or magic tricks, which popularized multiple exposures, dissolves, stop motion and split screen photography among other techniques in cinema.

SEE CH4 FOR MORE ON SPECIAL EFFECTS

In *Un Homme de tete* (*The Four Troublesome Heads,* 1898) Méliès enters the frame and proceeds to remove his head placing it on a table. Every time a new head appears on his shoulders, the director removes it until four identical Méliès heads interact with each other—three on the table, and one on his shoulders in a technically impressive early use of **multiple exposures.** Méliès' take on Cinderella, *Cendrillon* (1899), similarly provided one of the earliest uses of **dissolves**, and was the director's first use of lavishly designed multiple scenes to tell a story in cinema. Méliès' cinema was distinct and influential in its ornate stage design, which drew the spectacle of the theatre into motion pictures. The magical illusion of his camera presented elaborate stories in ways that were impossible in live theatre and startlingly new to the medium of the screen. Méliès would often appear in his films and use **direct address** with his audiences, creating a self-reflexivity that encouraged audience awareness of the camera and artificiality of the screen. Audiences were part of the magic trick or adventure on screen in this way.

A Trip to the Moon (Melies, 1902)

A Trip to the Moon (1902) and *The Impossible Voyage* (1904) remain two of the most influential early films of science fiction. The respective scenes of the space shuttle flying into the moon's eye in *A Trip to the Moon* and the sun swallowing a flying train in *The Impossible Voyage* are still two of the most iconic images in film history. Méliès used his camera to embrace the air of scientific discovery and exploratory hope for the future that marked the time period. *A Trip to the Moon* was the first example of science fiction on film in its imagining of not just the journey from the earth to the moon, but the perspective of the earth from the moon. Important also to

The Impossible Voyage (Melies, 1904)

Méliès' storytelling innovations was his use of **linear editing** to establish continuity between his shots to tell simple stories. Filmmakers across the globe were still figuring out how to tell a story through rudimentary editing that kept narrative clarity for audiences across space and time. Melies' 11-minute *A Trip to the Moon* successfully kept its spatial and temporal logic from scene to scene, using editing to sequentially follow its characters on their journey to and from the moon.

For all his cinematic innovation, movement in Méliès' films happened not through the camera, but through **set design**. His cinema of tricks mandated a very steady or fixed camera through which he could swap in other objects to create **jump cuts**, so his camera never moved, preventing him from experimenting with shot sizes and camera movement the way in which other filmmakers would. Early British films, especially, continued the Méliès magic tradition and were known for their special effects cinematography, for example, James Williamson's *The Big Swallow* (1900) and Cecil Hepworth's *Explosion of a Motor Car* (1900). Through these films you can begin to trace the begins of the editing tradition in early cinema. In *The Big Swallow* a man walks angrily towards the screen until his open mouth fills the camera view. Williamson invisibly cuts on the black interior of the character's mouth to a black back drop into which a cinematographer and his camera falls, then back again to the now laughing and chewing face of the man to suggest that the angry man his swallowed the cameraman.

As the name suggests, *Explosion of a Motor Car* presents the spectacle of an exploding car that slowly scatters the body parts of the car's passengers in a comedic and playful way. Hepworth's film features one of the earliest uses of Méliès' popularized **stop motion** effect to negotiate the shock of the modern experience with the presence of the rapidly developing technology of the automobile. By 1912, Méliès was considered old-fashioned due to changing film practices, and he became outpaced by his peers. Despite the global popularity and imitation of Méliès' films and their special effects, the dominant form of cinema today is not one filled with tricks and fantasy, but rather of a narrative embedded in realism. The Pennsylvanian director, Edwin S. Porter, would be a key figure in encouraging this direction of modern storytelling. From the one-shot films of the Lumières to the tricks of Méliès to Edwin S. Porter, we see a steady development of cinema from dependency on technology to aesthetic play and towards greater realism.

Classical storytelling and Classical Hollywood cinema

Originally a film projectionist and equipment expert, Edwin S. Porter quickly rose in the ranks of the Edison Manufacturing Company. Working with his future collaborator George S. Fleming, Edison would become a prolific cameraman and director for the majority of Edison films. In 1903 he directed two seminal American films, *Life of an American Fireman* and *The Great Train Robbery,* providing important forays into the use of continuity editing to deepen narrative in early cinema. A major problem for early filmmakers was the establishment of temporal continuity from one shot to the next. The films of Georges Méliès were especially influential to Porter in their lessons on storytelling through continuity across narrative time and space. *A Trip to the Moon* held a particular familiarity to Porter as he had illegally duplicated it for distribution by Edison in October 1902, allowing him a closer understanding of the mechanics of editing together a story for narrative clarity. The 6-minute film *The Life of an American Fireman* (produced in late 1902 and released in January 1903) grew out of this experiment with continuity.

James Williamson's 5-minute British film, *Fire!* (1901), was one of the very first films to edit multiple shots together chronologically to create a cohesive narrative sequence. Although *Fire!* skillfully used editing to heighten the emotional tension of firefighters racing to rescue a family with a baby from a burning house fire, it struggled in its narrative clarity. The spectator is often confused about the proximity or distance of spaces from each other. The opening scene, for example, shows a police officer who has noticed a home on fire running off-screen for help and immediately arriving at a fire station. Subsequent shots, though, highlight the horse-drawn fire engines sprinting to the scene of the fire which now appears to be a distance away.

Fire! (Williamson, 1901)

Life of an American Fireman (Porter, 1903)

The Great Train Robbery (Porter, 1903)

Inspired by *Fire!*'s technical skill and narrative, Porter created *Life of an American Fireman* (1903), a dramatized nine-shot narrative that combined multiple staged scenes of firemen coming to the rescue with actuality film of a real fire brigade. Porter's film begins with a fireman thinking about his wife and daughter, one of the first films to feature a character's inner thoughts and thereby humanize the figure of the fireman. Porter further deepens the audience investment in his film through one of the first uses of the close shot in early cinema. Fading in and out between images of the fireman thinking of his family to a close shot of someone pulling an alarm, and firemen reacting to the alarm, Porter displays an advanced use of continuity between shots that maintains a sense of temporal and narrative pacing and meaning across shots. His sophisticated attempts at continuity extend to sequenced shots of horse-drawn fire engines all going in one direction. Despite depending on wide, fixed shots to tell its story, *Life of an American Fireman* exploded into audience's consciousness, taking what had been done before by disparate filmmakers to another level that made the popular genre of the firefighting film even more in demand. It would be with Porter's next film, *The Great Train Robbery*, that the direction of cinema would firmly turn towards the realist narrative as its dominant form compared to the fantasy-driven narratives of Georges Méliès.

The Great Train Robbery remains Porter's most famous and influential film to the development of classical storytelling in cinema. A story about a gang of bandits who hold up a train, Porter's film is arguably the most popular film of the pre-1905 period and prompted

many imitations. *The Great Train Robbery* tells its story in eleven shots, moving back and forth between scenes of a tied up telegraph operator, his discovery by town folk who mount a posse to apprehend the bandits, the anticipated train robbery, and shoot-out that leads to the bandits' death in the end. Porter makes the device of editing central to his storytelling, with a film language focused on creating a sense of time passing between shots, while simultaneously stimulating audiences by cutting between different locations in the building of tension and drama. While there were other fiction films composed of multiple shots being created during the time period, *The Great Train Robbery* challenged the expectations of the frontally composed and theatrical films still being made by most filmmakers at the time. It displayed an unparalleled level of continuity of action, on-location shooting, and narrative clarity across shots that served to increase the realism of Porter's film.

The Great Train Robbery (Porter, 1903)

The Great Train Robbery ends on a shocking final insert of a bandit shooting his gun directly into the camera, in a breaking of the fourth wall, which shows its awareness of the spectating audience. This famous ending reverberates in modern cinema today in homages placed in films like Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (1990), the gun barrel sequence in the James Bond movies, and George P. Cosmatos' *Tombstone* (1993) where characters fire their guns at the camera. Porter was one of several filmmakers across the globe whose work pushed forward the development of classical storytelling and editing during the era.

The 1905-1912 **Nickelodeon** boom created the moviegoer who now went to the movies as a habit. This explosion of permanent indoor exhibition spaces across the United States that were dedicated to screening motion pictures made huge profits from charging just a nickel for admission. With the demand for more films to screen to these habitual audiences, by 1906 early cinema began to be dominated by narrative storytelling necessitating the rapid development of a visual language of expression. It is within this era of the Nickelodeon boom that Biograph actor-turned-director, D.W. Griffith, would leave the company in 1913 to produce a body of infamous films that would change the face of modern visual storytelling. Learning from earlier films and his own experimentations, Griffith developed the rules of continuity editing at a scale never seen before in his most influential film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Griffith shot his scenes with multiple cameras to create a continuous flow of dramatic storytelling while maintaining continuity in space and time across his numerous cuts.

The Birth of a Nation was the highest-grossing film of the silent film era, but for all its innovative camera techniques and narrative achievements, it was also highly controversial and socially devastating. Griffith's film tells the story of the American Civil War through a focus on two white families torn apart by the conflict and the threat of the freed slave. Three hours of racist propaganda, *The Birth of a Nation* starts with the Civil War and ends with the Ku Klux Klan riding in to save the South, and more specifically white women, from the uncivilized emancipated slaves. The origin of stereotypes like the loyal Uncle and Mammy characters became popularized through their prominently portrayal by white men in black face in these characters' unwavering service towards their owners.

In contrast, the other slaves within the narrative are ruined through their freedom, having become violent, arrogant, and sexually aggressive. In the middle of the second act, Flora, a young white woman flees the unwanted attentions of Gus, a former slave turned Union soldier, who wants to marry her. Rather than be despoiled by a black man, she jumps off a cliff, leading her brother to form the Ku Klux Klan to avenge her death. In *The Birth of a Nation*, lynching is the tool suggested to exact vengeance and bring order to the land. Through filmmaking tools, Griffith creates sympathy for the white characters and demonizes black slaves as dangerous narrative elements to be destroyed. The editing cuts closer to Flora to set up character psychology that highlights her purity, and it cuts increasingly faster between Flora, Gus, and her brother, who desperately searches for her, to create drama and tension. Editing and a sweeping orchestral score is used in *The Birth of a Nation* to emotively portray the Ku Klux Klan as heroes and to position the audience on their side, in a revisionist history of America's birth.

Although Griffith is often incorrectly credited with introducing innovations such as **cross-cutting**, and the close-up, Griffith effectively used these techniques to show several competing lines of action, moving between different shot sizes and groups of characters, with a clarity of story that remains astounding for the 1910s. In the climax of *The Birth of a Nation*, Griffith displays a sophisticated use of parallel editing that builds tension and excitement in terms of emotional and narrative cues. Cutting between Klan members riding to the rescue, to a white family under siege in a small cabin by black soldiers gone mad with too much freedom, to Lillian Gish fighting for her virtue against the mulatto, Silas Lynch, Griffith cuts from full-figure shots to close-ups to accentuate the drama. In the little cabin, as a father prepares to kill his own daughter to save her from the bestiality of attacking black soldiers and characters desperately fight to hold off the horde, Griffith inserts a close-up of a child crying to further manipulate audience emotions. He consistently returns to the sight of the Klan as the white characters' only hope and creates drama by shortening the shot lengths to accelerate the pace and deepen the emotional stakes. Though the content of Griffith's film was immediately criticized by many viewers and has become a dark spot in film history, he has been revered for filmmaking techniques that effectively manipulate viewer emotions. Griffith's mastery of crosscutting provided a foundation for narrative action and pacing in cinema, which underpins modern Hollywood cinema today.

When *The Birth of a Nation* opened to audiences in 1915, it was met with standing ovations across the country by white audiences, but also the counter-pressure of massive protests organized by the NAACP (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) due to its dangerous misrepresentations and liberties taken in recounting history, which many American filmgoers at the time mistook as accurate. Griffith's film singlehandedly aided in the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, who actively used *The Birth of a Nation* as a recruiting tool. While *The Birth of a Nation* is considered by many to be the foundation of modern Hollywood cinema, it is also representative of racism, white supremacy, and America's history, and it cannot responsibly be understood separately from its politics and ideology. Understanding this connection between Hollywood's foundations and the ideology that it perpetuates is

The Birth of a Nation protest

important to historically orient Hollywood practices today, like whitewashing and the use of racist stereotypes. A criticism or study of Hollywood cinema today must take into consideration its beginnings rooted in Griffith's sensational film.

After the record-breaking success of Griffith's three-hour *The Birth of a Nation* there was no going back. The multi-film reel or feature film became the norm. With longer films came other stylistic standards: more restrained acting style and the further development of character psychology, which would lead in turn to the emergence of the star system and fan magazine culture like *Motion Picture Story Magazine* (1911) and *Photoplay* (1911). The classical style of storytelling and editing evocatively showcased in Griffith's film set in place the editing practices that still make up the basis of Hollywood cinema to this day. More recently Hollywood films have drawn from the troubled historical legacy of *The Birth of a Nation* to speak to contemporary concerns in America. In 2016 Nate Parker released *The Birth of a Nation*, which repurposed Griffith's film title to challenge a white supremacist version of events and tell the story of the birth of America from the slave's perspective. Although also marked with controversy, Parker's film won numerous awards, and the distribution rights were bought for $17.5 million by Fox Searchlight Pictures, breaking the record for the largest amount paid to date for a Sundance Film Festival production. In Spike Lee's 2018 film, *BlacKkKlansman*, referencing *The Clansman*, the original title of *The Birth of a Nation*, Klan leader David Duke screens Griffith's film for the Colorado Springs chapter after a secret induction ceremony. Using audience awareness of *The Birth of a Nation* as the foundation of the American film industry, Lee's film reengages Griffith's in a satirical examination of race and politics in modern America.

Griffith was only one of many directors creating feature length films during the silent film period important to the development of Classical Hollywood cinema. Mentored by Alice Guy-Blaché, Lois Weber was a prolific director, screenwriter, and highly recognized and sought after talent in Hollywood alongside D.W. Griffith. Unlike with D.W. Griffith, the course of film history has obscured Weber's importance to silent cinema laying its creative trajectory chiefly at the feet of men. In *Suspense* (1913), a roughly 10-minute film in which a man, chased by police, steals a car in his haste to reach his remotely located home to save his wife and baby from a threatening tramp, Weber engages in superior editing to heighten the suspense and narrative clarity of her story. Using a variety of film techniques from a three-way split screen to introduce characters in order to explain space and location to the audience, to a key hole effect to create a close-up, and cut-ins to cut closer to the action, Weber produces an immersive experience for her film audience. In one startling moment, Weber places the spectator within the point of view shot of the young mother in peril as she peers from her upstairs bedroom window and meets the gaze of the tramp who looks straight into the tilted camera representing the shocked mother's, and audience's, gaze. Weber cleverly heightens the tension and emotion of her film through her manipulation of shot sizes and parallel cutting between the home invasion and the husband on his way, building upon the legacy of the rescue sequence that D.W. Griffith would display on the immense stage of *The Birth of a Nation*.

One of the early directors to create feature-length films in the 1910s, Lois Weber's 1914 film, *The Merchant of Venice*, is widely considered to be the first American feature directed by a woman. In 1916, she would be the first, and only, woman elected to the Motion Picture Directors Association in honor of an oeuvre that addressed the social issues within her time and her own personal politics. In films like *Hypocrites* (1915), *Where Are My Children?* (1916) and *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* (1917) she challenged the power and hypocrisy of religious institutions and issues of contraceptives and abortion, respectively.

By the end of the 1910s the feature film was a staple of Hollywood cinema, and the industry was steadily migrating to the West Coast to take advantage of the year-round sunlight and good weather crucial for outdoor filmmaking. Classical Hollywood narrative form informed a universal language of cinema that still remains the norm today. In other countries around the globe, directors began taking alternative approaches to telling stories visually that would continue to impact on the development of the medium through the rise of an international avant-garde cinema. This alternative to Hollywood narrative cinema would use its cinema to encourage new representations of reality, and to call forth a new cinema spectator.

World War I & international avant-garde cinema

French Impressionism

Referred to as 'the first modern war', World War I saw the technological clash of the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire) against the Allied Powers (Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Romania, Japan and the United States). This modern war saw the unprecedented use of chemical warfare and military technology, which would result in socio-political upheaval and the deaths of civilians and soldiers on a massive scale. On the winning and losing side respectively, the cinema industries of France and Germany were particularly affected through the immense casualties experienced during the war.

Before World War I French studios like Pathé Frères and Leon Gaumont dominated the international film market, but the loss of conscripted personnel and the use of the studios for wartime purposes during the Great War basically brought these giants to a standstill. Hollywood cinema rose to fill the gap. By the end of the war there was a desire to create a distinctly French cinema, to reclaim the theaters from the hegemony of Hollywood by producing a distinctly national product. In 1918 French Impressionism, a film movement invested in the centrality of the emotions and the subjective spaces of characters, deepened the possibilities of what cinema as a medium could do. Filmmaker-theorists Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, Marcel L'Herbier and Abel Gance were strongly associated with the movement and used different aesthetic approaches to explore cinema's unique ability to make audience's feel emotions, not simply see them displayed. In a movement away from the more objective world of the earlier actualities, Impressionism allowed audiences to intuit meaning from emotional impressions, rather than the often linear, clear-cut understandings encouraged in classical Hollywood cinema.

Abel Gance's *La Dixième Symphonie* (*The Tenth Symphony*, 1918) is considered the first major film of the Impressionist movement and tells the tale of a composer who, believing his wife is having an affair, expresses his pain through a powerful symphony. *The Tenth Symphony* showed the possibility of mainstream cinema to be liberated from theater and

the novel, which tend to tell meaning directly, in a move towards the sensations that gives rise to meaning and emotional truths within the audience. In Gance's film the performance of a symphony is felt through visual devices and emotional reactions of the people who listen to the symphony. The bodies of characters layered within the frame heave in shared feeling, moving silently as one as they physically react to impressions inspired by the music. The use of superimpositions and inserts of a woman dancing in a woodland glen evoke the mental space of characters, privileging the creation of mood over plot. *The Tenth Symphony* showed the possibility of cinema outside a classical Hollywood narrative form dominated by realism.

Impressionism is characterized by point of view storytelling, lighting, and the revolutionary technology of frame mobility that allowed the camera to represent the eyes and experience of characters. Most films around the world were still largely static, but Impressionism saw the rise of a new generation of filmmakers who strapped their cameras to carousels, and locomotives in an attempt to facilitate the ease of experiential character movement. In *L'argent* (1928), L'Herbier's camera swoops and glides through cavernous rooms, pulled by numerous pulleys and dollies in its visualization of corrupt practices, and shifting perspectives as characters are consumed by their surroundings. Due to Impressionists' interest in character subjectivity, their films also often played with optical effects to suggest the inner life and experience of its characters. Germaine Dulac's *La Souriante Madame Beudet* (*The Smiling Madame Beudet,* 1923) presents a narrative concerned with a young housewife's fantasy of escape from a dull marriage. Dulac uses visual techniques – slow motion, double exposure, irises, dramatic lighting and distortions – to allow the spectator entrance into feminized mental spaces of dreaming and loneliness.

The Smiling Madame Beudet (Dulac, 1923)

Central to Impressionism was the idea of photogénie, a concept introduced by Jean Epstein that saw as the essence of cinema its artistic ability to enhance the soul or character of things through filmic reproduction. Plot and story should thereby be secondary to the creation of what is truly cinematic, that is moments of photogénie. For the Impressionist filmmaker the camera should be wielded in spontaneous ways to break free of the limits of the traditional film narrative and present fresh ways of seeing and understanding the world. For Epstein, the use of the close-up intensifies emotions and provides opportunity for photogénie.

In Jean Epstein's *Cœur fidèle* (*The Faithful Heart*, 1923), a stand-off occurs between two men, Jean and thug Petit Paul, over the fate of Marie, an exploited young woman they are both interested in. In a confrontation sequence that shifts between a variety of shot sizes, Epstein utilizes over twenty short, extreme close-ups of faces, fists, and a hand grasping a bottle to highlight the tension and anxiety imbued in the moment. What creates photogénie in this sequence is the many subtle movements made visible by the use of close-ups that generate a world of the emotions and meanings that would otherwise be lost through a focus on dialogue and intertitles. In Impressionist cinema, the rhythms of editing and the distortions inherent in dreams, hallucinations and other mental states, can be confusing and exciting to untangle. These techniques destabilize the neat realist presentations of classical narrative cinema and force spectators to be active in generating film meaning.

Dada and Surrealism

The Dada movement emerged across all media around 1915 as a reaction to the sense of meaninglessness and disillusionment felt over the unparalleled loss of life experienced during World War I. Horrified, artists in Zurich, France, Germany and New York rejected the rationality of science that had led to such a war, choosing instead to adopt an absurdist view of life, one centered in nonsense, irrationality and anti-art, or anti-bourgeois capitalist sensibilities. *Entr'acte* (Clair, 1924), is one of the best known representations of Dada film. From the very start of *Entr'acte*, Clair throws the audience into disorientation through his ambivalent shifts from slow motion to fast cutting and unstable camera movements. In one sequence, a canon fires at the audience in a point of view that is absurdist and filled with narrative ambiguity even as a clear statement on war can be read. A hilarious funeral procession ensues when the mourners are forced to chase the hearse when it escapes the camel that is pulling it. *Entr'acte* challenges traditional ideas of storytelling in cinema through its undermining of conventions of character, plot and setting, its nonsensical images and disconnected scenes that defy clear interpretation, and its overturning of clear temporal and spatial relations. In Clair's irreverent postwar film, laughter is the only thing that makes absolute sense.

Many members of the Dada movement went on to form the Surrealist movement, originating in Paris from 1924. André Breton officially founded the movement in 1924 when he wrote The Surrealist Manifesto in which he argues that cinema should be understood in terms of dreams. In the 1920s the question of 'what is cinema?' and how it could be differentiated from the other arts gained ground. For Breton, cinema was different from other arts in its ability to approximate the dream, and so cinema had a unique way of merging dream-states with reality. The surrealism of the dream forces the spectator to engage in a higher level of thought that escapes the limits imposed by traditional ways of structuring a story through the cause and effect structure and formal aesthetics of Hollywood narrative cinema. While Surrealism partakes in Dada politics of negotiating anxieties concerned with the state of the world, Surrealist cinema combined absurdist imagery with shocking, often sexual and irrational juxtapositions

Entr'acte (Clair, 1924)

Emak Bakia (Ray, 1927)

to present new ways of considering reality through dream states. It is no wonder that the critical work of Sigmund Freud on dreams and the subconscious were crucial to surrealist work.

Even as the Surrealist movement grew out of France, its artists hailed from different nationalities and no one specific Surrealist expressed themselves the same stylistically. In 1927 American visual artist, Man Ray, a Dadaist-turned-Surrealist, produced the hypnotic short film *Emak Bakia* composed of dreamlike images and film techniques that blur the distinction between objects in its presentation of female mental space. The film ends with the famous image of a woman with eyes painted on her eyelids. It is only when she opens her eyes and smiles direct at the audience, that the trick is fully revealed, and the strange unease felt at the woman's previous blank stare is dissolved. It is a shocking moment that forces the spectator to draw their own conclusions and engage with the cinematic medium at a 'higher' level than required by narrative cinema. Ironically, *Emak Bakia* was criticized by many Surrealists as containing too little narrative.

Spanish Surrealist Salvador Dalí and Mexican filmmaker Luis Buñuel are the individuals most associated with Surrealism in cinema, chiefly due to their famous collaboration *Un Chien Andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*, 1929). *Un Chien Andalou* ostensibly presents the story of two lovers, but Buñuel disrupts the clarity of traditional cinematic storytelling by structuring his film along the lines of the dream. Following the title-card, "Once upon a Time", Buñuel introduces a man who, in a shocking cut to close-up, slices open a woman's eye with a razor blade. He then proceeds to undermine the narrative continuity by having the woman, who was previously blinded, regain her sight following an intertitle telling the audience that eight years have passed. *Un Chien Andalou* destroys the linear and logical expectations of seeing and understanding the world of the story in cinema. Filled with aggressive imagery, *Un Chien Andalou* is composed of vignettes and nameless characters with unclear spatial and temporal relations to each other.

Un Chien Andalou (Dali/Bunuel, 1929)

The Seashell and the Clergyman
(Dulac, 1928)

Despite the popularity of *Un Chien Andalou*, Germaine Dulac's *La coquille et le clergyman* (*The Seashell and the Clergyman*, 1928) is considered by many to be the first Surrealist film. Originally an Impressionist filmmaker, Dulac shifted briefly to Surrealism to direct *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, a film about a priest's frustrated pursuit of a beautiful woman. Filled with dream imagery, disjointed settings, superimpositions, and split screens among other techniques that place the spectator within character's mental spaces, Dulac's film challenges the idea of cinema as representation of reality. By the 1930s and 1940s, many Surrealists emigrated to the Americas as the globe became embroiled in World War II, allowing a resurgence of Surrealist ideas to enter into Hollywood cinema.

German Expressionism

Although Germany lost World War I, hit with sanctions and losses that isolated and devastated the society economically and socially, it would become a juggernaut in the world of cinema production with highly technical and moody storytelling that would challenge the norms of narrative cinema across the globe. The harsh reparations that Germany was forced to pay to the Allies at the end of the war led quickly to inflation. The German economy collapsed, hyper-inflation rocked the country by 1923, and unemployment visited all, including those belonging to the middleclass who had never before experienced economic depression. Discontent, anxiety, and disillusionment were felt everywhere as the national trauma of losing the war and humiliations of 'peace' hovered over the society. During the war Germany had banned the import of foreign films, so between 1916 and 1920, with no competition, domestic German film production soared. Expressionism was already a flourishing movement in German art and theatre before World War I. After the war, as the German people increasingly suffered under socio-political and economic tensions, the Expressionist movement gained a foothold in German cinema, redefining the relationship between cinema and realism.

The German Expressionists sought an approach to cinema that questioned the way that reality was traditionally represented and understood in cinema by translating the inner experiences of its characters onto the world around them. The mise-en-scène – makeup, costumes, set design – took on the qualities of character's emotions, often anger, angst, and shock. While the Expressionists shared the centrality of the emotions as a defining trait of their movement with the French Impressionists, the Impressionists' focus lay in their camera mobility and cinematography techniques. The Expressionists, on the other hand, used mise-en-scène and simple continuity editing techniques to express emotions. They pushed the human figure into exaggerated performances and expressed character subjectivity through visual distortions in set design, like unparallel lines and jagged shadows. Expressionist cinema also drew heavily from earlier Expressionist theatre and painting, borrowing techniques of stylized sets, geometric compositions, tilted angles, low-key lighting, and heavy shadows. In revealing the artificiality of cinema, that is, by making it clear to audiences that they are watching something that has been carefully constructed, the Expressionists sought to awaken the spectator of Expressionist cinema to their own realities. In watching Expressionist films, we become aware that our worlds also have been structured in certain ways by institutions, like religion, education, and politics. By troubling vision, Expressionism attempts to reveal these systems of control and introduce new ways of seeing and thinking.

In 1920 Robert Wiene's silent horror *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was screened to audiences. Its unique abstraction of space with oblique lines and angles, dark staging and theatrical movement of characters would signal the beginnings of a new German cinema of expression. Wiene's film recounts the tale of a psychotic hypnotist, Dr. Caligari, who uses a somnambulist, Cesare, to commit murders. The film played with narrative expectations by telling the story from the point of view of a young man, Francis, who is revealed at the end to be a patient in a mental institution, a classic unreliable narrator. The stylized sets, chiaroscuro lighting, the iris shots that open and close scenes, among other techniques all challenge the perception of the audience and retroactively suggest that the world of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is caught up in the twisted mindscape of the mad.

SEE CH3 FOR MORE ON *MISE-EN-SCÈNE*

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari would be the first of many Expressionist films that would deal with themes of madness, alienation and monstrosity. Horror remains one of the most

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Wiene, 1920)

Nosferatu (Murnau, 1922)

important genres impacted upon by the Expressionist movement. While some Expressionist films resemble *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* with its highly stylized and graphic mise-en-scène that clearly draws from Expressionist painting and theatre, other Expressionist films sought out the expressionism inherent in exotic locales at tension with everyday reality. In 1922 F.W. Murnau released the Expressionist horror masterpiece *Nosferatu*, a film adaptation of Bram Stoker's Dracula. Thomas Hutter travels to the faraway Carpathian Mountains to meet a reclusive client, Count Orlok, who wishes to purchase a new home. Unbeknownst to Hutter, Count Orlok is an ancient vampire who will wreak havoc on his life, and those he loves. Everything about Count Orlok is wrong. From his too long body and fingers, to his too long teeth and ears. Starkly highlighted through harsh lighting and exaggerated acting, Count Orlok's shadow creeps across walls in an expression of his bestiality, but also of his alienation and loneliness. Central to the creation of an expressionist style in *Nosferatu* is Murnau's use of real landscapes rather than studio-built sets. In Hutter journey's towards Count Orlok's castle, Murnau captures the brooding, alien feel of the landscape through long takes, providing a sense of an insight into the vampire's very old, yet enduring soul.

With the 'Rentenmark-currency miracle' of 1924, the German economy stabilized. Economic and cultural life flourished in what would come to be known as "the Golden Age of Weimar". Technological advancements abounded and new techniques replaced the old in the face of burgeoning modernity. With the success of the Expressionist movement, many German directors like Wiene and Murnau, emigrated to Hollywood, just as the Nazi party began to gain in power in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Filmmaker Fritz Lang made one of the last German Expressionist films, *Metropolis* (1927), and this marked the end of the movement in Germany. Set in an urban dystopia, *Metropolis* follows the fraught love story of Freder, the son of rich management and Maria, child of workers, and their attempts to surmount the gulf between the classes. Fritz Lang used exaggerated movements of characters, geometrical lines of his urban landscape, and stylized contrasts between high and low social spaces to imbue his film with social commentary about the dangers of technological progress at the expense of the human condition.

As film history progressed beyond its early stages, it incorporated new technologies and cultural standards in film industries. But the core principles of storytelling, editing, and cinematography from early cinema remained the same. The feature film is still our standard for widely distributed cinema. In fact, the three-act structure, which was developed in the 1920s is still our screenwriting standard. Since developing continuity editing in the 1910s, which keeps coherent time and space across shots, we have not changed it. And the cinema style developed in French Impressionism, Surrealism, and German Expressionism through cinematography, mise-en-scène, and editing, continue to be our building blocks of style today.

French Impressionism: A cinema movement of the 1920s in which character psychology is portrayed with point-of-view storytelling, lighting, mobile framing, and optical effects.

Dada: A short movement of the 1910s that expressed meaninglessness and disillusionment in the world. An absurdist view of life is portrayed with nonsense, unstable camera movements, and play with fast and slow motion.

Surrealism: A 1920s art and cinema movement that focused on dream logic, absurd combinations of shots, and shocking imagery.

German Expressionism: A 1920s art and cinema movement that expressed suffering and angst through exaggerated acting, harsh shadows, and off-kilter set geometry.

Other chapters in this textbook continue the story of film history: Classical Hollywood Cinema is covered in Ch 2: Narration; French New Wave and camera technology are covered in Ch 4: Cinematography; "Talkies" transition to sound is covered in Ch 6: Sound; Film Noir is covered in Ch 8: Genre; and Third Cinema, Direct Cinema, Underground films, and the Post-Cinema Age are covered in Ch 9: Beyond Genre.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:
FILM HISTORY

(1) What is film history? Every year montages of the year's best films are created and posted online (YouTube, Vimeo etc.). View one such montage, and consider this question in light of how the montage is edited together. What nationality and gender is mainly represented for instance? What genre or type of film is dominant? What tone does the montage take on? What does this tell us about the way film history is imagined, and the role of perspective in recalling or recording film history?

(2) Across film history there have been many different approaches to cinema, all concerned with using the medium of cinema to represent reality. How can we think about cinema today in light of representations of reality? Think about the films you have seen in the last year, and discuss how these films choose to frame reality in terms of cinematography, editing and content. How do these cinematic approaches shift across nation, gender of the director and character, or engage with your own understanding of realism as a person in the world?

CHAPTER TWO

NARRATION

NARRATION **28**
Classical Hollywood narrative *28*

STORY, PLOT & NARRATION **31**
Diegetic & non-diegetic *31*

THREE-ACT STRUCTURE (INSERT) 32

NARRATORS **34**
FEMALE NARRATION 36
Unreliable narrators *36*

THE RASHOMON EFFECT **37**
Restricted & unrestricted narration *39*
Temporal frequency *39*

TIME TRAVEL NARRATIVES (INSERT) 41

NARRATION

What is it about cinema that transcends the barriers of nationality, ethnicity, and language, at its best revealing a shared humanity despite our differences? Every culture tells stories. From the earliest oral traditions to contemporary forms of social media, stories have been used to entertain, educate and stimulate the emotions. Few of us have grown up without hearing bedtime stories and moral tales like the Good Samaritan or comedic anecdotes from friends to explain an unexpected situation or horrendous breakup. Storytelling pervades every aspect of life and provides a means of understanding self and world. Whether we go to the movies or sit at home in front of the computer, when we watch films, image and sound come together in visceral and subjective ways. Despite our respective backgrounds, we experience the story world from the same point of view, through the same empathetic or dispassionate lens. Of course, this does not mean we will always understand or feel the same things when we watch a film, only that cinema uses unique techniques on all spectators to help follow its storytelling and also to manipulate the minds and emotions.

When we watch films, image and sound come together in visceral and subjective ways.

Narrative film is one of the most popular and common forms of cinema, and in its broadest terms can be understood as fiction films with a particular structure that tells a story. **Classical Hollywood narrative** cinema is the most powerful and pervasive style of this filmmaking. It characterized American cinema from 1917 to 1960 and remains the dominant approach to visual storytelling worldwide. Through a focus on invisibility and **continuity** (see Ch 5: Editing), the Classical Hollywood approach to filmmaking hides the artificiality of the medium, convincing audiences that they are watching something real, not pieces of film sutured together by filmmakers. In this way, Classical Hollywood cinema is marked by its assumed realism and rational linear narrative centered on the psychological motivation of its characters as they struggle to overcome the obstacles set before them.

Every film has a shape or a form that dictates how the content of a film is presented both narratively and stylistically. For example, you might think about beginnings and endings. All stories have a beginning and an end, but an end can be **open**, where we are left with uncertainty for the future of characters, or it can be **closed** with a clear resolution to events. Similarly, a film can begin at the end of a hero's journey rather than at the start, challenging how the sequence of narrative events will be visually presented. In *Cinema Paradiso* (Tornatore, 1988), audiences are introduced to successful filmmaker Salvatore Di Vita who arrives home late one evening to the news that his mother called to say someone named Alfredo had died. But who is Alfredo? And why has his death deeply shaken our protagonist? With Alfredo's death, Salvatore returns home to Sicily first in memory, in an extended flashback sequence, and then in person as an adult in the present to say goodbye and gain closure after an absence of thirty years. In the Classical Hollywood narrative style, the flashback is one of the only ways that straightforward linear structure can be undermined in cinema, typically through visualization of a character's memory.

Director Giuseppe Tornatore could have shaped his film in many different ways. He could have begun his film in a chronological fashion, with Salvatore (called Toto) as a child growing up and finding love in his home village of Giancaldo, Sicily. You could also imagine a scenario where the film begins with an adult Salvatore learning of Alfredo's death and

Cinema Paradiso
(Tornatore, 1988)

immediately returning to his hometown where he must face the specters of his past in real time as an adult. Instead, Tornatore uses aural triggers of bells and chimes to move back and forth in time as Salvatore relives his childhood and remembers the deeply parental relationship between himself and Alfredo. Rather than the conventional shape of beginning, middle, and end, with a clear resolution often characteristic of Classical Hollywood Cinema, *Cinema Paradiso* takes on the structure of memory. The narrative takes place mostly in the past. The director frames his film with an adult Toto remembering the love and loss of his youth until we eventually circle fully back to the present to an adult Toto who must make peace with his ghosts. In all of these different ways to organize the telling of Toto's life, the story remains the same: Toto finds love and mentorship in the past and remembers it in the present. But in each strategy of telling the same story, the plot changes. The plot is the arrangement of the story elements. In this case, the story begins in the present but takes place largely in the past, moving back and forth between past and the present. Even when stories appear to move across different timelines, these timelines all must move forward through time towards some goal or big reveal that the narrative is dependent upon.

You might have noticed that I have been using the term 'narrative' but what exactly is narrative? Narrative presents the story world in specific ways for our consumption. It is the whole storytelling system of a film composed of story, plot and narration, as well as the film's structural elements of similarities, oppositions, and repetitions that guide audience understanding of the film and its patterns. Often when we think of narrative it is a literary text that comes to mind rather than a film. It is helpful to think of films as texts that display an unfolding of causal events in time and space. A narrative is not a random chain of events, but, through character action and reactions (the cause) that prompt an effect or response from others, characters propel a film's story forward. In Classical Hollywood cinema, for example, film form adopts a **causal narrative**, where everything is a result of a certain action, thus creating logical and often predictable outcomes.

Narrative film: A fictional or fictionalized story. As opposed to documentaries (non-narrative films).

Classical Hollywood narrative: A specific storytelling structure developed in early American cinema that has become the norm for narrative film. Includes elements like the three-act structure, causal relationships between events, clear character motivation, and often, a closed ending.

Open ending: The film intentionally leaves the audience uncertain about the future of characters.

Closed ending: The film ends with a clear resolution to story events.

Causal narrative: Story events progress in a cause-and-effect relationship. Every event is the cause of a certain action, often creating predictable outcomes. There is little room for randomness or non-sequiturs in these narratives.

Story, plot, and narration

Story, plot, and narration can be difficult concepts to grasp, as they are often nested within each other, and the terms are used interchangeably in popular culture. **Story** presents the film's **diegesis**: a story world in which things both seen and unseen (also heard) give insights into how characters think and the rules by which the world functions. **Narration** points to where the story emerges from, that is, from whose perspective the story is being told. It is often caught up in camera perspectives, point of view gazing and authorial voiceovers. As mentioned earlier, **plot**, on the other hand, is the arrangement of the story in time. These three important modes of a film (story, plot and narration) occur all the time and make up a narrative system through which audiences intuit meaning. In most films, we are often asked to identify with a protagonist or characters who lie at the center of the story. Narrative is important to understand a character's motivation, their place in the story world, and their growth and change throughout a film. Narrative introduces characters and directs us through impressions of their character.

For example, in *Cinema Paradiso*, the story is about a famous filmmaker who learns that his old mentor has died and remembers his days spent within the walls of the movie house Cinema Paradiso while he developed an enduring relationship with the middle-aged projectionist, Alfredo. But we learn more about Toto's life than just the direct facts of the story. We also build our understanding of story from events that occur **off-screen**, that we learn third-hand or that grow out of purely visual moments like flashbacks and nonverbal cues. These additional levels of story create viewing excitement because they ask us to play detective and to read deeper into the film, much like analyzing a text. Six-year-old Toto learns of his father's death from watching a newsreel playing at the Cinema Paradiso. The director cuts to Toto walking with his sobbing mother but instead of succumbing to grief himself Toto smiles at a poster of famous film star Clark Gable on a wall as he passes by. We can understand several things in this moment. Although we never see Toto running to tell his mother the news of his father's death, this gap is filled by our deduction of the missing pieces to the story. In this way, the audience becomes a type of narrator and both imagines the unseen that has happened, in a fleshing out of the story, and composes meaning that deepens character insight and motivation. By reading the shot/reverse-shot editing between Toto and Clark Gable, utilized in the midst of Toto's grappling with the death of a father he does not remember, the spectator understands that Toto is blurring his father with Clark Gable. The story of *Cinema Paradiso* then is not simply one of a man who returns to his past to find closure, but a love story that emerges out of loss, where both cinema and Alfredo become parental and life substitutes for Toto.

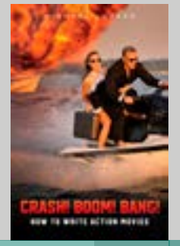
SEE CH5 FOR MORE ON SHOT/REVERSE-SHOTS

Story: A series of events that form the building blocks of narrative.

Diegesis: A story world within which characters live and interact with its own set of rules and customs. Includes what is seen in the frame and also what exists beyond the edges of the frame that characters react to.

Plot: The arrangement of story elements in time. Events can be organized chronologically or told out of temporal order.

Book excerpt provided by Michael Wiese Productions from *Crash! Boom! Bang! How to Write Action Movies* by Michael Lucker



THREE-ACT STRUCTURE

All stories are broken into three *acts*: a beginning, middle, and an end. That's it. Try to drop one of them and the story falls apart. The beginning is the *introduction* where you introduce everyone and everything you need to set your story in motion. This is Act One. The middle is the *complication* where you complicate everything you already set up. This is Act Two. The end is the *resolution* where you resolve everything you complicated earlier. Act Three. Easy peasy, right? But good act structure is often tossed asunder.

The beginning, middle, and end of your story are all separated by what are known as *plot points*. These are major twists that propel your hero from one act to the next, forcing them to make new decisions. The best plot points alter the course of the story in a way neither the hero nor the audience was expecting. Ideally, they drop the hero into a predicament from which they cannot return. If a hero loses his phone, no big deal, he goes back and finds it. Bad plot point. If a hero loses his job, or his leg, or his virginity, tougher to fix. Good plot point. These unforseen turns should not only complicate matters for the hero, but also raise the *stakes*, that which is at risk of being gained or lost.

In action films, plot points must be extraordinary. The genre itself implies action and plot points must deliver it. Something must blow up. Someone must get robbed. Somewhere people die. Lies and threats and thefts can all be solid twists in action films, but the good ones literally propell your hero forward. Through the air. Through a wall. Or through time. That is the fix action audiences are accustomed to getting.

Plato, Shakespeare, Hitchcock, Spielberg, Tarantino all have plot points in their work. Because they work. Because we're wanting something to happen. We're wanting progress. In screenplays, one page is equal to one minute of screen time. So a two-hour movie (120 minutes) is 120 pages. A three-act structure breaks down like this:

Plot Point I: between pages 25 & 30
Plot Point II: between pages 85 & 90

But that leaves a dark and murky sea between them of almost sixty pages. In the old days, filmmakers could get away with those few twists. But not today. We're used to getting much more much quicker and need a Midpoint Plot Point around page 60 to bridge the gap. James Cameron says he writes in seven acts. Something that turns your hero's life upside down in an instant and forces them to make a new decision.

Raiders of the Lost Ark (Spielberg, 1981)

Lethal Weapon (Donner, 1987)

Mission: Impossible III (Abrams, 2003)

THE CALL TO ACTION

Every action hero is called to action. We meet them set in their dysfunctional ways in their dysfunctional world. Then someone calls. Someone walks in the door. A letter is delivered. With a mission.

Indiana Jones, we need you to find an ark.
Detective Riggs, we need you to find a killer.
Ethan Hunt, your mission, should you choose to accept it, find the rabbit's foot.

This is what's known as the *inciting incident* of the story and falls around the tenth minute. If you wait much longer, the audience gets antsy.

HIGH STAKES

What is your hero fighting for? For your hero to go to the ends of the earth, face the fire, and risk everything they have in order to get tickets to the opera seems, well, ridiculous. In action films, you want your hero's quest to be worthwhile. Of course, there could be great rewards for their success, but also consider what the consequences of failure may be:

Their fiance may be killed.
Their daughter could be kidnapped.
The president could be assassinated.
Aliens may destroy the world.

In all movies, stakes should elevate as the story progresses. But it is imperative in action movies. For example, in the beginning your hero may learn someone has been killed and he is assigned to find the killer. The stakes? If he doesn't find the killer, the crime goes unpunished, the person died in vain, and the killer is free to kill again. That is pretty significant.

"THREE-ACT STRUCTURE" CONTRIBUTED BY
MICHAEL LUCKER
GEORGIA FILMMAKER &
SCREENWRITING LECTURER
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH GEORGIA

Narration: The subjective telling of story from a specific point of view. This point of view can be seen in plot organization, in a voiceover, and in cinematography, editing, or mise-en-scène choices.

Off-screen: Events that occur beyond the film frame provided to the viewers. These events are in the diegesis and characters may have access to them, but viewers must learn of off-screen events by deduction.

Narrators

Cinema has the unique ability to tell its stories aesthetically, through the use of close--ups, music, lighting, the framing of on-screen and off-screen space, even dance and pantomime. Gazing in particular is distinctly filmic and a central means of narration in cinema. Cinema always presupposes a narration, a story being told by someone even when there is not an actual narrator. To perceive the narrator of any film, one must ask the question: from whose perspective is this story being told? The narration in *Cinema Paradiso* is from Toto's point of view and told via flashbacks, but even when we are in the present with an adult Toto, the camera lets us know that his story is the one that is privileged through framing, close-ups and eyeline matches that follow the character and keep us close to his body and his psychology. Often when we imagine the **narrator** of a film, we think of either a physical character within the diegesis who relates the order of events and guides us through the film, or a non-character, someone unseen who speaks in **voiceover** and assumes the position of authority in the text. But not all narrators fall cleanly into these two categories; many films mix a voiceover with a subjective point of view to tell a story. Tarsem Singh's fantasy film, *The Fall* (2006), frames narrative as a story being told to a little girl named Alexandria, by Roy, a depressed silent film stunt actor, who wishes to manipulate her into helping him to kill himself. Voiceover brings emphasis and clarity to a film's mise-en-scène and story development, aiding in continuity and the structure of the filmic text. *The Fall* thus adopts a story--within-a-story structure and positions its voiceover narrator as a character within the film, moving between Roy's oral tale and Alexandria's visualization of the story.

An interesting development occurs in *The Fall* as Roy narrates his tale, and Alexandria frequently interrupts its telling. Alexandria begins to move from mere listener-spectator of the story to replace Roy as storyteller. Although initially Roy narrates the story, it is the listener's voice which begins to take over the frame's point of view or subjectivity. Alexandria's voiceover and sight is privileged alongside Roy's as storyteller. She is able to re-imagine the look of characters based on events from her own life and, ultimately, change the

The Fall (Singh, 2006)

The Truman Show (Weir, 1998)

course of events at the end of the film by adding herself as a character to the story.

For the non-character voiceover narrator, who is historically male, there is an understanding that he has full knowledge of the events that will unfold, unlike the film's characters who are caught in the story's web and so have limited knowledge. In this way, the non-character narrator often is considered a 'voice of God', even though the commentator may lack objectivity. In *The Truman Show* (1998) director Peter Weir plays with audience understanding of the voiceover narrator as God. Starring Jim Carrey as Truman Burbank, *The Truman Show* is about a child adopted and raised by a corporation who grows to adulthood inside a popular simulated television show based on his life. As an adult, Truman grows to be aware of the artificiality of his life and seeks to escape the fantasy on-screen bubble in which he lives. At the end of the film, Christof, the show's creator and executive producer, attempts to convince Truman to stay by speaking to him anonymously through a speaker system. For Truman, in his artificial story world, Christof's voice takes on the appearance of God in its disembodiment and absolute knowledge of characters and events within the diegesis. And yet, this voiceover narrator stills holds limited knowledge of the interiority of characters, and he cannot fully predict the choices that characters make within the story. Christof cannot control Truman's actions, even though he can manipulate the artificial world, and he is surprised by Truman's final decision to leave the bubble.

The voiceover narrator is also often used as a fountain of information to relay past events and deepen the emotional nuance of a story. Non-character voiceover narrations are typically understood as **non-diegetic**, since the narration originates from outside the film's story world. Some films choose to reveal the non-character narrator as a character at some impactful point of the film's narration. These films shift the narrator from non-diegetic to diegetic, with the intention of shocking audiences and advancing plot. *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder, 1950), for example, presents its story about a forgotten silent film star's desperate attempt to return to the movies from the point of view of a dead screenwriter found in the pool of the aging starlet. The film opens with a flash-forward and the voiceover narration of a man surprisingly revealed as dead within the first few minutes of the film, prompting the audience's need to discover what happened as the film flashes back to the very beginning. Between 1950 and now, many films have repeated the dead-narrator voiceover technique made famous by *Sunset Boulevard*. One of the more successful examples is Sam Mendes' *American Beauty* (1999) whose voiceover narrator, Burnham, is an advertising executive in the midst of a midlife crisis. Unlike *Sunset Boulevard*, *American Beauty* begins in the present and creates the illusion of a simple linear narrative in time and space. The film's end shockingly discloses that the narrator has been dead all along, deepening the impact of *American Beauty* as a cautionary tale and as an exploration of American middle-class family values.

Sunset Boulevard (Wilder, 1950)

Female narration

As mentioned earlier, voiceover narrators are typically gendered male in mainstream cinema, tapping into social assumptions of authority, knowledge and truth as male-centered attributes. The presence of a female narrator can point to, and challenge, such unconscious stereotypes and biases, allowing for female expression and perspectives. It would be in the so-called "woman's films" or melodrama of the 1940s where a plethora of first-person female narrators would arise only to find their voices often undermined by the authority of men within the text. As originally articulated by feminist film critic Laura Mulvey, in Classical Hollywood Cinema the gaze of cinema is male. You might think here of a classic story pattern where a male hero engages in an epic struggle against a clever villain or antagonist and at some point, inevitably, rescues his love interest—the quintessential damsel in distress—from his enemy's clutches to win day. Often we assume the point of view of the protagonist. His subjective understanding of the world becomes our own. Women are often presented as the object of a male gaze to be viewed from his perspective, not her own, which has been a difficult obstacle to overcome in female storytelling.

READ LAURA MULVEY'S ESSAY

The Piano (Campion, 1993)

The Piano (Campion, 1993) stands as a unique film for its mute female protagonist, Ada, who controls the film's voiceover, and also for its female authorship. Director Jane Campion wrote the screenplay for The Piano, providing a re-imagining of Emily Brontë's 19th century novel *Wuthering Heights*, also authored by a female writer, and incorporating the theme of dangerous female gazing through its narrative and aesthetic staging of the Bluebeard folktale. Ada's muteness sets up a politics of female resistance to patriarchal language and structures that seek to contain and disempower female voice and sexuality. *The Piano* begins immediately in female voiceover over a black screen, before image, as Ada narrates her background, privileging the use of a woman's voice as narrator over the male gaze of the camera, and highlighting the inherent power of the female author and historian. Rather than have her story told by third parties or be constructed by a male 'God' narrator, Ada tells her own story, possessed of the ability to define her own self. Campion subverts the patriarchal mechanism of cinema, which typically privileges male voice and gazing as center of the story action, to situate Ada in a position of power as storyteller.

When a film has a narrator we often assume the reliability of the narrator, that the story they tell must be the truth, but films can also have **unreliable narrators** with compromised memories or who blur the truth. As we watch Toto grow into a young man in *Cinema Paradiso*, for instance, he falls in love with a beautiful young girl called Elena from an upper class family. But is Elena real, or is she only a figment of his imagination? Through the use of close-ups and reaction shots, the audience is constantly kept within Toto's emotional frame of reference, and often when we see Elena, her presence is mediated through cinema and the movie camera in some way. For example, Elena is never seen outside of Toto's point of view. The first time he sees her is through the eye of his home movie camera, and their secret meetings together typically occur in places of cinema or in his memory. One hot summer night at an outside film screening, Toto laments a rotten summer away from Elena and muses that if his love-affair were a film it would already be over, fade-out, cut to storm. Immediately

SEE CH4 & CH5 FOR MORE ONCLOSE-UPS & REACTION SHOTS

thunder sounds and lighting strikes as rain begins to fall. The theme music swells as Elena suddenly appears within the close shot frame of Toto, and the two kiss. The improbability of the moment positions Toto's relationship with Elena as one born out of cinematic fantasy, and it reveals Toto's narration of the past as subjective, and thus compromised.

Narrator: The character or characters from whose point of view the story is told. The character(s) may be on-screen or off-screen; they may be diegetic or non-diegetic.

Voiceover: The voice of a character layered over the film image. This voice may be an omniscient perspective or an inner voice. Voiceovers most often are associated with the film's narrator.

Non-diegetic: Elements that exist outside of the diegesis, or story world. Characters in the story cannot see or hear non-diegetic elements, for example credits, subtitles, or orchestra music. When a narrator is non-diegetic, they exist outside of the diegesis and characters on screen are not aware that he is speaking.

Unreliable narrator: Narrators who defy our expectation the be told the "true" story. Unreliable narrators have compromised memories, intentionally blur the truth, or straight out lie to the viewer.

The Rashomon Effect and experiments in time

Rashomon (Kurosawa, 1950)

All acts of storytelling represent a perspective, and as such can never be truly objective. Some films structure their form around the very unreliability of the narrator. Storytelling presupposes the telling of tales or lies, and directors can play with audience expectations of a narrator's truth-speaking to delve into deeper political and socio-cultural issues of nation and identity. In 1950, Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* broke storytelling conventions with its revolutionary structure, which repeated the same dramatic incident from four different character perspectives: the samurai's, his wife's, the bandit Tajōmaru's, and the woodcutter's. What happens in the grove remains a mystery that leaves the samurai dead (and his story told through a psychic), his wife raped, and the murderer in question. At their trial, all four individuals give contradictory versions of the event in flashback sequences that privilege each individual narrator, presenting that storyteller in a more positive or sympathetic point of view than the rest. In one version of events, the bandit is a stud; in another, the husband is betrayed by his wife; in another, the wife is a childlike victim; and in another the

woodcutter is an innocent bystander. Each story preserves a certain self-image that valorizes the individual and explores the ideas of memory and identity. *Rashomon* never resolves the whodunit mystery of its plot with its series of unre liable narrators, leaving its audience uncertain of what is truth, and both hopeful and untrusting of human nature.

Joint Security Area (Park, 2000)

Since *Rashomon*, many films have repurposed its unique storytelling structure that examines the unreliability of the narrator. Park Chan-Wook's *Joint Security Area* (2000) adopts the *Rashomon* effect in the story of two North Korean and two South Korean soldiers who cross the divide, secretly forming a friendship in a small North Korean border house. The brotherhood formed between these four men presents an imagined community of a united Korea, but one night something happens in the border house that triggers fear and violence, leaving two men dead. The hope of a united Korea finds itself overwhelmed by power dynamics and the webs of cultural expectations about the 'other'. The hunt to solve the mystery and stop an international incident between the two Koreas finds itself frustrated by conflicting witness accounts. Why would these soldiers tell two different versions of events? As with *Rashomon*, *Joint Security Area* is composed of flashback sequences as the survivors narrate their stories, and a neutral party seeks to parse out the truth. Unlike *Rashomon*, *Joint Security Area* shares the 'true' story at the film's conclusion in a dossier that will never be shared with the North and South Korean governments and superior officers.

The audience alone is privileged with this final story and made to understand why these soldiers feel the need to tell stories. In its literal traversing of borders between self and other, often utilizing storytelling vehicles like the photograph, song, or memoir, the film questions the 'truth' of a conflict learned secondhand, the line separating vilified other from civilized self, the impossibility of neutrality or bridging the gap, and stresses the necessity of alternative modes of representation. Storytelling is politicized in *Joint Security Area* as the ordinary man must tell stories in order to survive in a world of uneven power dynamics, a world of division where the South Korean self is defined against the North Korean other. The theme of storytelling also reveals the similarity between the South and North Koreans and so humanizes the previously demonized North Korean Other, particularly by positioning two popular South Korean actors as North Koreans in the film.

Storytelling acts as an accessible and comfortable technique to address the present by constantly looking backwards and putting narrativity itself into question. Characters tell and retell stories as truth becomes a fluid and contradictory construct that time and distance only complicates and deepens. The audience is forced to adopt the role of investigator, with understanding growing the more a story finds itself retold, revised, and extended. One effect of these narrators who deliberately withhold 'truth' from the spectator is the shattering of the suspension of disbelief, which allows the spectator to sink into film narratives without questioning the reality before them. **The Rashomon Effect** disallows escape into the typical linear expectations of classical film narrative with its closed endings, calling forth a thinking spectator with no easy moral resolutions. While story and narration share points of intersection, it is important to note the distinction between the two. As The Rashomon Effect illustrates, story has a whole life separate from narration, and thus can be told in different ways by different narrators who experience the story event from different emotional standpoints and with different motivations.

The flow of information in narration is typically understood as being either restricted or unrestricted. When information is **restricted** in a film, both the character and the audience are given access to similar story information, and thereby learn and come to conclusions at roughly the same time. **Unrestricted** information, as the name suggests, privileges the audience with more knowledge than characters, both visually and aurally. For example, in *M* (Lang, 1931), a serial killer who preys on young children is identified to the audience only by the tune he whistles before he murders them. Imagine a scenario in this story world where a kindly non-descript man approaches a child and begins to whistle as he buys her a balloon and walks away with her. While the character is unaware that she is in the hands of a killer, the audience has been given access to this unrestricted information through the use of an aural cue, creating intense suspense as we helplessly watch, knowing what will happen. Later in the same film, the old blind man, who had previously sold the balloon to the little girl's murderer, hears the whistled tune and recognizes the presence of the serial killer – now the narrative turns to restricted information. The audience in this moment does not know more than the old man in terms of the killer. Can characters know more than the audience? Such an idea introduces another way in which information flows in narration, where knowledge is deliberately withheld from the audience but accessible to characters in order to shock and surprise. Films move between different types of information flows at all times constantly working to manipulate their audiences' investment in the narrative.

M (Lang, 1931)

SEE CH6 FOR MORE ON M

All stories are an experimentation in time. A story may be arranged in or out of chronological order. The duration time over which the story unfolds can be a few hours, a day, several years or centuries (think here, for instance, of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1992), which follows a vampire's love story across time immemorial). The duration of a film can be extended and slowed in order to have audiences linger on a moment or pick up on subtler cues. Or, the film can be shortened through editing and ellipses to quicken the pace and excitement of the film. A story may also be told multiple times in a film, as in *Rashomon*, or a shot may be repeated by plot even though it only takes place once in the story. The amount of times the story or shot recurs in a film refers to its **temporal frequency**. Frequency can point to character psychology by indicating a repeated dream or memory, or it may simply create a pause in the film for audience introspection.

Every scene serves a particular function to cue the spectator into the film's meaning. Meaning can be explicit, that is, on the surface, emerging as plot summaries or a description of what exists directly before our eyes and ears. But meaning can also be **implicit** or beneath the surface, which requires an active spectator to read, not just watch, the filmic text to uncover the deeper implications of the narrative. **Motifs** are particularly important as a stylistic technique often used in cinema to nonverbally enhance the meaning in a film. A motif refers to any significant element of a film that is repeated to deepen narrative meaning. A motif can be aural, like the whistling in *M* or the use of ringing bells to send the spectator spira-

ling through time in *Cinema Paradiso*. It can be a color, for example the repeated use of red in a film to signal budding rage and resistance. Motifs can be objects, settings, camera angles or a particular lighting, character, or camera movement. It really depends on the needs of the particular film and its individual style. Narration is human interaction, through which we communicate our thoughts, dreams, ideas and imaginings with one another. It can be spoken dialogue, gestures, and expressions, or a stream of visual images, sound, and music without characters saying a single word. As audiences we intuitively read the narrative system that structures a film in an attempt to perceive the larger point or argument that lies at the heart of every story.

The Rashomon Effect: A term used to describe the unreliability of eyewitness accounts. Based on the film Rashomon (Kurosawa, 1950).

Restricted narration: Both the protagonist and the audience are given access to the same story information.

Unrestricted narration: The audience knows more information than the protagonist. Often used to evoke suspense in narrative progression.

Temporal frequency: The amount of times that an event or shot recurs in a film.

Implicit meaning: Story meaning that is not given directly to the viewer, but is hidden and needs active interpretation to unpack.

Motif: Any significant element of a film that is repeated to deepen narrative meaning.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION: NARRATION

(1) How can we continue to think through the intricacies of story and plot in cinema? If all cinema is a kind of time machine, whether or not a film follows a time travel narrative, we can trace the way in which time operates across a filmic text to move both characters and the audience through space, time, and information. Following the example provided in the Time Travel Narratives insert, create your own table outlining the play between story and plot in a film of your choice.

(2) What does it mean to gaze or look in cinema? Gazing is often articulated in terms of power dynamics, where the person who gazes controls the knowledge and narrative action of the film. While gazing is traditionally thought of as male, is there such a thing as a female gaze. Is there a difference between male and female cinematic gazing, or the gazing of marginalized figures in society?

"I'm going to stop you right there, Scott. Are you seriously telling me that your plan to save the universe is based on *Back to the Future*?"

-Tony Stark, *Avengers Endgame*

TIME TRAVEL NARRATIVES

DR. TOBIAS WILSON-BATES

Not only is time travel Scott Lang's plan to save the universe, it is one of the most popular ways that film experiments with narrative. In time travel stories, the viewer is presented with the idea that events do not need to happen in chronological order. As modern film viewers, audiences are actually already comfortable with non-sequential time. When a character remembers an earlier scene or imagines a moment in the future, we often read the movie's signals without becoming confused about why we are seeing a moment from an earlier or later time. However, in a time travel story, the characters are also in on the joke. They know that they are suddenly occupying their own past or future. In such a film, the time of the world within the film becomes as malleable as our experience of watching it.

The Time Machine (Pal, 1960)

Our modern idea of time travel emerges from a number of sources. Traveling through time appears in Hindu mythology and then repeatedly throughout history in stories about dreams or drug states, but many scholars attribute the current tradition as emerging from HG Wells' 1895 novel, *The Time Machine*. In the book Wells draws on recent scientific literature to propose time as a line that can be traversed forward and backwards with the correct mechanism. While physicists have moved past that rigid model of time as a straight line, it actually aligns very well with the technology of film, which makes time machines a great way to think about cinematic time!

The Hours (Daldry, 2002)

All cinema is a kind of time machine, not only in terms of its use of the idea, but the very medium itself is geared towards moving spectators and characters in and out of time. This happens not only through flashback and flash-forward, but also through the ways in which a film can actively have two or more times side by side operating in tandem. In Stephen Daldry's *The Hours* (2002), for example, we see three generations of women living in different times all connected by Virginia Woolf's novel, *Mrs Dalloway*.

The use of multiple or non-sequential timelines in films allows for compelling cinematic storytelling. In James Cameron's *Terminator* (1984) the spectator is introduced to actual time travelers, but also sees speculative visions of time focalized through characters' memories or dreams. In the movie, Kyle Reese, a time traveler from a dystopian robot apocalypse

La Jetée (Marker, 1962)

future, pursues an image in a photograph of his leader's mother, Sarah Connor, hoping to save her from an unstoppable mechanical assassin. As the movie progresses, Kyle and Sarah develop a relationship and their union results in the birth of John Connor, the very friend who sends Kyle back in time with the photograph. Towards the end of the film, we see a photo taken of Sarah Connor, the very image that eventually propels Kyle through time to his past future.

This propulsion through time via fixation on an image is in a real way the technology of cinema. Technically none of the pictures move, they are all still frames run one after the next to produce the illusion of movement. The spectator's memory of earlier frames become the material of cinematic memory in the film. Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) opens with the text "This is the story of a man, marked by an image from his childhood." The movie, almost entirely a sequence of photographs with voiceover narration, marks the viewer with the same image and this image becomes the means by which the protagonist later time travels in the film. Cinema operates as a time machine, weaving the material of the audience's own memory. Films like *La Jetée* and *Terminator* push spectators to consider our human attachment to images. How do we relate to photographs or to images from our own present and past?

The filmic movement of time seems simple enough at first glance. The audience experiences the events of the movie in order. For example, in *Groundhog's Day* (1993), Bill Murray plays a weatherman who is sent for the fourth year in a row to cover Punxsutawney Phil, the famous groundhog who will or will not see his shadow on Groundhog's Day. The story and plot move in tandem at the beginning of the film. The first thing we see is also the first thing that happens. On the day that comprises most of the film Murray awakens to irritating radio DJs (1), hits on an unreceptive coworker (Andie MacDowell) (2), unenthusiastically reports the story (3), and fails to leave town (4).

Henry Reich details the myriad twisting paths and loops that movies use to play with time in his MinutePhysics Youtube

The next day he awakens to the same irritating radio DJ banter from the day before and we soon learn that the day is happening over again. Although the scene happens after the other events, in the plot of the movie we have actually returned to (1) the first event of the day. In all the film represents at least moments of the day happening 38 times, and director, Harold Ramis, estimated at different times that the total amount of time that passed in the film would have been between 10 and 40 years' worth of days.

In order to recreate the directorial play with plot and story, you can even outline how the two interact with a simple table. If the entire movie is shot in sequence with no flash forward, flashback, memory, time travel etc., then the story (represented here as A, B, C, D) and the plot (1, 2, 3, 4) would appear as follows:

A	B	C	D
1	2	3	4

A movie like Groundhog's Day that returns repeatedly to the initial position could become quite complicated!

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	2	3	4	1	2	1	(Eventually 5!)

In the above example the story progresses as the plot is re-arranged but the inverse can also happen as it does in Michel Gondry's *The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) where the plot moves forward but the story becomes a tangle of coiling memory, nostalgia, and forgetting. All films manipulate this relationship between story (the events in the world of the film) and plot (the arrangement of how those events are presented to the audience). These rearrangements have been going on for so long that in films like *Avengers Endgame* (2019), *Superman* (1978), or *Back to the Future* (1985), characters in the world of the film openly discuss how they must re-order events in their worlds to fix broken or traumatic storylines. Audiences find themselves caught up in cinema's time machine as they parallel the characters' consideration of how a director and creative crew put together all the pieces of time that make up a cinematic narrative.

"TIME TRAVEL NARRATIVES" CONTRIBUTED BY
DR. TOBIAS WILSON-BATES
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
GEORGIA GWINNETT COLLEGE

CHAPTER THREE

MISE-EN-SCÈNE

SETS, PROPS & COSTUMES 45
Shallow & deep space *46*

PERFORMANCE 48
Choreography & blocking *49*

LIGHTING 52
Three-point lighting *52*
LIGHTING FOR GENDER & RACE 55
COLOR 56

MISE-EN-SCÈNE

Even though we often talk about watching a film, for example, we say "I went to see a film yesterday" or "I watched a really good film in class today," in reality we really read a film. If we think about film as a grammar, what we are speaking of is a universal language of film, the ways in which a common language is used to enable an audience to 'read' a film and understand the specific choices being made by the director in order to communicate story and meaning to audiences. Mise-en-scène is one of the key ways directors provide cues for us to read a film.

The French term mise-en-scène derives from theater and simply translated means 'placing on the stage' or 'putting in the scene'. Essentially, all the elements that have been arranged within the camera frame is mise-en-scène: setting and set design, lighting, décor, props, performance and choreography, make-up, costume, camera placement and angles, color and more. Literally everything within the frame that makes up the frame can be considered mise-en-scène. All film, as such, contain mise-en-scène, which contrives to bring about the look and feel of a film.

Through mise-en-scène the director stages the events of the film. The careful composition of these visual elements constantly communicate meaning to the audience about characters, their inner lives, and the world in which they live. Mise-en-scène directs our understanding of narrative events in both explicit and implicit ways.

Sets, props, and costumes

Setting can be its own character. Unlike with theater, you can have a space devoid of people and it will evocatively tell its story. In the films created by the Italian Neorealists at the close of World War II, for example, the postwar landscape was a powerful metaphor that haunted their films filled with depression and struggle. Roberto Rossellini's *Germany, Year Zero* (1948) begins with a camera that tracks through the rubble of Berlin, a setting the 12-year old young protagonist, Edmund, will continually walk, work and play in as he symbolically suffers for the bad choices of his elders. In the archetypical Hollywood Western, dialogue is unnecessary against the vast emptiness of its landscape and isolation of characters in a newly discovered world slowly catching up to the rules and regulations of modernity. Fifth Generation filmmaker Chen Kaige shot his film *Yellow Earth* (1984) entirely on location in an examination of the relationship between the Chinese landscape and the Chinese individual. Similar to *Germany, Year Zero*, Kaige's film begins with landscape as his camera pans over majestic yet barren mountain ranges that dwarf the human individual. Landscape dominates the frame and undermines the usual importance given to people and the sky in cinematography, highlighting the value of this yellow earth to the people who live in it. Plot is entirely secondary to the visual presentation of the setting in these moments.

Germany Year Zero (Roseellini, 1948)

Yellow Earth (Chen, 1984)

While the use of **on-location** settings can deepen the sense of realism in a film, setting, of course, can also be staged to engage in important narrative functions. German Expressionist directors often created elaborate stage designs in their films to challenge the way in which we perceive reality in traditional cinema and convey the inner, subjective experience of its characters. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), is a story, told in flashback from the point of view of a young man named Francis, about a mysterious Dr. Caligari who commits murders through control of a somnambulist. Director Robert Wiene hired Expressionist painters Walter Reimann and Hermann Warm to construct a set composed of geometrical patterns, strange angles, and jagged edges in a reflection of the twisted mindscape of its narrator. Considered to be one of the earliest horror films, set design in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is key not only to the distortion of reality, and audience understanding of the story world, but also to the generation of mood through the creation of a frightening and alien diegetic landscape.

SEE CH1 FOR MORE ON GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Wiene, 1920)

High and Low (Kurosawa, 1963)

Set design refers to the dressing or décor of a set, the way in which a space is staged in order to elicit greater meaning and direct the thought of the audience. A lot of consideration goes into the placement of props within any set in order to subtly suggest subtext and build additional information into a film. In Akira Kurosawa's *High and Low* (1963), a chauffer's son is mistakenly kidnapped instead of the son of a wealthy self-made businessman, Mr. Gondo. The kidnapper still demands payment, but if he pays the ransom, Gondo will go bankrupt and lose everything he has worked hard for. Caught in a moral dilemma, Kurosawa sets his film largely in one room containing Gondo, policemen, the chauffer, and his wife, and creates a sense of claustrophobia through tight composition and the use of long takes that prolong the sense of time within the same room.

Gondo is repeatedly framed between characters or at the periphery, caught between the desires of others, and his own conscience. Drapes become a very important **prop** to the visualization of his anxiety and entrapment in *High and Low*. When Gondo opens the drapes to survey the world below, a sense of space, light and power is created through the fostering of **deep space**. Forced to close the drapes to prevent the kidnapper from having visual access to the house, and thereby discovering that the police have become involved, the drapes function both to signal an off-screen space where a kidnapper lurks and to create a movement from deep space to **shallow space** that aids in the feeling of claustrophobia as space and light diminishes. Kurosawa further uses the drapes to emphasize how pressured Gondo feels to do the 'right' thing by having the character pace restlessly alongside the prop as first his chauffeur, and later his wife, close him in against the drapes as they plead with him to pay the ransom.

SEE CH4 FOR MORE ON DEEP SPACE

Props possess the ability to provide insight into characters, similar to costumes and makeup which can also affect the tone of a film. **Costumes** for instance can indicate the historical time period of a film, deepening the realism for audiences, or point to a character's emotions or development over the course of a story simply through a change of color. *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), for example, is a film concerned with teenage delinquency and the failure of the American nuclear postwar family. In this film, the color red is worn by all three main teenage characters at different points throughout the film, and becomes an indicator of rebellion and a crisis of self. At the end of *Rebel Without a Cause*, Jim (James Dean) replaces his iconic bright red jacket, which he has placed over the corpse of his friend, with his father's sports-coat in a symbolical movement from teenage angst and sexual confusion to social conformation and adulthood. Red clothing is ultimately phased out as teenage characters mature and are re-contained within the safe harbors of marriage and the family.

SEE CH4 FOR MORE ON *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*

Rebel Without a Cause (Ray, 1955)

Blade Runner (Scott, 1982)

Props, alongside costume and makeup, work to communicate story information to audiences as much as setting and characters. The manipulation of props, costume and makeup can be key to critical shifts in our understanding of the plot, and character decisions. *Blade Runner* (1982) is a science fiction film set in 2019 where bounty hunters called blade runners are commissioned to 'retire' or terminate runaway cyborgs known as replicants. In the midst of tracking down several missing replicants, blade runner Rick Deckard develops feelings for a replicant, Rachel, who has learnt that her entire human childhood was a fabrication. Hiding in Deckard's apartment, she touches and examines old photographs that adorn Deckard's piano. While the prop of the photograph can often help to establish a character's back story in time and space, thereby assisting in lending flesh to a character and moving plot forward, the photograph here does something different.

Earlier in *Blade Runner*, Rachel presents a photograph of herself as a child in her mother's arms to Deckard as proof of her humanness, undermining the status of the photograph as incontestable truth when her replicant nature is revealed. Even as Rachel's interest in the photographs reveal her own yearning to be human, they raise the question of photographs as a prop of our memory. Photographs can be used as evidence, but as a technology they can also be manipulated. Photographic images do not necessarily present 'real' memories, but the way in which we choose to remember or present a version of ourselves and others. Removed from any context of location or time period except for their aged appearance, the portraits on Deckard's piano that should validate his childhood memories, as compared to Rachel's, instead open the door for a questioning of Deckard's own background and the legitimacy of his humanity.

Shifts in costume (clothing and its accessories) and makeup can suggest a character's mood or consciousness, often functioning to more fully articulate a character. As Rachel comes to terms with her new reality as a runaway replicant, her sharp clothing that highlighted her cold aloofness is changed, her hair unpinned and worn down in loose curls, and her red lipstick removed in favor of nude lips. These choices in makeup and costume soften Rachel, heightening her vulnerability and childlike appearance to humanize her and encou-

Blade Runner (Scott, 1982)

rage the audience, and Deckard himself, to sympathize with the cyborg. The sudden deliberation behind Rachel's decision to change her appearance lends an ambiguity to Rachel's actions when Deckard roughly forces a sexual interaction between them: is Rachel truly in love with Deckard, or is she playing a role in order to survive in a world that either enslaves or kills her kind? While make-up and costume often strive for realism and thus invisibility, make-up and costume can alternatively be elaborated or exaggerated to emphasize a state of being or feeling that is embedded in fantasy or psychological states. The mise-en-scène elements of setting, costume, makeup and props all work in tangent with character and their performance to articulate deeper meanings and generate a complexity of emotions in the audience.

On-location: A real space is used as a set for a scene. As opposed to a "studio" set.

Set design: The dressing or décor of a set and the way that space is staged.

Prop: Short for "property". Any object used in set design.

Deep space: Many planes of space moving off into the distance, created by set design.

Shallow space: Few planes of space (sometimes only two). Often gives a sense of claustrophobia or a flattened image.

Performance

Actor performance is an important aspect of mise-en-scène. Controlled by the direction of the director, the physical performances of characters are crucial to the thematic expression of a film.

While the posture of an actor and the expressions of their face (**figure expression**) often function to express character thoughts and emotions, gestures and character action (**figure movement**) can also create dynamic patterns and moments of meaning in a film. We can trace the movement of a character from insecure to confident, for example, by examining the subtle changes in their posture. A character in this case may begin a film with a bent posture and pinched expression, and by the end of the film stand tall with bright eyes and a mischievous smile. Other elements of mise-en-scène and cinematography would continue to flesh out this character. Imagine, for instance, this same pinched faced, slumped character in an ill-fitting, wrinkled suit working in the glare of an old computer within the tight confines of an office overflowing with miscellaneous clutter and crumpled sheets of paper covered in coffee stains. The film might then end with this character in linen slacks on a beach, throwing his briefcase filled with work documents in a wide arc into the ocean to denote his freedom from the conventional grind of capitalism. The control the director exerts on character performance supports the overall argument or larger point of the film.

The delineation of figure expression is typically aided by the shot sizes of the camera, for example, the close-up is the most frequently used shot size to emphasize a character's emotional state of being. Figure movement on the other hand is often represented through the choreography of characters and things. **Choreography**, or **blocking**, is the designing of movement in space and time. An understudied aspect of cinema, choreography is often under-considered in film studies but in dealing with the tension and emotion of movement, choreography remains a core element of the medium.

Most often when we think of choreography, we think about dance. Films can have recurring dance sequences central to the expression of character emotion and dreaming as seen in Hollywood musicals and Bollywood cinema. Here the camera itself becomes a character to be choreographed in turn, and through its movements lengthens or dynamically shortens the articulation of the dance. We might call this camera dancing, as through maintaining continuity between character movement and camera shots, editing enhances the experience of the dance. By choreographing the camera and controlling the editing of the dance performance, the director heightens the movement visible on the screen in a communication of specific messages to the audience. Dance and choreography thus operate as main themes in the film.

Set in North East England, *Billy Elliot* (2000) is a dance film about an 11-year old boy who wants to dance but is caught between the social expectations of his family who are struggling with the very real economic concerns of the 1984 coal miner's strike, the desires of his dance teacher, and the social stigma surrounding male ballet dancing. Placed on top of a table by his brother, and surrounded by these dissenting forces, the camera adopts Billy's point of view and cuts between Billy looking at his family and dance teacher arguing from atop the table to Billy cornered against a brick wall dancing. Cutting between Billy's tap dancing feet, to fuller shots of him dancing, every door that Billy opens leads to a physical barrier in his way as he attempts to dance his frustration out, but also perhaps dance the dance out to make his family happy. No matter where he turns barriers hem him in, and he finds his path literally blocked at the end of his dance routine by a rusted galvanized fence. The shallow space created aids in the sense of entrapment caused by poverty and culture that sees generations going down in the mines. Billy's path was already set before his birth.

Framing and composition of space is important to the visualization of bodies in motion on the screen. Camera position thus works in tangent with choreography in order to anticipate the flow of bodies across space for maximum emotional impact. Bodies in motion

Billy Elliot (Daldry, 2000)

communicate at a deeper psychological and emotional level than dialogue. Billy could have delivered a moving soliloquy where he exposes his feelings of claustrophobia, confusion, and anger to audiences, but such a performance would not have been true for this young character who has difficulty communicating his desires to those around him. Through the movement of camera and dance the audience feels what Billy does, entering into a greater intimacy with the character where dance gives entrance to what cannot be communicated through words. Unlike in the musical, narrative action does not pause for the dance sequence but rather the dance sequence in *Billy Elliot* is key to character and plot development, holding an important place in audience understanding of the passage of time, and the emotional nuances of the film.

Napoleon Dynamite (Hess, 2004)

Contrary to the camera dancing of the dance film, some dramatic films contain one or more dance sequences that focus chiefly on the choreography to provide further insight into characters and the shifting moods of the film. While dancing is not central to the film, these films use dance choreography in often revelatory and humorous ways. The question to ask here is what would have been lost (or gained) without the mise-en-scène of character dancing? In the cult classic *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004) a socially awkward Napoleon bursts into dance on a stage in front of his high school peers in a last ditch attempt to help his friend, Pedro, become class President. Filmed chiefly in wide shot to display Napoleon's entire moving body, the freestyled dance sequence works as a triumphant climactic moment for Napoleon that the entire film rides upon, one where he momentarily transcends his situation in a dead-end Idaho town. Napoleon surprises his entire year by dancing, and dancing well. Throughout the film Napoleon has been picked on and bullied. At the end of his performance, he returns to the slouched posture he has held throughout the film and runs off-screen to the rapturous applause of his blindsided peers. Through the mise-en-scène of Napoleon's energetically bizarre movement, his peers finally see that there is something cool in Napoleon's unique difference, and that he is more than just a social pariah.

Choreography, though, is not only about dance. It can interface with any designed movement in a film, from staged combat like martial arts and medieval battles, to tense car chase scenes, and political rallies. Even a scene set at a frat party involves some level of choreographed movement as drunk and partying bodies move around the main characters. The choreography of large groups can often be overlooked in cinema as a backdrop for the more important interactions of main characters that advance plot. As in the aforementioned frat party, the drunk revelers will only exist as a prop against which important characters are situated and defined. In the right hands, the directing of large groups of people can be moved from a largely unremarkable backdrop to a stylized presentation that emphasizes the argument of the film or deepens dramatic tension.

French director Jacques Tati's 1967 comedy *Playtime*, a film loosely structured around a bumbling character (Mr. Hulot) who confusedly navigates a modern Paris, depends on an understanding of choreography as mise-en-scène. The choreography of large groups of people as they interface with modern architecture and space is crucial to the presentation of visual and aural gags in a critique of contemporary French society. The film begins in an airport where moving figures are framed against one another in an articulation of modern

Playtime (Tati, 1967)

space. In a world composed of rigid lines, glass, cold minimalisms and high-rise architecture, people walk in straight lines and do not deviate from the paths laid out before them. By the end of the film, the uniformity of the modern individual has collapsed beneath the chaos of life and humanity in a culminating scene where the poorly constructed architecture of a new restaurant falls around the heads of its inebriated costumers. Everything and everyone within the film is carefully choreographed in terms of their interactions with each other, especially in their eventual disarray. In its delineation of space, choreography in *Playtime* reveals modern architecture as the true main character of its filmic text.

Tati's careful coordinated scenes powerfully allow the audience access to his overarching argument without a typical emphasis on dialogue and psychological drama. Tati's use of wide shots keeps the audience at a distance that allows full views of modern life, one filled with isolated individuals, alienating technological advancements and superficial performances of wealth. *Playtime* contains little to no dialogue in its dependence on choreography to deliver its implicit meaning to audiences. Choreography possesses the ability to bear the chief weight of meaning in a story, creatively building a specific audio-visual expression that both entertains and drives the viewer to a deeper penetration of the narrative world.

Figure expression: The posture of an actor and the expressions of their face.

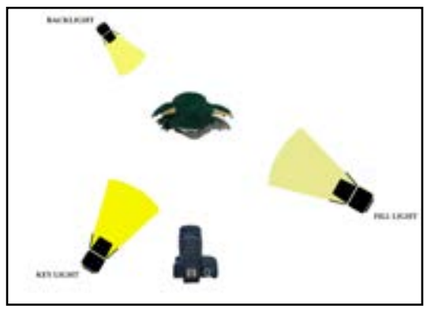
Figure movement: An actor's gestures and character action.

Choreography / Blocking: The design of movement in space and time.

Lighting

The design of lighting in cinema remains one of the most important elements of a shot as the story world of a film cannot be seen without the use of light. The very medium of film stock depends on the presence of light to bring images into visibility. In early cinema, natural lighting was crucial for the clarity of images leading to the creation of studios deliberately built to maximize sunlight (the Black Maria), and prompting the exodus of filmmakers to the West Coast to capitalize on the brighter year-round weather. By the late 1910s and 1920s, most lighting had become artificial, and the function of lighting had moved from simply lending light to a scene to using lighting to add emotional nuance and depth to characters and space. The cinematographer or lighting director would control the amount of light that enters any scene, and, through the manipulation of light and shadows, how we understand the cinematic world.

SEE CH1 FOR MORE ON THE BLACK MARIA



The **three-point system** forms the basis of most film lighting, and is the primary way in which figures in cinema are lit. This system is composed of three lights: the key light, the fill light and the back light. The **key light** provides the main source of illumination, while the softer **fill light** 'fills' out the shadows cast by the key light on faces and the background. In early cinema, the sun, as the strongest source of light, was a natural key light with any surrounding reflective surfaces acting as fill and back lights. Today, you can still see directors on exterior shoots using the natural light of the sun to define characters and collapsible reflectors as fillers to bounce light back unto surfaces.

A **back light** completes the triad of lights by subtly defining character outlines and separating the actor from the background to achieve a three-dimensional look. Early filmmakers would often deliberately place the back light behind their white female stars with the intent of creating a 'halo effect' around their hair to emphasize their 'blondeness' and virtue. By the 1930s hair lighting would become a feature in Classical Hollywood cinema across hair of different colors but not typically across race or gender. In other words, while brunettes and red heads were privy to halo lighting, women of color and men were not typically treated to the same hair lighting effects for virtue. In cinema today while hair lighting occurs regardless of race, it is not as frequently visible a technique in color cinema as it was on the earlier black and white screen. Lighting as an element of mise-en-scène is rigidly controlled by the lighting director to imply meaning. Through varying different levels of key, fill and back lighting the specific world of a film comes into being.

Lighting is important for psychological effect. Through its presence it can reveal something about a character, and thereby deepen the meaning in a story. Conversely the absence of light and presence of shadows can also tell us more about the inner state of characters and the tone of a film than words or actions alone can always disclose. Depending on how it is wielded by the director of lighting, lighting can produce a diversity of contrasting meanings. For instance, it can aid in enhancing realism in a scene, but it can alternatively be used to create subjective spaces that expose the mental workings of characters. It can make a character appear angelic and in the next moment reveal the hard exterior of someone who leads a dangerous double life.

Consider these film images of Classical Hollywood cinema icons Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich. How does lighting suggest the story of her character, and how the director wants us to feel about her persona?

In the first image, the director of lighting illuminates Greta Garbo with soft lighting. **Soft lighting**, typically some type of diffused lighting, is often used for beauty shots or to soften the appearance of the actor. Soft light hides wrinkles and other undesirable marks on the In the first image, the director of lighting illuminates Greta Garbo with soft lighting. **Soft lighting**, typically some type of diffused lighting, is often used for beauty shots or to soften the appearance of the actor. Soft light hides wrinkles and other undesirable marks on the body in order to create a fetishized image of beauty, innocence or vulnerability. With soft lighting shadows are softer and undefined producing fewer points of contrast in the image. Overcast skies where light is diffused across the entire sky, rather than emanating from the single source of the sun, or some type of gel, paper or silk placed between the subject and light source all aid in softening light and creating more angelic and beautiful images. Notice the hair light on Garbo that emphasizes her blondness and provides her with 'glow'. According to Richard Dyer, glow remains key to idealized representations of white women, especially in black & white cinema.

READ RICHARD DYER'S ESSAY

In the second image of Marlene Dietrich, we see that the key light, as the strongest source of illumination, is also a hard light. **Hard lighting** can be defined as lighting that casts sharp and defined shadows, in other words, as lighting that shows the contours and (im)perfections of the body. It is not a lighting that hides, but rather a lighting that forces things into visibility. A spotlight, the unfiltered light of a harsh sun or single uncovered bulb in a small dark room can all be sources of hard lighting. In this image, the hard lighting is directed to Dietrich's front and side creating a dramatic chiaroscuro effect that highlights her fairness against the blackness of clothing and background. The hard lighting produces defined shadows that reveal Dietrich's trademark cheekbones and dangerous exoticism in a creation of her film persona.

The third image is from the Josef von Sternberg film *Shanghai Express* (1932) in which Marlene Dietrich, shaken from a fight with another character, smokes a cigarette in agitation. A shot designed for the audience to simply gaze upon Dietrich's beauty and inner turmoil, Sternberg lights Dietrich from above and to the front, like a flower searching out the light.

Lighting, here, focuses our attention on the allure of Dietrich's face, but also serves to lend texture to the image by highlighting the edges of her hair, the brocade design on her shoulder, and the pattern of the wall. Notice the peculiar shape of the shadow beneath Dietrich's nose. Dietrich was often lit with what came to be known as 'Butterfly Lighting' or Paramount Lighting. The key light placed directly above a character's head created a small, butterfly-shaped shadow right under the nose that would come to be the standard of Hollywood glamour lighting in black & white cinema. The beauty of the image transcends the action of the narrative, and the deliberate use of light fosters the audience's immersion in the screen.

Lighting can be high key or low key, emanate from different sources and directions, and, influence the look and feel of a scene through its color. When lighting is **high key**, a scene is brightly lit with few (if any) shadows. Think here of your typical musical film, like *My Fair Lady* (1964) or *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964) and the way in which it is lit to eliminate shadows from characters' faces, and illuminate the bright colors of clothing and space despite dark themes of poverty and failed relationships. Not all musicals are created equal, though, as there are characters and plot concerns that still need to be emphasized giving rise to more contemporary musicals like *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2007) and *Les Misérables* (2012), which use low key lighting to dramatic effect.

My Fair Lady (Cukor, 1964)

In contrast to high key lighting, **low key** lighting is characterized by its darker, shadowy look. As its name suggests, low key lighting calls for a softer key light. Contrarily, **high-contrast lighting**, also known as **chiaroscuro lighting**, is considered a type of low key lighting even though it calls for a combination of high key light and shadow. High-contrast lighting therefore visualizes the 'high contrast' between light and shadow in a scene. Low key lighting is most often used in the genres of horror, thrillers, and film noir to stylistically depict dark social conditions and experiences. For example, in the crime film, *The Godfather* (1972), Francis Ford Coppola uses low key lighting as a means to create character. The film begins in a dimly lit office with the Godfather, Don Vito Corleone, meeting a father desperate for vengeance against two boys who have destroyed his daughter's life. Corleone is shot with overhead lighting and little fill light, creating a strong contrast between light and dark areas (high-contrast lighting) that deepens the shadows in the room while illuminating characters for psychological effect. The particular use of low key lighting here has the double effect of shading or hooding Corleone's eyes. Eyes are the proverbial windows to the soul, and dark secrets lie within Corleone's soul only to be suggested by our inability to see into his eyes. We are within the dark world of the gangster, the underbelly of society, and the low key lighting aids in the expression of our entry into an enigmatic world. And yet, the precise use of lighting in this scene further complicates this dark insight into the Godfather by directing our eyes to the cat he caresses in his hands, and the rose pinned to his tuxedo lapel. This is not a simpleminded, aggressive thug. Corleone is dressed for his daughter's wedding, and the use of mise-en-scène introduces us to a man whose hands wield more than violence, and who loves his family deeply.

SEE CH7 FOR MORE ON FILM NOIR

The Godfather (Coppola, 1972)

Watch this 2-minute video about the hit HBO series *Insecure* in which the Director of Photography, Ava Berkofsky, discusses her techniques for the lighting of dark skin tones with the aim to deepen story and celebrate diversity.

There is a significant difference between low key lighting, which fosters shadows, and unlit characters that reveal poor lighting expertise. In Hollywood cinema typically non-white actors are the ones who have historically been 'unlit' due to the racism embedded in the medium. As late as the 1990s Kodak 'Shirley cards', depicting photographed white women, were used as universal ideal skin tone markers to help professional film developers calibrate color in the processing of their photographs. While great for white skin, darker skin tones looked terrible under such a racially exclusive technique.

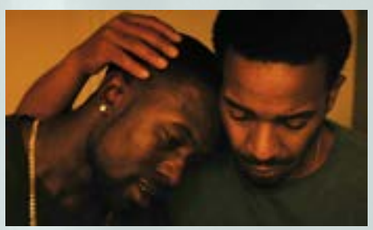
While such a technique would eventually change, lighting for blackness would continue to lack nuance with filmmakers often throwing lots of light onto darker hued characters regardless of the psychology of the scene and character, or continuing to light for whiteness and thereby locking dark skinned characters into obscurity. Only recently has there begun to be a different approach to lighting darker skin tones to highlight not only the beautiful diversity of skin tones across ethnicities but also to light clearly for character mood and film genre.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:
LIGHTING FOR GENDER AND RACE

(1) Is there such a thing as gendered lighting? in other words, are women typically lit differently from men? What parts of the body does lighting highlight in men and women? Look at film stills of men and women in films currently playing in theaters around you. What do you notice?

(2) What about lighting for skin color? How can we talk about the use of light between white men and women within heterosexual relationships? Can you find examples of films where women are framed as a light that men yearn towards?

(3) Black people have been historically unlit and darkly invisible in cinema, especially when framed against their white counterparts. Examine contemporary lighting for non-white characters in television shows such as *Insecure* (2016 – present) and films like *Moonlight* (2016) against older Hollywood examples.



Moonlight (Jenkins, 2016)

Three-point lighting system: A convention of lighting that includes a key light, fill light, and back light. Part of the Classical Hollywood system that created "glamour" shots.

Key light: The main source of illumination.

Fill light: A soft light that fills out the shadows cast by a key light.

Back light: Defines the actor outline, separating them from the background. Can create a “halo effect” in blond hair.

Soft lighting: Diffused light that hides imperfections.

Hard lighting: Lighting that casts sharp and defined shadow. Often shows imperfections.

High-key lighting: Brightly lights a scene with few (if any) shadows.

Low-key lighting: Creates a dark, shadowy look with a softer key light.

High-contrast lighting / Chiaroscuro: A type of low-key lighting that emphasizes the difference between shadowy spaces and light spaces. Often used for metaphorical effect.

Color

To complicate the idea of lighting for color, it is important to understand that light comes in a range of temperatures and colors that affect the look and feel of a film. Measured on the Kelvin (k) scale of temperature, the lower the K, the redder or warmer the light, and the higher the K, the bluer or cooler the color of light becomes on the screen. Light thus moves from a spectrum of reds, to yellows to white and blues the hotter the temperature becomes on the Kelvin scale. The director of photography can use light to heighten audience emotion through their instinctive reaction to certain colors, and thus lend new visual layers to a film.

Red, for instance, is a color that instantly triggers in an audience cultural understandings of anger, violence, passion, madness and love, aligned as it is with the universal color of blood. A shockingly dominant color, Stanley Kubrick paints the screen red with light in the climax of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) where supercomputer, Hal, sings his swansong ‘Daisy Bell’. The self-aware A.I. has killed everyone save astronaut Dave Bowman on the ship. Even though the color red emanates from Hal’s motherboard and ever seeing eye, it is Bowman who is painted red by the lighting as he deactivates Hal positioning him as a murderer as he effectively kills Hal. We are made to sympathize with Hal’s fear as his mind slowly slips away in a scene quiet but for Hal’s pleas, Bowman’s brief but earnest replies and the atmospheric sounds of breathing and space.

2001: A Space Odyssey (Kubrick, 1968)

The intensity of the moment is amplified through the colored light, where strangely, despite the emotional tenor of essentially watching a sentient computer die, the color red feels cold, rational, alien.

Hero (Zhang, 2002)

Lighting for color can create a veritable cinema of the senses for the spectator. The notion of mise-en-scène is invested in the director’s control of what lies within the cinematic frame, and lighting is essential to the composition of a scene. *Hero* (Zhang Yimou, 2002) is a story about the assassination attempt on the King of Qin told from the point of view of a nameless assassin. In *Hero* color is used as a narrative device to make clear the four different stories being told by the Nameless to the Emperor— the first in monochrome, the second in red, and, as we come closer to perceiving the truth, the third and fourth stories adopt the colors of blue and white respectively. Zhang uses his lighting to emphasize the specific color of the story being narrated, and to subtly communicate the emotional valences of the scene. In the third story, for example, remembered in blue, Moon, the pupil of master swordsman and assassin Sword is framed against the stark blue sky. Moon has lost her mentor, Sword, to the politics and violence of empire building. The three point lighting illuminating Moon’s face holds a blue tinge. The sorrow and sense of loss expressed by her countenance is enhanced by the delicate lighting, the character’s stillness, and the mournful music that plays over the image. Blue, though, can also be read in terms of serenity, peace, truth, and challenges the way in which we are meant to understand this moment.

Wizard of Oz (Fleming, 1939)

Color in Zhang’s film highlights the perspective, tone, emotion, themes and very malleable aspect of story, while lighting allows us access to the implicit feelings of different characters. While color is not traditionally thought as an element of mise-en-scène, it is often beautifully utilized by directors to develop story and meaning within their films. Wes Anderson , for example, is known for the bright color palette that demarks his film sets and characters’ costumes. Anderson’s color thematic allows the spectator entrance into quirky fictional worlds where color is an extension of characters. Color can also be aligned with gender expectations, in that we associate certain colors with women as compared to men, political and religious affiliations, and other cultural representations. Directors have also used color to delineate transition and change, as illustrated by *Wizard of Oz* (1939) in which a young girl from Depression-era Kansas becomes lost in Oz, a land of dreams. The reality of Kansas is depicted in black and white (actually sepia brown), while Dorothy’s dream in which she comes to emotional life through her adventures in Oz is full color through the technical achievement of Technicolor.

It is clear that color can have a deep emotional and visceral impact on the spectator. In the historical drama, *Schindler's List* (1993), director Steven Spielberg decided to film his 3-hour epic about Oskar Schindler, an ethnic German who saved thousands of Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, completely in black and white save for one moment when Schindler sees a little girl in a red coat wandering lost and alone within the madness of the Holocaust as people are gathered and gunned down around her. Color here is used for dramatic impact, and to place us within the mind of Schindler, as he and the audience alone seems to see the little girl who slips past the violence. It is in this moment that Schindler commits to fighting the atrocity of the Holocaust. The use of color focuses our attention on the child who humanizes and stands in for the mass of victims whose lives were destroyed during the Holocaust. The bright blood red of the jacket becomes a beacon in the black and white world of Krakow and concentration camps that Schindler will continually catch glimpses of throughout the film, and signal the deep stain that marks the hands of the many who knew about yet ignored the Holocaust until war touched their own shores.

Schindler's List (Spielberg, 1993)

Pleasantville (Ross, 1998)

Color can act as an important part of the narrative, and present alternative dramatic ways of examining history. *Pleasantville* (1998) tells the story of two siblings who become trapped inside a 1950s sitcom set in a picture-perfect Midwest town. As with most sitcoms of the 1950s the people of this small town exist literally in black and white, and, as emotion, sexuality and life begin to bleed into their lives, people and their surroundings become 'colored' causing social fears and violence to erupt. Color slowly spreads throughout the black and white town showing every person and thing touched by the changing times. Color here also becomes an allegory to work through collective memory of race relations in 1950s America. There are no African American main characters, but as the people in the town begin to target the 'coloreds' in the town with hate crimes and restrict them from social areas, the use of color within this black and white sitcom world embedded in a culture of repression and social ideology, forces into sight a conversation about race, history and cultural memory in America. Without the storytelling device of color, the narrative of *Pleasantville* cannot be communicated aesthetically and effectively to the cinema audience.

SEE CH4 FOR MORE ON COLOR

Mise-en-scène is produced through the collaboration of many different professionals all under the auspices of the director who ultimately directs and controls the final look and meaning of a film. World-building in a film thus draws heavily upon the visual imagination of the director, his crew, and their construction of a cinematic edifice rooted in meaning that enhances audience experience of the narrative text.

CHAPTER FOUR

CINEMATOGRAPHY

CAMERA PLACEMENT	**60**
CAMERA MOVEMENT	**61**
LENSES	**65**
ASPECT RATIO	**69**
EARLY FILM GIMMICKS (INSERT)	*71*
COLOR	**74**
SPECIAL EFFECTS	**76**

CINEMATOGRAPHY

The role of cinematography in storytelling is two-fold: first, the cinematography describes a space that is convincingly "realistic" and secondly the cinematography describes a particular point of view, a subjectivity, through which we are told about this world. Each story has specific variables that might change these two cinematography roles. For example, a fantasy story set in an imaginary place might not care about creating "realism", per se. But the cinematography will be used to establish a convincing place that feels emotionally real, if not "real" by the standards of our world. Or, for example, a story might not be from any particular point of view – it might not have a narrator or a sympathetic main hero to follow. Just the same, the cinematography will still use immersive techniques to make us follow and invest in the camera as it portrays an omniscient view of the story.

Camera placement

Though we might not always realize it, where the camera is placed with relation to the scene gives us a great amount of information. We generally like to look into our characters' faces, at eye-level, so any deviation from this standard position reads as meaningful. A **low-height** camera might cut off faces entirely, focusing on knees or feet if characters are standing. Or in Yasujirō Ozu's films like *Tokyo Story* (1953), for example, a low camera height is needed to showcase characters sitting on Japanese tatami mats. In this case, the camera is adjusted so that we can still stare into characters' faces as they sit at ground-level. The camera brings us down to a domestic ground and, in turn, we feel as though we are sitting with the characters in an intimate, familial way.

Tokyo Story (Ozu, 1953)

A **high-height** camera films well above characters' faces, perhaps staring out at the horizon like a bird, perched on a tree. Looking down from this vantage point onto a character, the camera would take on a high angle, distorting the character's body. From a **high angle**, we would see the character's head loom large and their body would look very small and very vulnerable, as in *Avengers* (Whedon, 2012). It is no surprise that high angle shots generally evoke a sense of power or knowledge over the characters who are in frame. This is the point of view of a mobster, looking down on his victim. And the high angle can also represent a more abstract metaphor of judgement, as in Alfred Hitchcock's and Martin Scorsese's films, which use high angle shots in moments of ethical dilemma.

Avengers (Whedon, 2012)

Alternatively, a shot that represents a victim's point of view, looking at a threatening man with a knife, as in *Inglourious Basterds* (Tarantino, 2009), would likely use a **low angle**. In this way, the camera makes the audience feel a sense of vulnerability and powerlessness by making us feel small while the character on screen looms large above us. Additionally, low angle cameras tend to distort characters' faces, making them look unflattering – this further places us in the victim's point of view by distancing us from a distorted, monstrous face. In moments of psychological turmoil or extreme power imbalance, the camera might tilt on its axis to create a **canted angle**, also called a **Dutch angle**. This technique has been used since silent cinema to evoke a sense of unease in the audience. In the 1950s, the Dutch angle was used excessively in *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray, 1955) to show power shifts between teenagers and figures of authority (parents, police officers). In *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998), Gilliam cants his camera when characters become drug-induced – the camera visually represents the feeling of being off-kilter.

Inglourious Basterds (Tarantino, 2009)

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas (Gilliam, 1998)

Low-height camera: Camera is placed low to the ground, without a tilt. This shot may capture someone on ground-level, or it could capture feet.

High-height camera: Camera is placed high above the ground to capture something in the air or a distant view.

High-angle shot: Camera is tilted down to film an object or character from above. This shot often makes a character look vulnerable and small.

Low-angle shot: Camera is tilted up to film an object or character from below. This shot often makes a character look powerful and large.

Canted-angle / Dutch-angle shot: Camera is tilted on its axis to evoke imbalance, anxiety, or a mental break.

Camera movement

Though movement in the frame is most obviously carried by the actors who move across the set, the camera contributes greatly to the sense of dynamism in a shot. In fact, a shot might feature static characters and still be considered dynamic through the motion that the camera contributes to the scene.

Two very simple movements can be achieved with a static camera on a tripod or on a standing cameraman: a tilt and a pan. By swiveling the camera from side to side, a **pan** represents the turn of a human head. This appears to be a very natural movement to the viewer. Just as we turn our heads side to side in order to read a room, the camera's pan creates an eyeline view and reads the fictional space like a book. It is no wonder that in Western cinema, panning from left to right feels the most natural, just like reading a Western book, from left to right. A **tilt** brings the camera-head up or down and represents a vertical scan. This feels less natural than a pan, since we generally spend less time looking up and looking down when we read our environments. But the tilt becomes a very important tool for specific cinema moments, like reading characters from head to toe or finding hidden figures in unusual spaces, like ceilings, in horror films.

Citizen Kane (Welles, 1941)

A third, less used, camera tactic is a **pedestal**, where the camera remains level but is lifted up on its tripod to read an environment up and down without tilting. In Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941), the mansion Xanadu is revealed to us with a pedestal. We first see a "No Trespassing" sign, then the camera pedestals up over gates until we finally have an answer to the question of what should not be trespassed: the mansion Xanadu sitting on a hill in the distance with the gate's large "K" (for Kane) looming large in the foreground.

In order to get even more motion in a shot, we might place the camera stand onto a moving object. In early cinema history, we see cameras placed on trains, boats, planes, and cars to get the shot to move quickly in a stable way. Since the camera, for most of cinema history, has been extremely heavy, it has been hard to create a steady image using just a cameraman's body (a hand-held shot). It is not until cameras became more lightweight in the 1960s that extensive use of the hand-held shot became an option for cinema, and even then it was considered an experimental strategy used for European art films or for documentary footage.

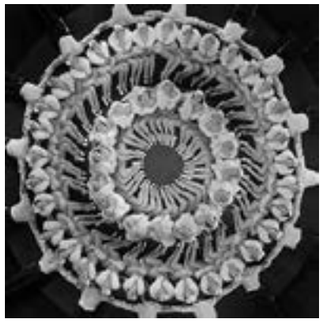
Generally, a stable moving shot is created using a **dolly**. A track is laid out for the shot that choreographs the camera's path with the actor's, and a platform is set up on this track to move the camera and the cinematographer together as the scene is filmed. These dollies can be set up in a straight line or in a curve, on a paved street or in a wild landscape. The main restriction of a dolly shot is that its movement must conform to the ground.

The effect of a **tracking shot** is a smooth movement, often using a dolly, that tracks a character as they walk through their environment. When we watch a tracking shot, we are unaware of the dolly setup – it becomes invisible to the viewer because it is an unobtrusive movement. Its smoothness allows us to feel as though we are with the character, walking side-by-side with them and investing in their problems, their concerns, and their emotions. The dolly shot brings us closer to characters and its invisibility helps to enforce our identification with them.

Another type of dolly shot places the actor on a dolly too. The **double dolly shot** is associated most closely with filmmaker Spike Lee, who uses the technique in nearly every one of his films. The effect of the double dolly shot is an interior experience, an extreme closeness with the mental state of a character. When the camera's dolly and the actor's dolly are synchronized so that they are moving the exact same pace, a different one than the rest of the environment, we feel as though we have been let in to such a personal experience that no one else can understand but us. This effect brings us even closer to the character and helps us to identify even more deeply with them through a technique that feels dreamy and isolated.

A more complicated and freer setup for a camera movement is a **crane shot**, in which the camera and cinematographer sit on a crane platform that can take them up into the air to shoot a scene from above. This is, of course, a more complicated setup because the camera movement must be coordinated with much heavier equipment and requires more safety measures. The effect of a crane shot is an omniscient, powerful gaze that can see the story world from above, from a viewpoint that the characters do not have access to. Films might use a crane for an establishing shot to orient the viewer in space before cutting in to the scene itself. Or films might use the crane shot to create a long take that scans the set from many angles. Hollywood musicals of the 1930s by Busby Berkeley, like *42nd Street* (1933), utilized the crane shot to create detailed geometries with dancers' bodies, filmed from above. The effect is kaleidoscopic as human bodies are turned into abstract shapes from high, flying angles that feel thrillingly inhuman.

SEE CH6 FOR MORE ON *TOUCH OF EVIL*



42nd Street (Berkeley, 1933)

Perhaps the most famous long-take crane shot was created by Orson Welles for the opening of his *Touch of Evil* (1958). In this scene, the camera sneaks along a wall and witnesses a bomb being placed into the trunk of a car. Then the camera lifts into the air as the car drives away into city streets. For over three minutes, the camera loses and catches up to the car, sometimes dipping down to street level, sometimes lifting up to see the street from the sky. Welles teases his audience: he lets the tense scenario be examined from many angles and he lets the car be lost and found again. When the car finally explodes, it does so with a sharp cut that feels like an explosion of editing, since the three-minute long take has made us so accustomed to the smooth, omniscient crane setting.

The latest technological innovation for a flying camera effect is the **drone shot**, which can now replace a helicopter- or plane-mounted camera shot. A drone shot, in which a drone-mounted camera films from the air, can be used for establishing shots, and the footage is often rendered in slow motion for a smoother effect. It is difficult, however, to use a drone-mounted camera to film close-ups and actor details. Crane shots are still the industry standard for omniscient long takes that include both establishing shots and medium shots or close-ups in the same footage.

The crane shot and drone shot are both freer forms of filming than the dolly in that they are able to move in all directions, unbounded by a track that must be laid out in advance of shooting. The dolly shot is restricted to the types of terrain that are track-friendly, and its camera is also unable to look at the ground for fear of filming its own track setup. A piece of technology developed in 1975, the Steadicam fixed many dolly track problems. Because the Steadicam is attached to the cameraman's body with various stabilizers, it creates a smooth movement even when the cameraman jostles it with rough footsteps or uneven terrain. Like a dolly track, the **Steadicam shot** is smooth and immersive. But unlike a dolly track, the Steadicam shot can move into spaces unfriendly to a track and can shoot the ground, where a track would normally have been laid. Though the Steadicam technology was used sparsely in several late-1970s films, the most extensive use of the Steadicam is credited to *The Shining* (Kubrick, 1980), in which characters are tracked low to the ground as they move through many hallway corners in single takes. Such complicated shots would be difficult to capture in a dolly shot. The Steadicam gaze, floating along so close to the ground, registers to the viewer as a creeping, ghostly presence, a look that fits this horror film's themes perfectly.

The Shining (Kubrick, 1980)

Several 1990s films have paid homage to *Touch of Evil*'s famous crane opening by contemporizing it with a Steadicam. Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (1990) uses a Steadicam to replicate the omniscient stalking that *Touch of Evil* had become so famous for. The camera

follows two characters in a three-minute long take as they move from their parked car into the backdoor of the club Copacabana and through the kitchen into the club. The Steadicam gives a floaty effect, so that the viewer feels like an insect following the characters through tight, crowded spaces. Paul Thomas Anderson's *Boogie Nights* (1997) combines both techniques: the crane shot and the Steadicam. The film opens with a three-minute long take that starts as a crane shot that tilts and flies down to the ground, then seamlessly transitions to a Steadicam that follows characters into a club. The camera moves us from the sky to the street to the interior, making us feel both like an omniscient observer and a participant in the scene.

Of course, if a filmmaker desires a cheap or a rough look to camera movement, then a handheld **shaky cam shot** can be preferable to the more expensive and complicated options of a dolly, crane, or Steadicam. **Handheld cameras** have long been used for documentary film because they provide freedom of movement and can more easily capture unplanned events. Many of these documentary handheld cameras inadvertently create a shaky camera look, and this look has become an aesthetic in narrative cinema that seeks a less sleek style. For example, mockumentaries replicate the shaky cam aesthetic in order to feel more authentic, more like a true documentary that aims to capture un-staged events. More recently, found footage horror films like *The Blair Witch Project* (Sánchez/Myrick, 1999) and *Paranormal Activity* (Peli, 2007) have adopted shaky cam shots in order to feel more realistic, and thus more horrific. Some light touches of shaky cam shots can be found now in most blockbuster films to evoke authenticity. Car chase sequences in recent action films, like *Mad Max: Fury Road* (Miller, 2015) and *Quantum of Solace* (Forster, 2008), use small, almost imperceptible inserts of shaky cam footage, taken from a camera attached to the side of a vehicle, in order to give authentic texture to the chase. These shots tend to be made with lesser quality cameras than the film generally, and so the texture of the footage feels closer to a documentary than a Blockbuster film. Though the audience is not meant to explicitly notice these small shots edited into the sequence, they do impart a feeling of reliability to what is otherwise a rather unbelievable action scenario.

Pan: Camera swivels from side to side.

Tilt: Camera tilts up or down on its axis.

Pedestal: Camera axis is lifted up or down while camera itself remains level.

Dolly shot: Camera is placed on a moving platform attached to a track. The track can be set up in a line or a curve. The cinematographer sits on the platform (dolly) with the camera as it is pushed along the track.

Double dolly shot: Both camera and actor sit on dollies whose movement is linked. Creates a dream-like effect of interiority.

Tracking shot: A smooth camera movement that follows (tracks) a character as they move. Often achieved with a dolly or Steadicam.

Crane shot: Camera and cinematographer sit on a crane, which films from above and can "fly" over the set.

Steadicam: Technology developed by Garrett Brown in the 1970s where the camera can be attached to the cinematographer's body with stabilizer mounts to create a smooth movement while walking.

Shaky cam shot: A rough, bumpy shot often associated with Direct Cinema documentaries of the 1960. Can be achieved with a handheld camera on set or with computer graphics in post-production.

Lenses

Camera distance from a character and camera movement alongside a character influences the feeling we have towards them. For example, close-ups of actors and objects imbue them with great importance in the narrative and extreme long shots orient the audience in a time and place. A filmmaker's choice in camera distance can also determine their choice of camera lens because different camera lenses capture different amounts of set space. Put simply, a wide-angle lens captures less range than a telephoto lens does. Why this is true is a bit more complicated, but worth delving into to better understand filmmaking choices and their meanings.

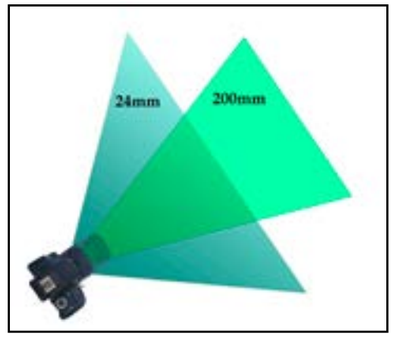


Diagram 1: The wide-angle lens (24mm) captures a wider amount of space in the camera and the telephoto lens (200mm) captures a deeper amount of space in the camera.

Lenses are available on a scale of sizes based on their focal length. On the small end, a wide-angle lens can range from 24mm to 35mm. It will capture a wide amount of space at a close range. On the long end, a telephoto lens can range from 70mm to 300mm or more. It will capture a narrow amount of space at a long range. (See diagram1)

Each of these types of lenses will capture the image with particular qualities. One advantage to the **wide-angle lens** is that you can film from very close to the object. For example, when filming *The Life Aquatic* (2004), Wes Anderson wanted to capture the entirety of a ship set that was built on a sound stage in the frame of his camera. To do this, he had to order a very wide-angle lens (25mm), even wider than his usual 40mm, since the sound stage dimensions kept his camera so close to the set. But the disadvantage of the wide-angle lens is that "bulging" can occur along the edges of the frame. The lens is so rounded that parallel lines on set will start to bend in towards each other at the edges. This rounded "bulging" effect is most pronounced at the smallest focal lengths (8mm to 14mm), often called "fish-eye" lenses for this reason.

The Life Aquatic (Anderson, 2004)

Diagram 2: A wide-angle lens (left) expands distance between objects, as opposed to a normal lens (middle). The telephoto lens (right) compresses distance between objects.

What is actually happening within the wide-angle lens is that the shorter focal length creates a wider angle of vision that is captured by the lens, thus the name “wide-angle”. (See diagram 2) As a result of this wide angle and the shape of the lens, the objects in frame have a more distanced relationship to each other. Planes in space look as though they are set far apart from each other, creating the look of deep space that is cavernous and vast. Using a wide-angle lens can make characters feel emotionally distanced from one another, or it can make a character look as though they are belittled by their environment. In Wes Anderson’s films, like *Hotel Chevalier* (2007), the aesthetic of a wide-angle lens supports his common film themes of distanced relationships and lack of true human connection.

Hotel Chevalier (Anderson, 2007)

One classic application of the wide-angle lens in the late 1930s and 1940s was the technique of , developed in French Poetic Realism and popularized by Orson Welles in Hollywood cinema. Deep focus involves several carefully planned elements to achieve the effect of an all-perceiving and meaningful camera eye. To achieve deep focus, a filmmaker must use a wide-angle lens to achieve deep space through a short focal length. They must close the lens aperture to create a larger depth of field, the range of distance that creates sharp focus. And they must fill the set with light so that the camera can capture set detail even with a small aperture. Once all of these elements of deep focus are in place, the mise-en-scène will be captured in crisp, sharp focus in every plane, from the foreground to the background of the set. The effect is simultaneous vision of foreground and background without the need for cutting, camera movement, or focus pulling.

Citizen Kane (Welles, 1941)

Jean Renoir and Orson Welles used the deep focus technique for metaphoric purposes: since the wide-angle lens creates the illusion of distance between planes, a character moving away from the camera will quickly appear smaller and smaller within the frame. In Welles’ *Citizen Kane*, the character Kane moves away from the camera towards the back of a room while accountants count his money in the foreground of the frame. As the accountants dribble his money away, Kane appears smaller and smaller until he is just an insignificant figure leaning against the back wall. As we hear about his money disappearing, so we see Kane’s body disappear too. This visual metaphor, allowed by the distancing effect of the wide-angle lens paired with deep focus, allows us to see how closely Kane is tied to his economics.

For the opposite effect, a **telephoto lens** can be used to create an extreme closeness among characters or crowdedness within the environment. A telephoto lens is quite long, so the objects that it captures must be set very far away from camera. As a result of this physical distance between camera and objects, the objects appear to be relatively close to one another. In the telephoto lens, planes in space look as though they have been compressed together and they are sitting right next to each other. This makes characters feel as though they are in very close proximity, and it makes the environment look quite full and dense. Telephoto lenses are used often in cityscapes to make streets look fuller and more crowded, like in *Tootsie* (Pollack, 1982), where Michael is framed to look like he blends in while costumed as "Dorothy".

Tootlsie (Pollack, 1982)

The disadvantage to the telephoto lens is that it has a very shallow **depth of field**, which makes it hard to keep a moving object in focus. In a crowd filmed with a telephoto lens, a hero might be in focus but the person right behind her and right in front of her are out of focus. Therefore, as she moves towards the camera, the cameraman must move the camera with her at her pace in order to keep her in focus. If done correctly, the people around her will look like a hazy sea of bodies and she will emerge as a crisp heroic image among them.

Of course, one way for a filmmaker to not be forced make the choice between a wide-angle lens and a telephoto lens is to use a **zoom lens**, otherwise known as a variable lens. A zoom lens can shift the focal length of its lens to make it short or long. Unlike a fixed lens, like a wide-angle or telephoto, the zoom lens moves fluidly between several settings to allow for the same lens to have many lens options. The disadvantage of the zoom lens, however, is that it is heavier, thus less portable, and has smaller apertures, so it is slower and needs more light than a fixed lens to create the best image.

The zoom lens became so common and overused by the 1970s and 1980s that it gained the reputation of being a “lazy” filmmaking technique. But the 1950s gave us a rather unique effect that could only have been achieved using the technology of a zoom lens: the dolly zoom. This effect was developed by Hitchcock for his film *Vertigo* (1958). After fainting at a party, Hitchcock wanted to cinematically recreate the feeling of dizziness, which he could only describe as “vertigo”. After many experiments, his special effects team landed on a visual trick that combined a dolly track and a zoom lens. The **dolly zoom**, also called the **Vertigo effect**, pulls a camera away from an object as the camera lens zooms in on the object. The zoom changes the lens by which the object is captured – first it is a wide-angle lens, then it becomes a telephoto lens. The dolly track out keeps the object occupying the same space of the frame as the zoom becomes a telephoto lens. By keeping the object generally in the same space on the screen but meanwhile changing the focal length, the environment around the object will appear to move while the object appears to stay static.

Jaws (Spielberg, 1975)

In a dolly zoom that dollies away while zooming in, the environment will at first feel vast and elongated, but as the lens zooms in, the envi-

ronment will become compressed and dense. The effect is environmental distortion that seems to be a representation of what the character is feeling internally. Dolly zooms are often used in times of critical peril: a psychological crisis, a sudden realization, or a feeling of powerlessness. They are used most famously in *Vertigo* and *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975), but have become quite common in every genre and in every cinematic medium, including TV and commercials. What was once a unique solution using technological innovation has become a widely accepted and standardized metaphor.

Wide-angle lens: Range in focal length from 24mm to 35mm. Captures a wide amount of space at close range, which makes it optimal for filming big sets. The shape of the wide-angle lens creates "bulging" at the edges of the frame and creates distance between objects.

Telephoto lens: Range in focal length from 70mm to 300mm or more. Captures a long range of space, which makes it optimal for filming at long distances. The distance of the telephoto lens flattens planes of space in the frame, making objects appear extremely close together.

Deep focus: A style developed in the late 1930s, often attributed to Orson Welles. Creates sharp focus through several planes of space in the frame. Requires a wide-angle lens, small aperture, set light, and deep space in the mise-en-scène.

Depth of field: The range of distance that is kept in sharp focus within the frame. A shallow depth of field keeps a small amount of space in focus. A large depth of field keeps a large amount of space in focus.

Zoom lens: A variable lens that can move between several focal lengths, potentially creating both wide-angle and telephoto effects.

Dolly zoom / Vertigo effect: A style developed by Hitchcock for his film *Vertigo* (1958) where the environment appears to contract or expand. Achieved with a dolly track and zoom lens.

Aspect ratio

There has always been a relationship between the shape of film stock and the shape of theater projection. The conventions for **aspect ratio**, or the ratio of width to height of a screen, has changed over cinema history as new lenses have been developed and standards for projection quality has increased. Silent cinema started with a 1.33:1 aspect ratio for 35mm films and TV matched this aspect ratio so that movies originally filmed in 35mm could be easily translated to TV screens. This squarish format worked well for close-ups, since a character's face fills the shape in a comfortable way.

Diagram 3: Aspect ratio changes over film history. 1.33:1 (or 4:3) in silent cinema; 1.85:1 and 2.35:1 widescreen formats in the 1950s.

When theater attendance dropped in the 1950s due to the popularization of TV, the cinema industry upgraded its technology to allow for newer **widescreen** standards. The wider aspect ratios – first 1.85:1, then 2:35.1 – created a more dynamic image viewing experience than TV could allow and brought many viewers back into theaters. But filmmakers found the new shape challenging to film in because many of their previously used framings looked awkward with a wider screen. Close-ups no longer filled the shape. Two-shots also didn't fill enough of the space. So filmmakers started to place more and more characters into the frame to fill it. Often, so many characters were standing side-by-side to fill the frame that they looked like they were pinned to a line – this look was called **clothesline staging** and was commonly criticized by filmmakers. A film like *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray, 1955), which used a new **anamorphic widescreen lens** called CinemaScope, found creative ways to fill the frame without setting up simplistic clothesline staging. *Rebel*'s set is carefully organized in levels, using architectural features, cars, or furniture, to allow characters to be positioned throughout the frame horizontally and vertically, not just in a line. The set also carves out aperture framings in the background, like windows and doorways, to allow for multiple mini-frames, cutting up the wide space, in which characters can appear. And the camera is often placed at a low angle or a canted angle so that more of the rectangular frame is filled by characters' bodies.

Ho w to Marry a Millionaire (Negulesco, 1953)

Rebel Without a Cause (Ray, 1955)

First introduced to the public in the late 1940s, the anamorphic lens was one of the many innovations that the film industry tried out in order to compete with TV technologies, first introduced to the public in the late 1940s. To lure audiences back into theaters for unique experiences, studios tried 3D films, **gimmicks**, and giant screens similar to our current Imax theaters. 3D film technology was borrowed from comic books, using the same principle of anaglyph (red and blue) glasses. A polarization option was also developed in which two projectors would synchronize two separate images. Cinema gimmicks would be marketed as theatrical experiences most often in B-film horror. William Castle, the self-pro-

To lure audiences back into theaters for unique experiences, studios tried 3D films, gimmicks, and giant screens similar to Imax theaters.

claimed “king of gimmicks”, would scare his audiences with skeletons flying across the theater, buzzers attached to seats, and life insurance taken out in audience members’ names. Such gimmicks promised a unique theater experience that could not be replicated at home. Widescreen formats like Cinerama promised an epic film experience in which three projectors created an image three times as large as a regular screen across a curved wall. Though very impressive, Cinerama had so many technical issues, like easily unsynched projectors, that it did not catch on like CinemaScope’s anamorphic lens, which captured image with one camera and projected it in nearly as wide of a format with only one projector.

Contemporary widescreen cinema has now been standardized to a 1.85:1 aspect ratio, but some filmmakers will play with the size of the image in order to evoke a previous cinema era. Wes Anderson’s *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) is a great example of this principle, as it organizes the time period of each scene according to its appropriate cinema aspect ratio. The most contemporary scenes, set in 1985, are presented in 1.85:1; the scenes set in 1968 are in 2:35:1, an anamorphic aspect ratio; the scenes set in 1932 are in 1.37:1, the standard Academy ratio of the 1930s. Many viewers overlook the changing shapes of their screens while watching this film. The different aspect ratios, though, are meant to pay homage to differing film styles and the screen frame restrictions must be used uniquely and creatively for each era, as filmmakers of past aspect ratio transitions have had to do.

The Grand Budapest Hotel (Anderson, 2014)

Aspect ratio: The ratio of width to height of a screen.

Widescreen: Aspect ratio developed in the 1950s to create a bigger, more exciting image for theaters.

Anamorphic widescreen lens: A specific lens developed to capture more image onto the film stock through compression, which then would be expanded in projection. Had similar distortion problem as other wide-angle lenses.

Gimmick: An extraneous device or event meant to attract attention. Examples are marketing campaigns and 4D theater tricks.

"We all have a common interest: bigger and more horrible monsters -- and I'm just the monster to bring them to you."

-William Castle, 'King of the Gimmick'

Early Film Gimmicks

ALEX LUKENS

P.T. Barnum, 1910s

The Return of Tarzan (Revier/Merrick, 1920)

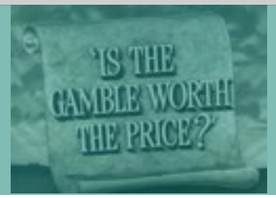
Hollywood has always needed an audience to do what it does best: sell movies. By 1910, theater owners regularly developed their own promotional materials for films. They did this because it was often cost-prohibitive to advertise in local newspapers. Instead, they borrowed methods from the circus tradition of P.T Barnum, making their own posters, pressbooks, and even hiring barkers to create buzz. Film studios quickly took notice of a growing need to shape public opinion about their movies playing at other people’s theaters. In 1915, Paramount was among the first studios to develop their own “Exploitation Department”, which provided theater owners with gimmicks, stunts, and “tie up” advertising that included buy-in from local businesses. People couldn’t avoid seeing or hearing about a film when it came to town, if it was properly exploited. This would create quick amusement, word of mouth, and ultimately, paying customers.

For instance, in 1920, Harry Reichenbach, a prolific publicist and provocateur, pulled off a stunt to promote the upcoming *Return of Tarzan* As the story goes, Reichenbach inquired with the Belleclaire Hotel in New York if they could accommodate a concert pianist with a particular penchant for eating huge quantities of meat. The hotel agreed and provided the supposed pianist, Mr. T.R. Zann, with a steady supply of meat. After the hotel got wind that there was no music being played, as well as a whiff of some decaying meat, they inquired about Mr. Zann. Management, followed by journalists that were likely told about the story, forcibly opened Zann’s hotel room door to find a full-sized lion had taken up residence there. The publicity from the stunt gave the film a huge opening and made it successful.

Reichenbach and other Exploitation Managers actively worked to put their rhetoric in the mouths of both journalists and would-be filmgoers. Often, word of mouth would spin itself into thick lore, with supporters and detractors alike promoting a film after getting taken in by an enticing gimmick. By the 1920s, news outlets were getting wise to the schemes employed by these movie exploiters. A 1924 headline in Motion Picture Magazine read “The Movies Outdo Barnum: And Poor Pictures Make Money Because of Clever and Extensive Exploitation While Good Pictures May Fail Thru Lack of It”.

Reefer Madness (Gasnier, 1936)

Mom and Dad (Beaudine, 1945)



Throughout the 1930s and 40s, drugs and sex became popular exploitative topics in films. *Reefer Madness* (1936) was a repackaged morality tale originally made by a church group, with scintillating scenes added to exploit drug use and sex alluded to in the film. *Mom and Dad* (1945), relied on similar techniques. Kroger Babb produced a "sex hygeine" film that, on the surface, sought to educate audiences about the dangers of sex. The film featured live births, seen for the first time in theaters. Babb exploited this by bombarding small towns with tie-up advertising, had paid presenters write fabricated letters to newspapers protesting the film, and required male/female segregated screenings, to heighten controversy surrounding it. Keeping moral and educational lessons intact allowed producers to skate past the newly implemented Hays Code of film censorship, while still exploiting audiences' want for illicit scenes.

Girl Who Said No To Hitler

NEW YORK, Saturday: Tears streamed down the face of pretty brunette Ellen Schwanneke, Berlin-born actress.

As the girl who snubbed Hitler, she took the oath of allegiance as a U.S. citizen with 291 other aliens before Judge Henry Goddard in the Naturalisation Court.

Ellen, when only 15, achieved fame in the German film, "Maedchen in Uniform."

Hitler sent her a golden-embossed invitation to attend a command performance at Munich. But Ellen fled to Vienna, next to Switzerland, finally to America.

Said Ellen: "I hate Hitler and all he represents. I am proud of being the black sheep of the family." (Her mother still lives in Germany.) "One lives only once, and one has to live the way one wants to live."

The Sunday Times, Jan 7, 1945

Though studios had entire departments dedicated to exploiting a film's basic features, no single producer or director had more gimmicks up their sleeve than William Castle. His first memorable gimmick came as a stage director in the late 1930s, when he hired German actress Ellen Schwanneke. At the time, German actors were only permitted to act in plays first performed in Germany, during Nazi rule. Castle quickly wrote a script and had it translated into German. Schwanneke received an invitation from the Nazi party to perform the play in Germany, which Castle saw as a promotional opportunity. Castle claims that he wrote a telegram to the Nazi party, declining the invitation. In the press, he fanned sensationalism by referring to Schwanneke as "The Girl Who Said No to Hitler". This got people talking and Castle kept the controversy going by defacing the theater himself with painted swastikas on the exterior. The play was well-attended as a result.

Castle would parlay his success in theater to a full career in film, making a name for himself through the 1940s and 50s as a B-movie director who delivered films on time and on budget. He flirted with 3-D in 1953 with the western *Fort Ti*, upon seeing the massive crowds for *Bwana Devil* (1952), noted for igniting the first wave of 3-D features in the United States. Castle practiced his aim and threw everything he could at the camera. He remarked to his wife upon seeing moviegoers ducking projectiles in the theater, "I'm not a director, I'm a great pitcher".

Bwana Devil (Oboler, 1952)

During Castle's heyday as a director, he utilized numerous technological "processes" that involved branding a live theater experience with catchy names. This was common at the time, as the film industry tried to promote the movie theater as offering more than television. For *House on Haunted Hill* (1959), Castle invented "Emergo", where a skeleton would pop out of a box above the screen and sail across the theater, where young patrons would throw popcorn at it. For his seminal film, *The Tingler* (1959), Castle utilized "Percepto", where he rigged plane wing deicer motors to the bottoms of theater seats. He coordinated with theater employees to buzz people's butts when the film purported that The Tingler was loose in the theater.

The Tingler attack, from screening of *The Tingler* at Emory University, 2012

Castle's schemes became more complex over time, adding hired actors to pose as nurses in theater lobbies, planted audience members to "faint" at certain moments, and even "Coward's Corner", a branded box that patrons could retreat to if the film scared them too much. Theater owners often complained about putting on a Castle film in terms of cumbersome technology and gimmicks like the "Fright Break" for *Homicidal* (1961), which promised patrons their money back if they were too scared to continue. His legacy lives on today as the film industry is always looking to exploit the next great gimmick to entice audiences.

"Fright Break" in *Homicidal* (Castle, 1961)

"EARLY FILM GIMMICKS" CONTRIBUTED BY
ALEX LUKENS
GEORGIA FILMMAKER &
LECTURER OF EMERGING MEDIA DESIGN
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

Color

A Trip to the Moon (Melies, 1902) (handpainted)

Experiments in film color can be traced back to the late 19th century, when some black & white film prints would be hand-colored with paints to create a "color" film projection. Color film cinematography has been patented with various techniques since the early 1900s. But the most widely used early color process in Hollywood was Technicolor, used for major studio pictures like *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), and *Fantasia* (1940). Each subsequent color film technology fixed some technical issues, like light, camera, and projection requirements.

Since the popularization of color film stock, cinematography has been interested in the psychological and emotional effect that color and color combinations have on the viewer. We have already seen that color has symbolic value in film (Chapter 2: Mise-en-scène). Audience associations with color are culturally defined, so the same color in two separate cultures might have opposing meanings. For example, the color red has associations of power and warning in Western cultures, but in many Eastern cultures, red is associated with weddings and beauty. So color symbolism does not always translate perfectly across the world. But film also creates its own color association language by color-coding films according to their genres. For example, psychological thrillers tend to be cast green, horror films tend to have a blue cast, and fantasy films tend to be cast purple.

SEE CH2 FOR MORE ON COLOR

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (Columbus, 2001)

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (Cuarón, 2004)

These overall color casts are only somewhat created on set through the art departments. Most of the color hues are created with the post-production process of color grading, which creates consistent color quality across all shots and all scenes. This color technique can enhance and change the costumes, the set, the light, and even skin tone. **Color correction** helps footage from multiple shoots over many days and locations look like they belong in the same time and space. In many ways, it covers over any continuity errors by fixing unnatural contrast, lighting, and color levels. **Color grading** allows for films to take on new color hues to provide an overall sense of world immersion. Many of these color grading choices work alongside lighting to create mood in the scene and in the film. We can see the progression of these choices within a franchise like *Harry Potter*, whose first film has a magical golden glow and whose third film turns an icy blue with dark shadows. In this way, Harry Potter's themes evolve alongside its color grading: as Harry Potter ages and matures, his world becomes less golden and more terrifying.

Not every film has a single generic color theme across all scenes. In fact, most genres use **color palettes** that combine multiple color hues and saturations to convey more complicated mood and tone through visual means. Three common color palettes – monochromatic, analogous, and complementary – use just a few colors to organically evoke composure or tension within the scene. A **monochromatic** color palette uses multiple saturations or values of the same color hue. For example, the film *The Matrix* (Wachowskis, 1999) uses different values of green across most matrix scenes. This gives the impression of a consistent world that runs by a single set of rules. An **analogous** color palette uses two or three neighboring colors to create a cohesiveness to the story world. For example, *Her* (Jonze, 2013) uses pinks, reds, and browns throughout most of the mise-en-scène to create a slightly futuristic but believable world. This color palette sounds a bit dull, but Jonze creates contrast in the environment by playing with saturation, using highly saturated pinks and very dampened browns. The effect is simultaneously naturalistic and enchanted.

Amélie (Jeunet, 2001)

A **complementary** color palette uses two or more opposing colors to create tension in the story world. For example, *Amélie* (Jeunet, 2001) uses opposing reds and greens in nearly every scene to represent Amelie's inner tension between her independence and her need for companionship. Lately, blockbusters have been critiqued for overusing the complementary colors teal and orange to aesthetically create tension in otherwise unmotivated scenes. We can clearly see this teal-orange tendency in recent blockbuster posters, which evoke a tone of dramatic conflict in a single image: *Transformers* (Bay, 2007), *Blade Runner 2049* (Villeneuve, 2019), *Brave* (Chapman/Andrews, 2012), *Dark Phoenix* (Kinberg, 2019).

A less common color combination is a **triadic** color palette, which includes three complementary colors, arranged in a triangle on the color wheel. This type of palette is jarringly unnatural and is often used for discontinuity effect. Jacques Demy, part of the Left Bank Group in the French New Wave, famously used triadic color palettes in his musicals. The *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964) boldly uses yellow, red, and blue in the same frame to create an artificiality to the musical when other elements, like singing and character motivation, remain quite naturalistic. Recently, *La La Land* (Chazelle, 2016) referenced this Demy yellow-red-blue color palette in many scenes where costumes and props clash to create a bold theatricality. Other scenes in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* create a triad of blue-pink-green and a tetrad of pink-green-blue-orange. Though these colors are dull in saturation to make them slightly more believable in the scene, the off-putting color combinations create the effect of unresolved tension in the characters' interactions.

The Umbrellas of Cherbourg (Demy, 1964)

Digital color grading has created a greater efficiency in the area of film color. With the touch of a button, visual effects specialists can experiment with color casts, saturations, tone, and palettes. It is no wonder that in the past several decades, since access to this new technology, we have seen more vibrant colors on screen than can be captured with color film stock or with digital cameras. Many of our films have entered the realm of color fantasy, even when outside of the fantasy genre. But, perhaps ironically, our dramas and thrillers have become even more dark and muted as we enter an era of digital filmmaking and post-production that allows for shadows to take on more detail and nuance. So we see contemporary cinema pulled in two color directions: the excess of color and the desaturation of color. In fact, digital filmmaking has also seen a resurgence of **black & white cinema**, which is often filmed in color and then digitally transferred into black & white. Recent films like *Ida* (Pawlikowski, 2013), *A*

Girl Walks Home Alone at Night (Amirpour, 2014), and *Roma* (Cuarón, 2018) have won critical acclaim for their rich hues and contrast in black & white photography. Other contemporary black & white films, like *The Lighthouse* (Eggers, 2019), have received acclaim for their use of traditional lenses and black & white film stock to achieve a more textural and visceral viewing experience than digital cameras and techniques allow.

Color correction: Adjusts color hue, light, and saturation across shots to create cohesive sequences.

Color grading: Creates world immersion by casting scenes in a particular color hue.

Color palette: Combination of color hues and saturations to convey mood and tone through visual means. Includes monochromatic, analogous, complementary, and triadic palettes.

Black & white cinema: Films absent of color hues. Can be achieved with black & white film stock or in digital post-production.

Special effects

The question of believability in cinema lies not only in the way that action in front of the camera is captured, but also in how the eye can be tricked into believing movie "magic". Special effects have always been a part of film production, and many of the first special effects were created or inspired by theater magicians. Special effects in part work because they look believable, but some less authentic-looking effects work simply because the film has created such an immersive story world that the viewer is put into a suspension of disbelief.

Some classic special effects no longer look convincing to the contemporary viewer, but they are the basis for our more convincing visual effects of the digital age. **Matte paintings,** for example, which use paintings and, as we move into the digital age, 3D renderings of landscapes, are the predecessors of green screens. **Rear projection**, in which footage is projected onto a backdrop while the actor before it is filmed from the front, is the predecessor of travelling mattes and digital rotoscoping. The rear projection technique was used often for car shots to showcase characters conversing in the front seat while the environment flashes past them, and for high action sequences filmed in studio, like chases on foot, by boat, or even on horse-back.

Wizard of Oz (Fleming, 1939) – *A matte painting of Emerald City makes up the background while a small hole in the painting fits the live-action.*

Another common effect that has changed little since early cinema is slow motion and fast motion. With traditional film stock, the change in motion is achieved by adjusting the speed of image capture. With hand-crank cameras, the cameraman would overcrank the film stock in production so that when projected at a regular speed, the image would seem to move slowly. Similarly, for fast motion, the cameraman would undercrank the film stock so that the projection would appear to move quickly. Silent cinema often looks undercranked to us now because our projection standards have changed. In silent cinema, film stock was captured and projected at 16 frames per second (fps) but since the advent of sound cinema, the standards have adjusted to 24 fps. So, when projecting a 16 fps film at 24 fps, the film will appear to be in slightly fast motion.

SEE CH1 & CH8 FOR SPECIAL EFFECTS AND VISUAL EFFECTS

Dr. No (Fleming, 1939) – *Connery "drives" a car in front of a screen that has a road projected onto it from behind.*

Slow motion has often been used to evoke despair, isolation, or inner turmoil. French Impressionist cinema of the 1920s famously used slow motion to explore characters' inner emotions and psychology (See Ch 1: Film History). More contemporary films, like *Casino* (Scorsese, 1995) and *Chungking Express* (Wong, 1994), continue to use slow motion to express inner feelings: an isolating emotion, a hazy memory, a thought process, or the effect of alcohol or drugs. Slow motion can also give a "cool" factor to a character by extending their movement or to an action otherwise unseen by the human eye. Films like *Reservoir Dogs* (Tarantino, 1992) and *The Usual Suspects* (Singer, 1995) use this effect to show power in characters' gait. Films like *The Hurt Locker* (Bigelow, 2008) and *Drive* (Refn, 2011) use this effect to expand time in order to appreciate the small moments captured on film.

Fast motion was classically used to show the supernatural, as in *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922), or to show inhuman action, like a brutal murder. Lately, action films have combined the slow motion effect with fast motion to create a **ramping** effect. Films like *300* (Snyder, 2007) and *Sherlock Holmes* (Ritchie, 2009) use ramping to put focus on a character's isolated movements and their mode of thinking through this movement. By suggesting that only this character would be able to think and act so quickly, ramping suggest supernatural abilities along with a "cool" factor.

Nosferatu (Murnau, 1922) – *Nosferatu's carriage moves at hyperspeed to evoke the supernatural, in contrast to the "normal" speed of humans.*

Though special effects like ramping are not meant to look realistic, in that we cannot see ramping in the real world with our own eyes, these effects feel realistic because they exist within an immersive story world that has become believable to the audience. Objectivity in cinema does not always align with realism. It is entirely possible for an impossible fantasy space to be realistic. And it is entirely possible for a realistic scenario to be filmed in a way that could not be seen with our own eyes. The camera eye is a subjective point of view even when it is not positioned in a point of view shot. Through cinematography decisions, like camera placement, movement, lenses, color, and special effects, we are displaced from our theater seats and moved into the story world, gazing through a particular vision of this world. This kind of suspension of disbelief allows us to engage with a historical biopic like *Ali* (Mann, 2001) through just as much imaginative movie "magic" as a technically unrealistic fantasy film like *Avatar* (Cameron, 2009).

Matte painting: A painting that is composited with live footage to take the place of an on-location set.

Rear projection: Footage is projected onto a backdrop while the actor is filmed in front of it.

Slow motion: Image is captured at a faster speed and so appears to slow down when projected.

Fast motion: Image is captured at a slower speed and so appears to speed up when projected.

Ramping: Fast motion and slow motion used sequentially in a single shot.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION: CINEMATOGRAPHY

(1) How can color show a character's journey, or allow for deeper insights into a film's meaning? Select a single shot or still frame from a film, one that you think is particularly interesting or significant in terms of its use of color. Analyze this still as you would a painting or a photograph. What is the role of color in this still, and how does it challenge the different ways in which the image can be understood?

(2) Cinematic aspects such as camera angles, camera position, and camera movements are vital to the shifting impact of a film on the viewer. Examine a short film and jot notes under these three categories of cinematography, or any other cinematic choices that capture your imagination. What strikes you as special or impressive, and how do these images make you feel? What do you think is the role of cinematography in the film's effect on you?

CHAPTER FIVE

EDITING

CONTINUITY SYSTEM 81
Film grammar 82

KULESHOV EFFECT 85
Alfred Hitchcock 86

DISCONTINUITY 87
Breaking the 180-rule 87
Defamiliarization 89

EDITING

Film editor and sound designer Walter Murch famously complained that when audiences whine about "bad editing" in film, they just mean that the film is too long. But editing is a much more complicated and ingrained film process than just the final viewing length. Editing gives a scene a unique pace and rhythm. It defines the space in which characters move and have conversations. It can even change the expression on an actor's face and his relationship to the event that he is looking at. A good editor will be able to manipulate footage to give us a sense of characters' interiority: their motivations, emotional reactions, and modes of thinking.

Life of An American Fireman (Porter, 1903)

When cinema first emerged as an art form, certain rules of editing that we now take for granted were not yet invented. After all, editing deals in the art of time, and this element of temporality makes cinema unique against all other arts. Cinema editing had to start from scratch. So, for example, if a script described a character reacting to a fire with shock (as in *Life of an American Fireman,* 1903), early directors would place the camera at a long distance from the actor to frame him and the fire together in the same shot. This way, the audience could see the actor put his hands over his face with shock, then jump and run around wildly, reacting to a blaze just across the frame from him. But within a decade of the film industry, directors learned to use close-ups to develop more emotional connection and intimate moments in film. The same scene, using more nuanced editing, could be much more effectively and quickly communicated to the audience: A shot of flames, rising higher and higher, threatening to explode; a shot of the character's face, in shock at what he is seeing; a shot of the flames again, rising even higher; a shot of the character's face, eyes dodging, looking for water, thinking through his next steps.

The new scene is, of course, much more effective. It can show emotion on the actor's face, which can use more subtle movements than a wildly gesturing body in a long shot. It brings the audience closer to the character's mindset and shows us what he is thinking. This aids in identification, a bond between audience and hero, that often drives our love of movies. The new scene is also faster. In just a few short shots, we are given the impression of the scene instead of a single, drawn out shot that shows us the events in pantomime. The new scene also feels faster because it has more cuts, and so it has a faster pace, moving us from fire to face in a dynamic way that gets our blood pumping with excitement and the feeling of danger.

It is helpful to think of editing not in how long it takes to show the events, but in how the shots are put together to give the feeling of an event. Many early filmmakers used the French term "assemblage" for editing, and this is a more appropriate way to think about the art of editing. By thinking of editing as assembling pieces of footage, we can focus on the stitches that editing makes, bringing together shots or scenes into a larger whole.

In our fire scene example, we were focusing on **shot-to-shot editing**, which brings together individual shots into a larger sequence. A **shot** is the smallest unit of film. Simply put, it is a piece of footage without any cuts. A shot can be long (a "long take"), where the camera keeps rolling, following the characters as they walk from room to room for minutes, sometimes even for hours. A shot can be very short, just a small blip, almost unseen and subliminal. But most shots are between these two extremes. The average shot does the job of showing us something, and then it is assembled with other shots through cuts.

A **sequence** is a larger unit of film that is made of several shots stitched together. If you think of a shot as a word, a sequence, then, is almost like a sentence that is composed of words. A sequence usually shows us a series of actions that relate to each other. Often, the shots of a sequence occur in the same space and in the same time. When the film jumps from one space to another or from one time to another, we see **scene-to-scene editing** that lets us know that we are jumping. Often we will see a **transition** between scenes, like a **fade**, **dissolve**, **wipe**, or **iris**, which tells us we have moved to another space or to another time. For example, in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (Lucas, 1977), when a scene set in Tatooine ends and a scene set on the Millennium Falcon begins, the two scenes are assembled with a wipe. In *A Christmas Story* (Clark, 1983), when Ralphie finishes retelling a nostalgic story, the screen turns into an iris (a circle) and the circle closes in until the screen is entirely black.

Shot: A single piece of footage without any cuts. The smallest unit of film.

Sequence: A larger unit of film that is made of several shots stitched together with cuts. Each sequence exists in a single time and space.

Shot-to-shot editing: Editing that stitches together multiple shots into one sequence.

Scene-to-scene editing: Editing that stitches together multiple sequences. Often this type of editing moves between times and/or spaces.

Transitions: A style of scene-to-scene editing that uses an optical effect, like a fade, dissolve, wipe, or iris. These styles are usually meant to be obvious in order to mark a change in time and/or place.

Continuity system

Early moviegoers in the 1890s did not have a strong understanding of editing. Both shot-to-shot editing and scene-to-scene editing felt strange and incomprehensible. This is because early moviegoers were not trained in movies like we are today. When we call film editing a "language" or a "grammar", this is exactly right: like a language, the grammar of film editing must be learned. Film grammar as we know it is an artificial system, not a natural one, and needs to be taught by lots of movie-watching, sometimes since infancy, in order to feel natural. In fact, studies from 2010 have shown that contemporary cultures which are not exposed to cinema, like communities living without electricity in remote mountain villages in Turkey, find it difficult to understand basic film conventions, such as camera pans, cross-cuts, and shot/reverse-shots.[1]

1 *Schwan & Ildirar (2010). Watching film for the first time: How adult viewers interpret perceptual discontinuities in film.* Psychological Science, *21, 1-7.*

By watching more and more movies, audiences find that film conventions become more and more naturalized, until they are practically invisible. These film conventions, which were developed in the 1910s, have become standardized as the **continuity system** or **Hollywood system**. By using these standards, filmmakers can bring attention to the action and emotions of a story rather than bring attention to the editing of shots. In the continuity system, the most effective assemblage of shots is invisible to the average audience member. So, when James Bond kicks in a door, we just focus on how he kicked in the door, not noticing that it took four shots, carefully stitched together by the conventions of **invisible editing**, for the action to be shown to us. Practically speaking, continuity editing allows a scene to be filmed across several different days or across different settings and still look like it is occurring in a continuous time and space.

There are a few key editing strategies that are part of the continuity or Hollywood system, and they correspond to common actions described by stories. When a film introduces us to a new setting, it does this through an **establishing shot** with a piece of the landscape and characters interacting within it. An establishing shot is usually utilizes a long shot or an extreme long shot framing that shows us a wide view of the setting. This establishes the setting so that we can orient ourselves once the camera moves in closer to the characters. An establishing shot is a map. And like a map, it needs to be referenced more than once. So even though each scene will usually begin with an establishing shot, it will occasionally return to a wide view of the setting – a **reestablishing shot** – to remind us of the map and where characters are situated within it.

Like a language, the grammar of film editing must be learned.

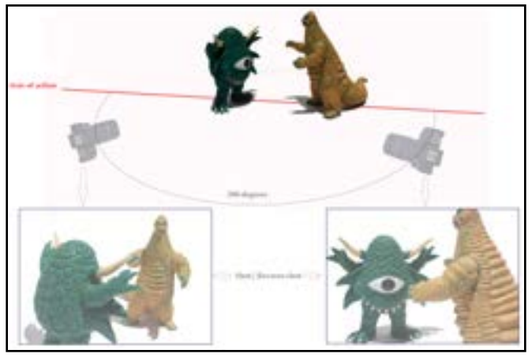


Diagram 4: 180-degree rule. Cameras 1 and 2 are both on one side of the axis of action (within 180 degrees). They will consistently film character A on the left-hand side and character B on the right-hand side.

When characters speak, we prefer to see their faces so that we can gauge emotion and thought process in their acting. Since we like tight framings (a close-up or medium shot) for dialogue, it becomes hard to use only two-shots to describe character interactions. The **shot/reverse-shot** convention allows us to move between two characters as they speak and still see reactions on their faces. Two cameras set at opposing angles will film the two characters individually, and the editor will assemble these two sets of footage to create a back-and-forth rhythm of two characters speaking (see diagram 1). By assembling footage of character A with footage of character B (a shot and its reverse-shot), the editor allows us to see the conversation in more detail than a long shot which would include both characters in frame at the same time. Additionally, the rhythm of editing – bouncing between the shot and its reverse-shot – feels like a visual conversation and becomes more engaging to watch than simply one static shot.

Within the shot/reverse-shot convention, we see that camera angles are usually set up consistently so that one character always speaks from the left and one character always speaks from the right. This is easier for us to process, especially as the conversation becomes faster, more heated, or more emotional. By always filming the conversation from one side of the **axis of action** (see diagram 1), the directionality of the conversation is maintained. This principle is also called the **180-degree rule**: never cross the axis of action within a single scene unless you are willing to confuse your audience. Why would crossing the axis of action (the 180-degree line) confuse the audience? As viewers, we are very willing to ignore small differences from shot to shot as long as the meaning of the scene is maintained. For example, if we are engaged in the emotion of a lovers' quarrel, like the rain scene in *The Notebook* (Cassavetes, 2004), we will naturally ignore the fact that one character's hair is completely wet in one shot and only somewhat damp in the next shot. But too much difference will snap us out of our engagement with the scene and make the "invisible" qualities of continuity editing blatantly obvious. If the camera crosses the axis of action in a lovers' quarrel, then one character will speak from left to right, towards his lover, in one shot, then in the next shot he will suddenly be speaking from right to left, towards his lover. This might just be enough visual change for the audience to be snapped out of the emotion of the scene and disengage from the film entirely. For most of cinema history, the film industry decided that filming from one side of the axis of action was a rule that could not be broken without risking audience engagement. (See "Discontinuity" section for more on breaking the 180-degree rule)

Another way to keep audience engagement in the scene is to match the energy of the scene action with the energy of the editing. Often, the rhythm of editing will match how much or how little action is happening on screen. For example, action films are cut almost twice as fast (with almost twice as many shots) as dramas simply because the pace of action films tends to be faster than dramas. In this way, editing rhythm supports the content of the film. One way to keep the audience engaged in the scene without noticing the editing rhythm, especially when it is fast as in action films, is to cut between different camera angles on a physical action. **Match-on-action** cuts use the physical action (a kick, a jump, or even a hug) to "hide" or make invisible the fact that two different cameras are being used to describe the scene. This helps the audience to not notice the change, and thus to remain engaged in the scene's dynamism. But also, practically speaking, it allows the editing to create action. For example, if you cut on a punch, the punch itself does not have to be filmed – one shot can describe a swing and the next shot can describe an impact from another camera angle. The editing itself, by giving the impression of impact, creates the punch.

So far we have been describing editing on the level of shot-to-shot. Editing on the level of scene-to-scene moves the viewer in time or space by assembling several sequences together. One very common creative mode of scene-to-scene editing assembles many individual moments in time (hours, days, months, or years) into a very short amount of film time. Hollywood **montage** condenses great expanses of time and space in ways easily and quickly understood by audiences. This type of editing is also called **elliptical editing** because it acts like an ellipsis (. . .) in literature, skipping over unnecessary material and creating rhythm in the writing. In film, the montage sequence often describes monotonous action which must be repeated over a long period of time or it describes the process of growing up, represen-

Rocky (Alvidsen, 1976)

ted by a series of coming-of-age events.

Rocky (Avildsen, 1976) features perhaps the most famous Hollywood montage sequence in cinema history, describing boxer Rocky Balboa as he trains for a championship: shots of Rocky jogging are intercut with him training in a gym and at a meat packing plant. The impression of the montage sequence is that Rocky has been training for days on end, growing stronger and stronger with each short slice that we are able to see of each day. The meaning that the sequence imparts visually is that Rocky is growing from an unknown meat packer to someone worth watching and betting on. His montage training journey takes him from being a nobody to being a somebody. The sequence culminates in Rocky running up the stairs at the foot of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and throwing his hands up in victory.

Rather than moving us quickly through time, other scene-to--scene edits can move us quickly in space. A **crosscut** assembles footage from two separate spaces in order for the audience to see two events happening simultaneously. This type of editing is also called **parallel editing**, because the film treats the two scenes as parallel events which take place side by side in time. Crosscutting can have a variety of effects and meanings. It can create tension by letting the viewer in on a truth that only they can see. It can create a sense of romance by showcasing two distanced lovers bonded in time, if not in place. It can also play tricks on the viewer by setting up expectations. For example, Demme's *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) assembles footage from inside a house with footage from outside a house to suggest that the same house is being described within the sequence. The editing pace becomes faster and faster as we get closer and closer to entering the house, making the viewer expect that the interior and the exterior belong to the same building. However, the crosscutting conclusion reveals that the inside footage and outside footage actually belong to separate houses; we have been in two separate spaces all along. Surprisingly, this editing "trick" does not break audience immersion, but rather brings the viewer into a deeper engagement with the film by making the viewer think that they must become better film detectives.

Continuity system / Hollywood system: Standardized film conventions that make it easier for the viewer to understand the film's time, space, and movements. Includes establishing shots, shot/reverse shots, the 180-degree rule, match-on-actions, and eyeline matches.

Invisible editing: The prime goal of continuity editing is to be invisible to the viewer. This way, the viewer does not focus on the editing, but rather focuses on emotions, story, characters, etc.

Establishing shot: A common way to introduce a new space at the beginning of a scene. Most often an establishing shot is an extreme long shot of a landscape and characters interacting within it.

Shot/Reverse-shot: A common way to edit two characters in conversation. One shot features one character; the other shot (the "reverse-shot") features a second character. Cuts move us between these two shots as the characters converse.

Axis of action: An imaginary line that can be drawn between two characters in a shot/revere-shot setup. This line is the "180-degrees" of the 180-degree rule.

180-degree rule: Do not cross the axis of action within a single scene. Adhering to the 180-degree rule maintains directionality of characters (one character always sits on the left of the screen; the other character always sits on the right).

Match-on-action: A cut between two camera angles is "hidden" by an action that is shown in both shots. For example, the action of a door opening, when matched in two shots, "hides" the fact that one shot was filmed from inside a room and the next show was filmed from outside.

Montage sequence / Elliptical editing: A sequence that condenses great expanses of time by showing small portions of actions stitched together.

Crosscutting / Parallel editing: A sequence that stitches together shots from two different spaces to show two events occurring at the same time.

The Kuleshov effect

The manipulative quality of filmmaking has been scientifically studied since the origins of the art form. Most famously, Lev Kuleshov and Vsevolod Pudovkin ran film editing experiments in the 1910s and 1920s to prove that film editing choices have a profound effect on our understanding of film meaning. Their most famous film experiment, credited to Kuleshov, assembled a static shot of actor Ivan Mosjoukine after three different shots: a bowl of soup, a girl laying in a coffin, and a woman laying on a couch.

The shot of Mosjoukine does not change – he held a neutral face in the shot and the shot length remained the same. But depending on which shot was edited in after the Mosjoukine shot, audiences read a different emotion onto his quite neutral face. Later in life, Pudovkin described the original reaction this way:

> ***"[the audience] raved about the acting . . . the heavy pensiveness of his mood over the forgotten soup, were touched and moved by the deep sorrow with which he looked on the dead child, and noted the lust with which he observed the woman. But we knew that in all three cases the face was exactly the same."***[2]

Kuleshov / Pudovkin experiment, 1910s

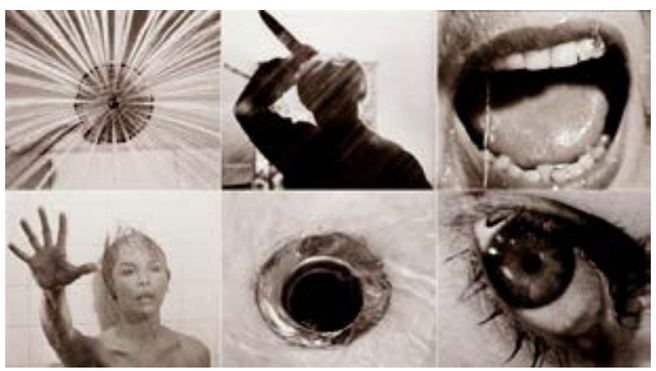
2 *"Naturshchik vmesto aktera",* Sobranie sochinenii, *Volume I, Moscow: 1974, p 184.*

How strange that the same face can exert such a variety of emotions. Kuleshov concluded that the editing must change the impression of the face on the audience. **The Kuleshov effect** has come to describe this great power of editing to change the impression of a shot based on what it is assembled with.

Hitchock's recreaction of Kuleshov's experiment, 1960s

Though many Russian directors of the 1920s edited based on the Kuleshov effect, Alfred Hitchcock famously popularized the principle in the 1960s in a series of filmed interviews. He was interested in the psychological impact of cinema, and the Kuleshov effect explained to him why editing holds such great psychological power over an audience. He called the Kuleshov effect "impressionistic" and praised its ability to suggest action and meaning rather than hand meaning over directly.

Most famously, Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) uses the principle of "impressionistic" editing to suggest the action of a murder in a shower setting. Hitchcock uses 52 cuts in only 45 seconds to describe this event, an extremely fast-paced editing sequence meant to evoke terror and anxiety in its audience. What makes this sequence "impressionistic" is that the knife never literally stabs the victim – we never see the murder itself. We see short close-ups of a victim's body, quick images of a glistening knife, a shadowy outline of a murderer, and bloody water washing down the drain; but we never see the murder itself. Violence is suggested through a series of visual impressions. Just like in the Kuleshov effect, we read into *Psycho*'s shower sequence to extract the meaning of a bloody murder, and the victim's eyes read as even more horrified against the other shots which horrify us. It is not just Janet Leigh's performance that is so effective at portraying surprise and hopelessness, but our impression of the assembled shots inflect her eyes with more surprise and more hopelessness. It is important to notice how the montage of *Rocky* differs from the shocking, rapid cuts of ***Psycho***. Hollywood montage should not be confused with the discontinuity editing of Soviet montage, which emerged in the mid-1920s. Rather than communicating information seamlessly across time and space, Soviet montage can be understood in terms of a juxtaposing or collision of shots to create ideological meaning or emotion in the audience.



Psycho (Hitchcock, 1960)

Not all editing that uses impressionistic editing must be as dramatic as a murder sequence. In fact, the Kuleshov effect is at play in nearly all editing, no matter how mundane. The shots that are assembled next to the shot of an actor's face will necessarily effect our impression of his performance. In his films, Hitchcock routinely used an eyeline match to inflect a rather neutral, thinking face with an emotion created by a separate shot. His *Rear Window* (1954) showcases Jimmy Stewart, whose emotions and thought-processes are described almost entirely by eyeline matches. He looks out his window onto his neighborhood's goings-on, and Hitchcock describes this gazing out in two distinct types of shots: Jimmy Stewart's face and what he is looking at. By assembling a shot of a window view next to a shot of a face, we automatically assume that we are being shown a character and his gaze. According to the Kuleshov effect, Jimmy Stewart's face does not need to change much in order for us to imbue his face with meaning based on the thing he is looking at. In the film, when an eyeline match tells us that he is looking at a beautiful woman, we believe that his face is imbued with desire, and when he looks at a depressed, lonely person, his face is imbued with sympathy.

Rear Window (Hichcock, 1954)

The Kuleshov effect: The psychological principle that adjoining shots influence each other's qualities in the viewer's eyes.

Eyeline match: A shot of a character looking off-camera cut with a shot of an object. The cut suggests that the object is a point-of-view shot from the character's perspective.

Discontinuity

Much of the editing we have been describing so far has fallen under the most common umbrella of the continuity system, or Hollywood system. This style of editing is designed to be as invisible as possible so that the audience can feel its effect without necessarily noticing its artistry. But another type of editing is discontinuous and aims to be noticed by the audience in either an obvious or subliminal way. **Discontinuity editing** does not follow conventional modes of editing from mainstream film, sometimes breaking Hollywood rules altogether, and it draws attention to itself as editing artistry.

In opposition to the long-standing convention of the axis of action and the 180-degree rule, which maintains directionality in conversation scenes, some discontinuous editing will intentionally **break the 180-degree rule** in order to evoke a sense of unease or disruption in the viewer. Japanese films of the 1930s were some of the first to consistently break this rule. Tense domestic arguments or power imbalances or swordfights would violate the 180-degree rule in order to evoke disorientation in the viewer.

Though in the 1930s, these violations were much more obvious since they were quite rare, now breaking the 180-degree rule has become quite common and has less of an obvious effect on the viewer. As we have become more film-literate and greater consumers of film material, it takes more radical editing choices to completely disorient us within the

film's time and space. But a subliminal feeling of disorientation might linger with some more contemporary 180-degree rule violations. For example, in Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), we watch a father played by Jack Nicholson slowly lose his mind and become homicidal. Some of Jack's mental breaks are visually represented by 180-degree breaks. In one, he is filmed through a mirror and then this footage is assembled with similar shots of Jack directly in front of the camera – this gives the impression that Jack has shifted angles without moving and evokes an off-putting feeling to the audience. In another scene, Jack is filmed laterally as he is speaking to a door at the left side of the screen. As he picks up an axe to break the door down, the editor cuts to the opposite side of the room, crossing the axis of action, to show Jack swinging the axe towards the door which is now on the right side of the room. This gives the impression that Jack's actions are erratic and the audience feels a visceral sense of mania.

In a more contemporary example, Nolan's *Dark Knight* (2008) concludes with a tense interrogation between Batman and The Joker. As the two characters converse over a table, playing verbal games and outdoing one another's wits, the camera moves around the table. Each time a character wins the upper hand in the conversation, the camera crosses the axis of action to reveal a power shift by switching the characters' positions on the screen. Viewers are not necessarily meant to catch this camera trick, as it keeps moving around the action, but we are left with an uneasy feeling that our beloved Batman might not win this round.

Other discontinuity techniques are also borrowed from film history and imported into contemporary cinema. Silent cinema developed many creative editing tricks in order to tell a story as visually, with as few intertitles, as possible. The **graphic match** was used in surrealist films like *Un Chien Andalou* (Buñuel, 1929) in order to compare two visual elements to each other. Like the surrealism movement in art, surrealist film favored collage and non-sequiturs as representations of how our mind pieces together seemingly random experiences into cohesive thoughts and feelings. (See Ch 1: Film History for more on surrealism in film).

By comparing an armpit to a sea urchin, *Un Chien Andalou* draws our attention to a visual simile: this armpit is prickly and scratchy like a sea urchin. When compared next to ants, both armpit and sea urchin come alive with movement. Each graphic match creates a comparison that inflects shots with each others' qualities.

2001: A Space Odyssey (Kubrick, 1968)

Art cinema of the 1960s and 1970s reused these early surrealist film techniques and raised their stakes. Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) famously matched a shot of a bone flying through the air four million years ago with a satellite in outer space in 2001. This match shot serves as elliptical editing, skipping over millions of years to compare humanity's pre-history with human's future. The editing evokes a sense of great evolution and also, perhaps, a lack of progress, as human's connection to tools has not changed. Similarly, the match cut in *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lean, 1962) between a lit match being blown out and the setting sun over a desert evokes a sense of human power over nature. In both cases, graphic matches of the 1960s act as grand metaphors that dominate the themes of the films.

More playful editing violations of the continuity system poke fun at Hollywood conventions. French New Wave films of the 1950s and 1960s adopt American genres like gangsters and mysteries in order to twist them into parody by sapping them of their deep metaphors and grand heroes. Just like French New Wave characters float through life without many goals or aspirations, editing techniques like **jump cuts** describe these flippant lifestyles. Rather than use cuts to move between characters or between camera angles, a jump cut maintains the same camera position with the same footage, but takes out a small piece of film. The effect is jumpy and erratic, like a film mistake. The cut has not done anything for the progression of film time or film space, and so it is discontinuous, pointing attention to the mere fact of cutting in place without creating change or movement.

Un Chien Andalou (Bunuel, 1929)

Often, discontinuous editing is described as **defamiliarization**, an art term from Russian Formalism (1910s & 1920s). Discontinuity takes material that is otherwise "normal" and through the form of editing makes it "strange". The editing points to itself, thus showing itself off, and so it becomes visible whereas most editing conventions ask this art to be invisible. Films like *The Graduate* (Nichols, 1967) use discontinuity throughout the editing in order to create a sense of disconnection and alienation in the viewer – if you are constantly aware of editing tricks, it becomes difficult to immerse yourself in the story world and to identify with main characters. Other films, like Godard's *Contempt* (1963) or even Chazelle's *La La Land* (2016), use discontinuous editing in order to say something about filmmaking itself. In these films, which usually take place on a film set or are told through the eyes of a filmmaker, the discontinuity never lets the audience forget that they are watching a film. Fiction never becomes mistaken for reality. In this way, discontinuity is self-reflexive: it uses the art form to comment on the art itself and the form that it can take.

SEE CH6 FOR MORE ON *THE GRADUATE*

Discontinuity editing: Does not follow conventions of the continuity or Hollywood system. Points attention to itself by disregarding "invisible editing" rules.

Breaking the 180-degree rule: The camera crosses the axis of action in a conversation or fight scene so that each character flips positions in the screen with cuts. Creates a sense of unease or disruption.

Graphic match: Adjoining shots use objects that take up similar shapes in the screen. This creates a comparison between objects. In discontinuity editing, the objects usually have no relation to each other and the non-sequitur is jarring. In continuity editing, the similar shapes help to blend the two shots together and the cut becomes "invisible".

Jump cut: A cut between two shots where the camera position remains the same. A small piece of film is cut out, so that the object on screen looks "jumpy".

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:
EDITING

(1) What is a shot breakdown? A shot breakdown unpacks all the shots that make up a film. This slowing down of the film allows for alternative ways to examine the choices of its director from shot to shot. Choose a favorite film sequence and break it down shot by shot, creating your own shot list where you list each shot, shot size, cinematographic aspect (angle, movement, position), and editing cut or transition. What do you notice, or what can your shot breakdown tell you about the cinematic aims of your chosen film?

(2) Editing challenges the structure and implicit meaning of a film. Think about how different editing styles can completely transform how the audience understands or perceives the same story. For example, create a simple story or scenario, such as two people meet in a restaurant when suddenly they are approached by a stranger. Draw four separate storyboards to show how you would edit this sequence if you were

- **(a) A Classical Hollywood film director**
- **(b) A montage director**
- **(c) A French New Wave director**
- **(d) A contemporary director of your choice.**

How does the plot and story change dependent on editing?

CHAPTER SIX

SOUND

SILENT CINEMA TO "TALKIES" 92
Benshi *93*
Technology *93*
Silence *95*

VOICE 96

SOUND EFFECTS 97
Sound perspective *98*

MUSIC 99

SOUND DESIGN 101

SOUND

An audience can only look at one picture at a time, but it can hear many different sounds all at once. Amazingly, we can judge the weight, gender, and directionality of someone walking near us just by the sound of their footsteps. We tend to think of listening as musical attention, during which we care about loudness, pitch, or tone. But everyday listening – where we care about the source of sound, its cause, and its meaning to us – is crucially important to human experience and to sound design in film. The human perceptual system relies on sound for many of its functions: spatial orientation, judging danger or threat, and information processing. It is no wonder that in monster films, most of our excitement and fear is generated by the audio mix. Hearing a threatening rustle behind us or the low bass frequency of heavy footsteps rouses our base survival instincts, which tell us to run from stalking or large predators. These sound effects are often more effective at evoking fear than a full-frame image of a monster.

Sound design balances a triad of sound categories: dialogue, sound effects, and music. Generally, the triad will be organized according to a hierarchy that privileges dialogue over music and sound effects. So when a character is speaking, this sound is brought to the foreground while all other sound is pushed to the background. We see this most obviously in very loud settings, like a nightclub scene, where we are still able to hear characters speak to one other. Similarly, when an important sound effect is featured, music or ambient noise is pushed to the background so that the sound effect can be heard crisply.

Each sound category provides the film with a different quality that might be featured or mixed with other qualities. Dialogue provides information, so it tends to be featured most prominently in the foreground of the sound design, which speak most directly and obviously to the audience. Some sound effects are treated this way too, handing over important information to the audience in an obvious way, like the sound of a failing engine that anticipates our hero's car crash or the sound of a turning door knob that anticipates our hero's partner returning home. These informational sound effects are made unnaturally loud so that they can dominate our sonic attention and speak to us directly. But most sound effects live in the background, creating a consistent and rich soundscape. The background sound design, usually constructed of music and sound effects, gives shape to the world and makes it feel consistent. Music and ambient noise bleeds between scenes to make them feel like they belong together. And though some music gives us an obvious sense of emotional peaks, most music and sound effects are unremarkable and work on our subconscious rather than our conscious viewing experience.

Silent cinema to the "Talkies"

Given how important sound design has become in current cinema, it might seem impossible to find connection to its roots in silent cinema. But it is important to remember that silent cinema was never actually silent. Until 1927, when sound cinema became available to the general public, the movie theater was filled with live music accompaniment. The shift from silent cinema to "talkies" in 1927 was not from silence to sound, but rather it was from live sound to recorded sound.

In the U.S., silent cinema was shown with a live orchestra, band, or pianist seated in front of the screen. You can see such a setup in *Sherlock, Jr.* (Keaton, 1924), which features a movie theater with an orchestra dugout. The musicians would sometimes play a musical score that was written specifically for the film and would create consistency across all viewings in all cities. But sometimes the film did not come with a score, and this allowed for musical creativity. Specialized pianists would even improv music on the spot, without having seen the film in advance.

Sherlock, Jr. (Keaton, 1924)

Benshi performance

The Jazz Singer (Crosland, 1927)

Vitaphone sound-on-disc

Other countries included additional elements into the sound mix of silent film. Japan, for example, had a tradition of using ***benshi*** (film narrators) who stood just to the side of the screen and worked with a musician to explain the film narrative and to play characters in dialogue. These *benshi* were not bound to a script, and so they had a lot of creative license in their performances. Many became celebrities in their own right, and audiences would buy tickets to specific film screenings to see their favorite *benshi* perform.

When sound technology was being developed in the U.S. in the mid-1920s, the aim was to standardize the film's sound so that each viewing experience would be identical and to create a more cost-efficient industry. There were many up-front costs to changing the film industry to "talkies". Studios would have to buy new equipment, develop new technologies, hire new voice actors, and build new sets. Theaters would have to invest in new projectors, sound systems, and sometimes even rebuild sections of the theater entirely.

Understandably, change was slow. Even though the first **"talkie"** *The Jazz Singer* emerged in 1927, there were many theaters that were not equipped to show the film. And for a transitional period between 1927 and 1930, many films were produced and released in two versions – a silent version that relied on live accompaniment and a "talkie" that required an updated sound theater – so that the film could play across the country in every theater. We see a similar trend happening now with 3D, IMAX, and VR versions of films where multiple versions of the product will cover multiple technological capabilities. A single film now can have a 70mm print for theaters with classic projectors, a digital print for most theaters, a 3D theatrical version, and can be distributed on DVD, Blu-ray, streaming platforms, and VR gaming consoles.

Similar to today's digital climate, the sound technology revolution involved several companies who developed different technologies to meet the studio systems' demand for synched sound. Vitaphone **sound-on-disc**, developed by Warner Brothers in 1926, paired a record player with a projector, thus pairing a sound system with an image system. Vitaphone technology debuted publicly with *Don Juan* (1926), where the New York Philharmonic Orchestra's performance of the score was distributed on disc alongside the film image. But Vitaphone's second feature, *The Jazz Singer* (1927), is largely known as the first "talkie" because it included dialogue on the disc as well as music.

Another type of sound technology, **sound-on-film** or **optical sound**, had several competitors. The most influential system, RCA Photophone, debuted in 1927 with music and sound effects for the

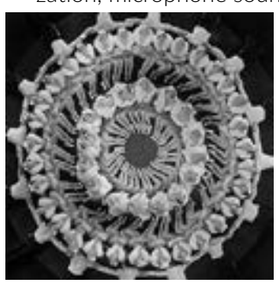
silent film *Wings* (1926). The sound-on-film or optical sound technology printed the audio track directly on the film strip itself, in a column near the sprockets. This became a far superior technology to the sound-on-disc, because sound was synched perfectly with image within the technology itself. Unlike sound-on-disc, which relied on a projectionist to start the disc and film at the same time and keep each element synched throughout the screening, optical sound needed only a specialized projector to be perfectly, mechanically synched. An optical soundtrack could also be cut just like the image portion of the film strip, so editing was more nuanced in sound-on-film than in sound-on-disc.

optical soundtrack

More technology needed to be developed to create a better-quality sound on set. **Boom microphones** were held over actors to capture dialogue more discreetly. **Directional microphones** captured sound from a single source, extracting it from the cacophony of noise around it. Cameras were first encased in **blimps**, huge moveable boxes with a window through which to film, so that the loud noise of cranking would not be picked up by the mics. **Clapboards** created synch points for image and sound (the visual of the clapboard closing with the sound of a "clap"). Many standardized visual elements of sets had to be changed because of the noise that they gave off – new lighting systems, set materials, and props had to be developed.

New genres were created to showcase all of this new technology. Starting in 1927 with *The Jazz Singer*, vaudeville performances were already the origin point for "talkies". But as the industry advanced, radically new spectacles were developed to create the expensive and popular genre of **musicals**. MGM's Busby Berkeley, a choreographer and director, dominated this genre with new advancements: moving cameras, crane shots, and geometric choreography. To see a Berkeley film, like *42nd Street* (1932), was not at all like seeing a musical performance on stage, at a distance. Musical films brought the audience into the dance, above the dance, and below the dance. It was an immersive and playful use of emerging 1930s cinema technologies, bringing a light-heartedness to cinema that had been largely dominated by serious melodrama in the 1920s. Within the genre, several sub-genres emerged. "Singing sweethearts" featured duets between musical or dancer celebrities. "Aquamusicals" featured synchronized swimming and diving – cameras would film through large aquariums and above the water with cranes. "Backstage musicals" were self-reflexive, telling the story of a play or musical being produced.

Perhaps the most famous "**backstage musical**" is *Singin' in the Rain* (Kelly/Donen, 1952), which tells the story of transitional filmmaking at the cusp of the "talkie" era. Set in 1927, *Singin' in the Rain* showcases many of the production difficulties of the transitional era, like sound synchronization, microphone sound capture, and acting voices. But as a 1950s musical, the film also displays many contemporary conventions and technologies, like an upbeat tone, creative choreography, celebrity duets with Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds, and Technicolor.


42nd Street (Berkeley, 1933)

Thrill of a Romance (Thorpe, 1945)

Naughty Marietta (Thorpe, 1935)

Ironically, the advent of sound technology also allowed for film to become truly silent for the first time. Once audiences became accustomed to listening to sound – hearing it, differentiating its layers, interpreting it – the most radical way to get attention was to turn the sound off. In 1931, Fritz Lang's *M* did just this. Contrasting boisterous musicals and chatty rom-coms, *M* turned to dark themes of child abduction and murder. When a little girl Elsie goes missing, Lang uses silence to show the gravity of her absence. We see shots of her empty chair at the dinner table, her ball rolling to nowhere, her balloon disappearing into the sky – all absolutely silent with no music or dialogue to ease the audience's nerves or provide solace.

M (Lang, 1931)

In *M*, Lang avoids a film score altogether. Especially in an early era of marveling at sound technology, this is a bold choice. Without music to guide our emotions, we pay more attention to the sound effects and diegetic music, like children singing about a man in black who's coming to get them or like the killer's whistle that indicates he is near. This whistle is cinema's first use of **leitmotif** in film. By repeating the whistle when the killer's shadow is on screen, the audience is trained to associate the killer with his whistle tune, and eventually its sound alone will start to conjure up the killer, even when he is off-screen. Between the dead silence and the leitmotif whistle, Lang showed that very careful and sparse sound design could carry audience tension, immersion, and emotion just as well as an overabundance of musical energy.

A lack of sound has always been uncomfortable to audiences, and current cinema has been using silence to create tension in thrillers and horror films. Uniquely, *A Quiet Place* (Krasinski, 2018) works silence into the diegesis by setting up a world where violent alien creatures attack by tracking noise. In this world, keeping silent becomes vital to survival. For the audience, a silent world is nerve-wracking to watch and physically immersive by creating lean-in moments to hear whispers and push-back moments at jump scares.

"Talkies", even in the 21st century, have a continued interest in the traditions of silent cinema. Beyond using silent cinema's creative visual techniques, some films adopt the interactive theatrical experience of silent cinema. Midnight screenings of *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, for example, will use actors in front of the screen who pantomime, parody, and interpret the film – serving a modern-day *benshi* function. Some films even take on the form of old silent film in order to evoke a particular time period. *The Artist* (2011) received accolades for its silent film form that told the story of Hollywood's silent-to-talkie transitional period. The film used a recorded musical score, but the scarce dialogue was presented in intertitles, like a silent film. *The Artist* was only the second mostly-silent film to win a Best Picture Academy Award since the Oscars began in 1929.

The Artist (Hazanavicius, 2011)

Benshi: Film narrators who describe a silent film while standing just to the side of the screen. A Japanese tradition.

Talkie: Early term for sound cinema. *The Jazz Singer* (1927) is commonly descried as the first "talkie", since it was the first sound film to feature spoken dialogue.

Sound-on-disc: Early sound technology that synched a record player's sound with the projector's image.

Sound-on-film (optical soundtrack): Sound technology that prints the sound track directly on the film strip itself. For celluloid film, this became the standard of production.

Boom microphone: A mic attached to a long pole. Allows dialogue to be recorded discreetly, without microphones embedded in costumes or props.

Directional microphone: A mic that captures sound from a single source. (As opposed to "omnidirectional mic")

Blimp: A large box that encases a camera to dampen the sound of cranking.

Musical: New genre created in response to the rise of sound film. Features singing, dancing, and spectacle-driven camerawork.

Backstage musical: Musical subgenre that is self-reflexive, telling the story of the making of a musical.

Leitmotif: A musical phrase that comes to be associated with a particular character or place.

Voice

One of the startling realizations of the sound cinema age was how important an actor's voice quality is to their performance. During the transitional period, many actors lost their jobs because their voices were off-putting or wrong for the role. In some cases, **dubbing** became a way to add a quality voice to a famous face that had a poor voice. Voice actors can record song or dialogue after the film production itself, matching their voice tempo to the image. The result is a collage of talent: one facial performance meshed with a separate voice performance. In *M* (Lang, 1931), Peter Lorre, who played the child killer, didn't know how to whistle, so Fritz Lang, the director, sang the whistle leitmotif for the film. Ironically in *Singin' in the Rain* (Kelly/Donen, 1952), the actress Jean Hagen, who plays the brash-voiced Lina, actually had a lovely voice. In the film, when Kathy (Debbie Reynolds) appears to be dubbing over Lina's voice, it is actually Hagen's lovely voice that is being used. So in fact, the film is using **ADR** (Automatic Dialogue Replacement), where an actor will lip sync their own performance in an audio booth after filming for clearer audio quality. Recently, it has become more important to audiences that actors are singing their own parts in musicals. Films like the remake *A Star is Born* (Cooper, 2018) are marketed on the fact that their actors can sing and have done their own ADR work.

Singin' in the Rain (Kelly/Donen, 1952)

Good-quality sound that is well-synched to the image is essential for our immersion into a diegetic world. Without crisp sound and without synchronization, we consider the film to be of poor quality and find it hard to watch. Yet some famous, high-quality films contain moments of badly synched sound or badly recorded sound. For example, Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) has a moment of horrible dubbing early on when the character Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) says "you'll get what's coming to you" to her colleagues. The ADR recording is choppy, as though it was overly manipulated in post-production, and the sound doesn't quite match Ripley's mouth movements. But *Alien* is considered a classic, so just one moment of bad ADR does not necessarily ruin a film. Contemporary cinema, even amateur independents, are raising the bar of production quality, becoming more and more professionalized. This is due to emerging affordable softwares and technologies that allow anyone to create a recording booth at home and a sound design on their laptop.

But one area that still receives overwhelming critique is foreign film dubbing. Produced in one language, then distributed with dubbing from a new set of voice-actors, foreign language dubbing runs the high risk of un-synched voice and image and often the dubbed recordings are not merged well with the rest of the sound design. Many viewers prefer the work of reading **subtitles** in foreign films than listening to a badly-dubbed version in their native language. This inconvenience of foreign film dubbing and subtitling was created by the sound film industry. In silent film, intertitles were inserted between footage, so that audiences did not have to juggle both reading and viewing the film, and the intertitles were easily switched out with translations for global distribution. But the fast-paced nature of "talkie" dialogue required a more efficient way of conveying information to foreign viewers. Though subtitles are often an inconvenience, many viewers become accustomed to the process of reading-while-watching after the first act. We see evidence of this broad acceptance of subtitles in the first foreign-language Best Picture win in Oscars history, for the South Korean film *Parasite* (Bong, 2019).

Dubbing: One actor's voice is replaced with another's in post-production.

ADR (Automatic Dialogue Replacement): An actor records her own voice in post-production for crisper sound quality.

Subtitles: Captioned dialogue printed on the screen on top of the film image. Used to provide translated dialogue information in foreign-language films and captioned dialogue for hearing-impaired viewers.

Sound effects

Similar to dubbing quality, sound effect quality is essential to the believability of a film's diegetic world. We need the image to match the sound we hear in order to feel that the world is cohesive. This is achieved with **sound fidelity** (or **synchronous sound**), which ensures that each prop that we see on screen makes a believable sound in post-production. **Foley** artists work hard to find the right material to make the right sound. But this material is not always the prop that we see on screen. In order to get "good" sound, a radically different material might be used. For example, the sound of rain is chaotic and difficult to purely record. So Foley artists will often use the sound of frying bacon,

which can be controlled in a studio, to simulate the sound of rain. Bacon has a crisp sound that is easily recordable and controllable, and when we hear it paired with the image of rain, our brains merge the two neatly. Other Foley pairings include crumpled chips bags to simulate fire, coconuts hit together to simulate horse hooves, and snapping celery to simulate bones breaking.

Although Foley switches out the prop's sound for another's, essentially "dubbing" one sound for another, it usually aims for sound fidelity because it aims to be invisible and continuous to the viewer. Alternatively, sound effects that are obviously different from the prop's sound **lack fidelity** (they are **asynchronous**). These discontinuous effects are often used for exaggerated or comic effect. For example, a character's horrible headache might be represented with the sound of a train whistle. The whistle is not the natural sound of a headache, but in this case asynchronous sound is the best way to exaggerate the agony of a headache. The train whistle is obviously unnatural and is not meant to fool the audience into a sense of realism. Similar asynchronous sound is used in the opening of *Daisies* (Chytilova, 1966), where two characters sit on the floor, moving their arms in robotic ways. Each robotic movement is paired with the sound of creaking wood, as though the characters are being described as wooden dolls and robots. The effect is comic, but it is also metaphorical, comparing the characters to inanimate playthings.

Daisies (Chytilova, 1966)

Once sound effects are created, their volume is determined by several factors. If the sound serves the general ambiance, like the sound of traffic in a city scene, the sound's volume will be brought down to merge with the rest of the sound design background. But if this sound is subjective – for example, the sound of traffic is annoying a character who is trying to sleep – the volume might be brought up to showcase its importance. **Sonic close-ups** bring attention to a specific object or a specific experience. They are used to create subjectivity in a film and to bring the audience closer to a certain detail. In *Blue* (Kieslowski, 1993), sonic close-ups of ordinary objects, like a teacup overflowing with tea, bring us close to the grieving hero's sensitive mental state.

Blue (Kieslowski, 1993)

It is not only props on screen that give us sound effects. A simple way of establishing off-screen action is with **off-screen sound**. This sound is still within the diegetic world, but it is just out of frame. Sometimes this out-of-reach quality can be intentionally frustrating; sometimes it is scary. But most often, off-screen sound creates the film's atmosphere and is essential to our subconscious acceptance of the story world's believability. An envelope of sound makes our central characters, who are often on screen, feel like they are part of a larger world, which is often off screen.

Beasts of the Southern Wild (Zeitlin, 2012)

Just as camera framing and movement choices create visual subjectivity in film, **sound perspective** creates aural subjectivity, carrying the viewer on an intimate journey of the story world. Sound perspective will often match a visual close-up with a sonic close-up. The more intimate we are with an object, the better we can hear it. And the more intimate we are with a character, the better we can hear what they hear. In *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Zeitlin, 2012), we can hear our hero's thoughts in voice-over narration along with the sounds that she experiences directly. When the hero picks up a chicken to listen to its chest, we hear the chicken's heartbeat loud in our ears too. This sound perspective brings us emotionally closer to the hero, who becomes our prosthetic eyes and ears in the film world.

Touch of Evil (Welles, 1958)

Perhaps the most famous use of sound perspective is in the opening of Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil*, where a 3-minute long-take crane shot takes us over a city to track a car carrying a bomb in its trunk. At the start of the long take, we see a bomb placed in the car's trunk, then when the car is turned on, its radio blasts loudly. As the car weaves through the city and the camera alternately loses it and catches up to it, we can hear that radio music constantly. Through Welles's use of sound perspective, we can judge how far away the car is from us (and the camera) based on the radio music's volume. When the music is faint, we instinctively know that we are losing the car. Even when off-screen, the car's presence and movements are felt through sound effects. When the car swings back on screen, the radio music volume blasts up, almost congratulating us for finding it. In *Touch of Evil*, Welles teaches filmmakers how to effectively create tension and immersion simply through the careful staging of sound.

Sound fidelity (synchronous sound): Each prop that we see on screen makes a believable sound in post-production. The image and sound appear to match.

Lack of fidelity (asynchronous sound): Sound effects are obviously different from the prop's "natural" sound. Often used for exaggerated or comic effect.

Foley: The reproduction of everyday sounds using various materials in a studio. Named after the sound-effects artist Jack Foley.

Sonic close-up: The volume of a certain sound effect is increased to bring attention to an object or experience.

Off-screen sound: Diegetic sound whose action is out of frame.

Sound perspective: Matches camera distance to sound volume. Sonic close-ups are matched with visual close-ups. Sound becomes muffled when it is far away from the camera or unimportant to the story.

Music

Film music takes the audience on an emotional journey that is largely based on instinctive reactions to certain sounds. Music scored in major keys will evoke joy and power in a film scene. Music scored in minor keys will evoke sadness, tragedy, or fear in the film scene. Hitchcock once described music as "company", and this is a great way to explain the musical term "accompaniment". In film, music serves as company for the characters and the audience, and so it can provide us with relief in the most intimately painful experiences. Our own feelings of loneliness are never as poetic or entertaining as a tragic hero's alienation when paired with a delicate, mournful soundtrack.

For some directors, this concept of musical "company" influences their decision to not include a score in their film. For example, Hitchcock decided not to hire a composer for his film *Lifeboat* (1944), which takes place entirely on a lifeboat floating in the middle of an ocean. When questioned on this decision, Hitchcock would retort: In the middle of an ocean, where would the orchestra sit? The film creates a high sense of isolation simply from the lack of aural "company" for the characters and the audience. Taking a cue from this technique, Zemeckis didn't want a musical score for his film *Cast Away* (2000), also a film about being stranded at sea. But Zemeckis did hire the composer Alan Silvestri, though he asked him to compose "music" without the use of instruments. Silvestri thought about this challenge carefully, and he started to record the sounds of wind in place of traditional instruments: happy wind tunes, tragic wind tunes, fearful wind tunes. The resulting orchestration of sound effects does not serve as non-diegetic "company" to the story; rather, it is completely naturalized in the story world and gives hints as to an emotional journey without feeling obvious and overly-manipulative to the audience.

Lifeboat (Hitchcock, 1944)

Cast Away (Zemeckis, 2000)

Many directors will work with a single composer for their entire careers, creating a tonal consistency across their films. Hitchcock worked closely with Bernard Herrmann for many of his films, and Herrmann was instrumental in creating the mysterious, disconcerting tone of thrillers. For *Vertigo* (1958), Herrmann used two undulating musical phrases that meet to alternately create harmony and dissonance. This score is a musical representation of the feeling of vertigo, alternately falling and picking itself up. It also keeps the viewer on edge, unsure of how the narrative will progress. Christopher Nolan works consistently with Hans Zimmer to create the tense scores for his films. Zimmer is known for his overblown brass notes and has been credited with starting the trend for "braaam" sound effect in action movies and film trailers. In *Inception*, Zimmer's style of incorporating traditional orchestration with electronic distortions matches the film's themes of artificially created, yet naturalized dream-worlds. Through both Herrmann's and Zimmer's scores, the orchestration matches the film themes to enhance them.

Other soundtracks are filled with pop music to achieve similar effect. The first film to use an entire score recorded by a pop musician was *The Graduate* (Nichols, 1967), and it revolutionized the landscape of film soundtracks. For *The Graduate*, Nichols hired the popular band Simon & Garfunkel to use some of their pre-written tracks and to write some new ones. The most famous track of the film album, "Mrs. Robinson", was actually a pre-written track titled "Mrs. Roosevelt", whose lyrics were slightly changed to match the name of the film character. The songs on the soundtrack, like many Simon & Garfunkel tracks about counterculture movements, are mournful and pessimistic, even when upbeat. The track "The Sound of Silence", which repeats three times in the film, perfectly matches the film's themes of loneliness, lack of ambition, and life stasis.

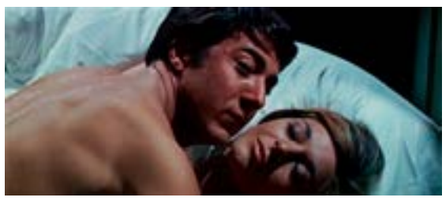
Since *The Graduate*, many films have taken the approach of hiring a single artist or band to create the entire soundtrack: from Cat Stevens's *Harold and Maude* (1971) soundtrack to Radiohead's *Suspiria* (2018) soundtrack. Others have heavily featured a single artist in the soundtrack, like Kendrick Lamar on the *Black Panther* (2018) soundtrack. But most films now feature a medley of artists who each contribute a different tone, emotion, or association to the scene. For example, *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) uses Paul Simon's "Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard", an upbeat song about juvenile delinquency, to match a montage where a grandfather teaches his young grandkids how to steal and gamble. The film also uses Elliott Smith's "Needle in the Hay" to enhance the sadness and desperation of a character's suicide attempt. And it invokes 1970s nostalgia and associations with gentle, pleasing ballads through Nico's "These Days" track.

Sound design

Soundtracks create a "wallpaper" for films that can cover over imperfections in other areas, such as mise-en-scène continuity, script quality, and acting. The job of a Sound Designer is to create a cohesive world that feels alive with energy, momentum, and possibility. Unmotivated lags in the soundtrack or moments of "bad" sound can ruin this sense of a cohesive world, and thus break this "wallpaper" continuity.

Diagram 5: L-cuts and J-cuts. An L-cut bleeds Audio 1 into Video 2, making an "L" shape in the mixer. A J-cut bleeds Audio 3 into Video 2, making a "J" shape in the mixer.

Along with dubbing, Foley, and musical soundtracks, Sound Designers use a few standard principles to create realistic and believable soundscapes. One standard practice is **sound bridges**, which take sound from one scene and bleed it into another. This creates a sense of continuity between sharp cuts and keeps the viewer involved in the story without being put off by the sudden change in scenery. A sound bridge can join scenes in two ways: it can bleed sound from the next scene in the first (a "J cut") or it can bleed sound from one scene into the next (an "L cut"). **J-cuts** anticipate the image that will come. **L-cuts** remind of the image that was just seen.



The Graduate (Nichols, 1967)

In *The Graduate*, J-cuts are used to merge two different lives that the main character Benjamin is leading: life at home after college and an affair with a married neighbor. In a sequence that is meant to show how Benjamin confuses his two lives, we hear his father's voice bleed into an intimate bedroom scene. We see Benjamin in his lover's bed while hearing his father accuse: "Ben, what are you doing?" As Benjamin turns his head to look up, the film cuts to a shot of his father outside, looking down on him. At first, it appears as though Benjamin was caught in a compromising position because of the J-cut that bled his father's voice in from the next scene. But in fact, we realize, Benjamin is just floating in the pool outside with his father accusing him of being unam-

Apocalypse Now (Coppola, 1979)

Blue Velvet (Lynch, 1986)

bitious and lazy.

In *The Graduate* example, the J-cut is used for discontinuous effect, to confuse and worry the viewer. But most J-cuts simply set up the sensory envelope for the next image. Before we see an establishing shot of the glorious Jurassic Park island, we want to be set up with a bit of glorious music and the sound of helicopter propellers in the previous shot. Or before we see the face of our hero's long-lost love, we want to hear her voice say "Hello, stranger" while the camera is still on his face.

L-cuts work in the opposite way – they linger on what we had just seen as we move into the next image. If we want an emotion to follow into the next setting or time-period, we might use an L-cut to bleed a previous piece of music or sound effect into the next establishing shot. For example, in the opening of *Apocalypse Now* (Coppola, 1979), the audio memory of the Vietnam War bleeds into our hero's present time: as he stares at a ceiling fan, we can still hear the sound of helicopter propellers. Or an L-cut might hide the visual cut in shot/reverse-shot editing: one character might be ranting angrily, and while we are still listening to his words, we visually cut to his partner's face looking aggravated at the lecture.

Another key tool to use in hiding the artificiality of soundscapes and editing cuts is **room tone**. Every room, unless extremely well-padded, emits a unique room tone that will be recorded in every actor's microphone. Cutting between recorded on-set sound and ADR feels artificial and choppy unless the room tone is layered over to "wallpaper" the two audio clips together. Often, room tone will be recorded separately to serve as this bridge between variously recorded clips, and often it is not noticeable to the audience. But some filmmakers, like David Lynch, will intentionally bring attention to the room tone, creating an intentionally discontinuous effect. See, for example, Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977) to hear how high-volume room tone will sound like a terrifying factory soundscape of gears turning and textures shrieking.

Like asynchronous sound effects, Lynch's soundscapes often feel unnatural and unfitting to their image. For example, in the opening of *Blue Velvet* (1986), the camera fluidly lowers from a suburban yard down through the grass and into the earth, which is crawling with bugs. As the camera lowers down, the soundscape moves from the 1950s track "Blue Velvet" to a medley of Foley effects that include squishy mud sounds and mechanical drum spinning. The Foley soundscape is not meant to be synchronous with the image of bugs, but it is meant to obviously evoke a sense of disgust that represents the underworld living just under the surface of a 1950s-style suburbia.

Ultimately, sound design is meant to guide our interpretation of the image. Objective soundscapes tend to create a synchronous, stable stage upon which experiences can unfold in a realistic way. Subjective sound, often inserted into this objective soundscape, will give the audience peaks of individual experience, sometimes asynchronous and usually immersive. These peaks of subjective sound bring emotion and personal experience to the image through various forms of sound perspective. In this way, we see that "good" sound design corresponds to the goals of "good" image: both create a believable and naturalistic world and also provide particular worldviews or points of view of that established space.

Sound bridge: Bleeds sound from one scene into another. Creates a sense of continuity between sharp cuts.

J-cut: A type of sound bridge that bleeds the next scene's sound into the first scene's image.

L-cut: A type of sound bridge that bleeds a scene's sound into the next scene's image.

Room tone: An ambient sound that is emitted from every room. Recorded room tone provides naturalism to a scene and helps to blend together sound recorded from different sites (for example, on set and in studio).

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:
SOUND

(1) How does the meaning of a scene shift with a movement from diegetic to non-diegetic sound (or vice versa)? Get into groups. Using your cell phone, film one scene or scenario *twice*-- once with diegetic sound, and once with non-diegetic sound. The only thing that should change in your scene is the type of sound. How have your diegetic and non-diegetic sound choices affected audience understanding of your scene?

(2) Although many consider sound to be secondary to image in cinema, sound in cinema can create worlds of meaning, a soundscape that constantly feeds information to the audience. How can we explore the world building that sound engages in, even without the benefit of being attached to a cinematic image? With a group of friends make your own sound collage to define a place. Choose a location that you wish to convey a sense of. Using on-location sounds, as well as dialogue, sound effects, music and/or other realistic and subjective sounds, create a sound design on Audacity (or some other free audio editing platform) that best communicates your chosen place.

(3) In what ways can sound open up our understanding of the narrative system of a film? Sound can be diegetic (existing within the story world eg. dialogue, off-screen sound), non-diegetic (external to the story world eg. voiceovers, soundtracks), and in some cases even occur within the minds of characters as a type of internal diegetic sound. What are some examples? How can narration use sound to communicate mental states and information to film audiences?

CHAPTER SEVEN

GENRE

ROMANTIC COMEDY 106

SCIENCE FICTION 107

HORROR 110
- SLASHER FILMS 110
- J-HORROR 112

FILM NOIR 113

GENRE

We go to see a movie with certain expectations based on its **genre**. For example, we expect the formula of a good action film to contain "good guys" and "bad guys". Often in action movies, the villain is portrayed as a foreigner. Often the action hero begins as an outcast or experiences a deep betrayal or conflict that forces him further away from law and order in order to exact vigilante justice, and thereby restore stability to the storyworld. We often expect car chases, explosions, gunfire, beautiful women and choreographed fight sequences. In the Marvel Universe for example, diverse groups of superheroes work outside the rules of humans, following their own moral code of conduct to protect humanity from evil. In *The Bourne Identity* (2002), *The Matrix* (1999), and *Kill Bill* (2003), characters live at the margins of society and, as rogue figures, are able to use violence to resolve the narrative crisis and return order to the world by destroying the "bad guys" and their systems of power.

Audience pleasure in genre stems from the familiarity of repetition, but it also stems from the ways in which films deviate from the expected script.

Genre refers to the way in which films are categorized or marketed by film studios and the expectations that such categories bring to bear on the cinema spectator themselves. Film theorist Rick Altman defines genre in terms of its predictability and repetition of situations, themes and icons. So genre can be examined in terms of its **structural conventions** (expectations of plot, character, setting or style), **thematic codes** (for example, the themes of social corruption and infection contained in the zombie flick) or **iconography** (objects that instantly denote genre such as cowboy hats within the Western). Audience pleasure in genre stems from the familiarity of repetition, but it also stems from the ways in which films deviate from the expected script. We both want to know what to expect from a film and we also want to be surprised, to have our expectations exceeded. While audiences might choose to view a film based on expectations and familiarity with the particular genre, a director can surprise the audience by manipulating these genre expectations.

We just have to look at movie posters and advertisements to see the way that the studio wants us to understand a film. Through looking at the staged conventions and iconography in the posters, we have immediate expectations, even before we watch the film, based on our own knowledge of the signaled genre conventions. In *The Matrix* (1999), for example, the characters represented in the poster all possess various guns and wear leather pants, trench coats, and sunglasses, highlighting their mysterious, rogue nature. The visible weaponry and cyberpunk appearance of the characters in the poster seem to be icons of the action film, but can also signal the science fiction genre, especially through its backdrop of computer-generated code that forces a questioning of reality. Genres are not neat and stable categories despite frequently being categorized as just one thing. Often a film can inhabit several different generic codes that audiences will recognize.

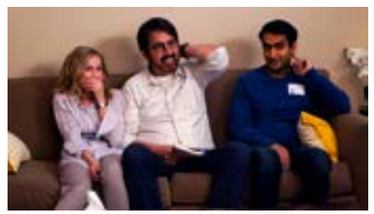
The Matrix
(Wachowskis, 1999)

Romantic Comedy

Similarly, when we buy a ticket to see a **romantic comedy** (rom-com), we already know that a boy and a girl will first hate, then love, then hate each other again as they are forced to reconsider their understandings of modern relationships and their own selves. One member of the couple will succumb to a grand romantic gesture that will result in the couple living happily ever after. Sometimes the couple might love each other right from the start, only to fracture in the face of their own personal insecurities or immaturities. But the rom-com typically ends with the reunion of the couple and the sense that love does indeed conquer all.

While most rom-coms follow this template, some challenge audience expectations. *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997), for example, does not end with the female lead (Julia Roberts) marrying her best friend, despite all her comedic machinations throughout the film. Rather, it ends in her helping the union of her best friend to another woman, despite her feelings of love. In this film, the grand romantic gesture becomes a gesture of sacrifice that ends all chances of a romantic union between boy and girl, as the boy marries another.

The Big Sick (2017), on the other hand, begins with the love story of a couple, which falters in the face of the main character's fear of losing his Pakistani-American family by dating outside the culture and faith, as well as the life threatening illness that suddenly befalls the female lead. Although *The Big Sick* ultimately follows many of the generic expectations of the rom-com, it departs from the romantic comedy's typical narrative conventions by having the male lead spend most of the film with the female lead's parents as she fights for her life in a medically-induced coma. In this way, the boy-meets-girl-boy-and-girl-fall-in-love-only-to separate-and-reunite trope of the rom-com changes to boy-meets-girl-boy-and-girl-fall-in-love-only-to-lose-girl-and-fall-in-love-with-girl's-parents-then-be-rejected-by-girl-only-to-reunite. Most Hollywood rom-coms feature a white heterosexual couple at its center and focus chiefly on the perspective of the female romantic lead. *The Big Sick* undermines some of these expectations with its Pakistani-American male lead, the point of view that the film largely follows.



The Big Sick (Showalter, 2017)

Genres: Categories of story-types that are used by studios for marketing purposes. The predictability and repetition of genre elements is the basis for film-watching choices, audience expectations, and creative surprises.

Structural conventions: Expectations of plot, character, setting, or style.

Thematic codes: Subtext embedded within genres and subgenres, often based in historical context.

Iconography: Objects that instantly identify a genre or subgenre.

Romantic comedy: Genre that follows a simple structural convention: a boy and girl alternate loving and hating each other until they are reunited through a grand romantic gesture.

Science Fiction

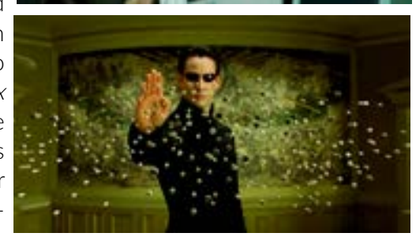
George Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) is widely considered one of the earliest examples of the science fiction film that set key conventions of the genre – spectacular use of special effects, journey to another world (the moon), and the iconography of aliens and space ships producing themes of space travel, discovery, and the fear of the unknown. The science fiction plots tend towards themes of science, technology, ethical or moral anxieties, and philosophies that shed light on humanity and society. Visual effects and advanced technology props, such as teleportation machines and hovercrafts, characterize science fiction as a speculative film genre imagining future technologies and realities. Characters range from aliens and artificial intelligence to scientists and government officials. Sci-fi heroes often bear the sacrificial weight of trying to save the world.

A Trip to the Moon (Méliès, 1902)

The prototypical story of the **sci-fi genre** revolves around the device of the *novum*, Latin for the "new thing". The novum is a technology or cultural trend pushed into a logical, but often dystopian, endpoint in order to distance it from the audience, making it appear foreign. The punch line of these films is often that the novum is not actually a "new thing" at all. The plot reveals that the future version of the "new thing" was on earth all along or was Earth itself. For example, *Planet of the Apes* (1968) tells the story of American astronauts who crash onto an unfamiliar planet in the future where intelligent, articulate apes subjugate mute humans. The film ends with the shocking discovery of a buried Statue of Liberty by the lead astronaut (Charlton Heston) as he escapes his enslavement by the apes, and the horrible understanding that this strange future planet, the new thing, is actually Earth.

Planet of the Apes (Schaffner, 1968)

The Matrix is also set in the future, but one where machines have taken over the world, manufacturing incubated humans as batteries and keeping these humans subdued and unaware in a virtual world (the Matrix). The real world, on the other hand, is a dystopic space where the last remnants of freed humans fight a losing battle against the machines in a long drawn out war. Computer programmer Neo (Keanu Reeves) discovers the deception and becomes 'The One", a special person able to move freely through the different realities of the Matrix and the real world, and a hero destined to save humanity from their enslavement. *The Matrix* uses the figure of an everyday worker, a spiritually empty cog in the machine, to reflect a general malaise of contemporary audiences towards a capitalist society. And the film reinvigorates a need for 'reality' in the audience through Neo's virtual body and his experiences in the Matrix. In Neo, we are given a young man despe-



The Matrix (Wachowskis, 1999)

rate to believe that he is special, distinct from all the other copies and illusions as he fights to defeat bureaucratic clones within a hyper-industrialized landscape.

Genre is not static; rather, it is heavily influenced by its current cultural environment. In this way, genre films are time capsules that contain the specific cultural references and mindsets of the time and place in which they were made. Science fiction film would experience a surge in production in the 1950s, a period also known as the Golden Age of Science Fiction Films, due to the famous UFO sightings in the late 1940s into the 1950s near Roswell, New Mexico, and in Washington State. And during this Golden Age, the films' theme of anxiety about mass destruction is clearly influenced by common 1950s nuclear and communist fears. With images of the massive destruction of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945, Americans were more aware than ever before of the ability of man to destroy himself and others. The rise of Communism and the continued threat of nuclear warfare during the Cold War in the 1950s led to widespread paranoia concerning the infiltration of communists within American lives. This 'Red Scare' resulted in witch-hunts, loss of employment, and imprisonment, touching all areas of American society. Numerous sci-fi films such as *The Thing from another World* (1951) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) tapped into a pervasive fear of communism imagined through themes of infection, the uncertainty of identity, and the notion that the enemy looks just like you. The subgenre of the monster or mutant film would also emerge from these apocalyptic concerns, and lend itself to a reworking of the horror genre.

Gojira (Honda, 1954)

In blending genres, Ishiro Honda's science fiction *kaiju* (monster movie) *Gojira* (*Godzilla*, 1954) remains one of the most successful monster-as-allegory films. Gojira emerged both from the trauma of the atomic bomb and the awareness of nuclear warfare as a continuing threat to Japanese lives as evidenced by the Lucky Dragon 5 incident, in which radiation exposure continued well after combat. Six years after the end of World War II, American military tested a hydrogen bomb near a Japanese fishing vessel filled with civilians, exposing them to radiation. As a reference to the Lucky Dragon 5 incident, *Gojira* begins with an explosion of light that destroys the peaceful routine of men on a fishing vessel. This light configures the monster Gojira as an allegory for an atomic bomb. Later in the film, characters watch the aftermath of Gojira's rampage through Tokyo on television. The panning camera shows a Tokyo in ruins, deliberately recalling the war torn post-World War II landscape. Honda used singing children to create sentimentality and, in highlighting the true victims of nuclear threat, stressed the importance of peace. The figure of a scientist in a lab coat is a crucial character within the sci-fi film universe because he translates a scientific or rational decision into human terms. It is through his humanity, or lack thereof, that we understand the stakes of the crisis and political response. In the end of *Gojira*, after using a powerful weapon of mass destruction to destroy the monster, scientist Serizawa sacrifices his own life to take the secret of his weapon to his grave in fear that the inherent weakness of man will lead to his weapon's use for further global warfare.

Traditionally, science fiction as a genre privileges male leads and, thus, largely male action and concerns. In earlier classical film, women chiefly occupy the role of damsel in distress, object of desire, or subordinate sidekicks who serve little purpose beyond propping up the male lead. Even as late as *Star Wars: Episode IV—A New Hope* (1977), arguably the most culturally impactful science fiction film in contemporary cinema, the male robotic drones had more dialogue than the 'real' women did in the film. The Second Wave of Feminism in the 1960s-1970s ushered in new representations of women with the agency to act and make decisions on their own in Science Fiction cinema. Ellen Ripley in *Alien* (1979) provides the quintessential example of a strong female lead at the helm of a historically male-oriented genre. The huge success of the *Alien* franchise would lead to increased visibility and popularity of female heroes within the sci-fi landscape who escape gender expectations placed upon them. In more contemporary films, like *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991), *Arrival* (2016), *Gravity* (2013), and *Her* (2013), female perspectives and storylines have occupied a greater stage. This evolution of the sci-fi genre shows how the film industry has evolved according to audience expectations and has negotiated the complexity of gender politics in the world today.

Ex_Machina (Garland, 2014)

In the *Ex_Machina* (2014) poster, the shocking image of a young woman's interior circuitry clues us in to the thematic tension between human and android that will be central to the film. While the sterility and futuristic feel of the lab setting suggests that the genre belongs to science fiction, the text of the poster warns of the machine's human desire "to survive" and the low-key lighting of the shot indicates the possible presence of another genre – horror. By highlighting the internal "difference" of the female android from a female human, the poster troubles the common sci-fi message that humanity is essential to "save the world" and poses a monstrosity in the android's enigmatic quality that is so close to being human. The film refuses to hide the android qualities of this almost-human character, and her obvious android-ness forces the audience to meditate on contemporary fears of scientific excess and gender relations. Ava, as an android, shatters the binaries of gender expectations and refuses narrative confinement within romantic plotlines with her male leads. She defies the trope of the damsel in distress while also manipulating the same trope to escape her enslavement by performing fear and helplessness for the male characters. Androids and cyborgs in sci-fi cinema build upon the themes of what is widely considered the first science fiction text, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), which is about the artificial creation of life and the scientist who is horrified at his creation. In *Frankenstein* , we explore the idea of playing God and questions of the human, and we also grapple with our own humanity in the face of scientific progress, race, gender and other social concerns.

Science Fiction: Speculative genre that follows themes of science, technology, ethical or moral anxieties, and social philosophy. Includes iconography of futuristic technology, scientists, or a dystopian setting. Often allegorical stories that address historical events and social systems through subtext.

Horror

When we talk about **Horror**, what we are really talking about is how visualizations of violence, terror, and boundary-crossing taboos shock the viewer into navigating their own fears and anxieties, in terms of both the nation and the body. Similar to the Science Fiction film genre, horror delves into social and political issues that preoccupy the nation, but horror cinema focuses particularly on bodies, especially female bodies, and issues of gender and sexuality. It is little wonder that science fiction and horror genres often cohabitate in their shared concern for exploring social ills and repressions. As horror runs the gamut from psychological and horror-thrillers, to Italian *gialli* (murder-mysteries) and slasher films, it is easier to discuss horror in terms of its major genre and cultural conventions rather than find one fixed definition that defines all horror. In this way, we will briefly examine the slasher and J-Horror subgenres to point out how their specific concerns shape the aesthetic look and genre conventions of horror.

Slasher films

The **Slasher Film** surged into massive popularity during the golden period of the 1980s with John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978), Sean S. Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* (1980), and Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). These films are largely credited with launching the numerous imitations, sequels, and franchises that recycled characters and plotlines, giving rise to the genre. A key plot characteristic of the slasher subgenre is the repeated situation of naïve teenagers who journey to an isolated area and, away from easy access to help or means of escape, find themselves the prey of a serial killer who picks them off one by one. The teenagers, falling into the archetypes of the virgin, the slut, the alpha male or dumb jock, the intellectual and/or the slacker, all typically die except for the virtuous one. Film theorist Carol J. Clover coined the slasher film trope "**the Final Girl**", named after a common "virtuous" character who usually holds a gender-neutral name and 'deserves' to survive because she embodies societal expectations of female virtue and heroism. After being terrorized for most of the film, the Final Girl eventually fights back to be the only survivor at the film's end.

READ CAROL CLOVER'S ESSAY

The two most important characters in the horror film is the monster, who is coded male, and the suffering female hero-victim. Without the threat of the monster and the vulnerability of his victim, there can be no horror. Unlike the science fiction genre, the horror film often features a female lead with a few notable exceptions such as the Italian *giallo*, which classically alternates between a male or female amateur detective who stumbles upon the murder of a beautiful woman and seeks out her killer. It is also worth noting that the killer in the Italian *giallo* often moves between genders too, just like the hero. In Hollywood cinema, the killer in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) infamously embodies both male and female counterparts as he seamless switches between young, charming innkeeper, Norman, and his murderous dead mother. Although not a slasher film, Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017) importantly inverts the placement of a young white woman as hero-victim in the horror film with an African American male in order to interrogate liberal biases and race relations in contemporary America. Regardless of the gender and race of the killer-victim dynamic, the slasher film is not horror without the iconography of the bloodcurdling scream, vibrant red blood, and the desperate but fruitless flight of a beautiful victim from the killer.

So incredibly ridiculous is the chase scene in the classic slasher film that many media lampoon the token helpless female victim who repeatedly trips and falls in her heedless race away from the killer who inevitably kills her due to her poor choices. Instead of running towards a well-lit main road filled with pedestrians, for instance, the victim will dart into the darkest alley with a locked and rusted chain-linked fence at its end. Effectively trapped, the female victim becomes easy pickings for the killer with his huge chainsaw, machete, razor or large hunting knife that will dismember and puncture her flesh in a parody of sexual penetration. While the genre of horror often plays with identity and gender fluidity, especially in its classical form, most slasher movies deliver a simple formula for audience pleasure: the killer slashes, pierces, mutilates, tortures, and humiliates female bodies as the viewer occupies and takes pleasure in a violent point of view. As the cult of the killer grew in popularity, inundated by ever-growing franchises, the killer in the slasher film would eventually become the anti-hero, eclipsing the victim's perspective.

By the end of the 1980s, audiences felt a growing fatigue towards the genre's predictable plotlines, and it would not be until the late 1990s that films like Wes Craven's *Scream* (1996) would reinvigorate the horror genre. *Scream* broke the genre by parodying the clichéd tropes of the slasher film while also challenging established genre expectations by, for example, having a sexually active Final Girl. A genre-breaker wears its violation of traditional expectations of genre on its sleeve. By making visible to audiences the conventions that denote the genre, genre-breakers invite laughter in its self-conscious commentary. Genre-benders, on the other hand, more subtly work on audience anticipations of genre, and they subvert these expectations of convention, thereby misleading the viewer. In *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, for instance, Wes Craven merged the supernatural with the slasher film by introducing an undead killer and setting the film in a dreamscape.

Scream (Craven, 1996)

A Nightmare on Elm Street (Craven, 1986)

The dream logic of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* pushed the boundaries of the genre to create a startlingly unique and unpredictable audiovisual landscape that hooked audiences and made Freddy Kruger an instant star.

Horror cinema depends heavily on the historical archetype of the damsel-in-distress, found in gothic literature and early cinema, and the anxiety she produces. Sound effects and music play an especially significant role in deepening suspense and audience tension. German Expressionism (see Film History Chapter), with its use of shadows and disorienting mise-en-scène to reflect character subjectivity, influence the look and feel of the horror genre today. The horror genre also borrows its low-key lighting, which creates tone and tension through the production of mysterious and menacing spaces from which monsters can leap upon the unsuspecting victim, from early film movements. The damsel-in-distress works in tangent with the common gothic trope of the 'beast in the boudoir'. From *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) to *King Kong* (1933) and *Frankenstein* (1994), monsters in Classical Horror cinema constantly breach the bedroom of the nightgowned damsel in distress, who is unable to save herself, and, unfortunately for her, who cannot be saved by the male hero either. The gaze of the audience is important to the horror aesthetic. As our eyesight is repeatedly aligned with the monster through point-of-view shots and high-angle shots on the victim, we adopt the monster's subject position as he secretly gazes upon women. We thus become the monster who breaches the bedroom. In modern horror, with the arrival of the Final Girl, we see a clear shift from the girl of Classical Horror who needs to be saved to the girl who saves herself and has an ultimate accounting with the monster she will kill.

J-horror (Japanese Horror)

Psychological horror is a subgenre of horror that embodies the spectator within the growing fear and mental instability of its characters. While the slasher film typically follows the linear structure of a Classical Hollywood narrative, psychological horror tends more towards elliptical or surreal storylines. One of the key differences between the slasher film and psychological horror lies in the figure of the monster/killer. Even when the mysterious killer in the slasher film demonstrates seemingly mystical properties such as returning repeatedly from the dead, his monstrosity is grounded in a very human body and an explainable backstory, unlike the ghosts, ghouls, evil entities, dreamscapes, and unexplainable phenomenon of psychological horror. Film theorist Robin Wood (1986) famously argued that:

> ***"[the] true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization represses or oppresses.."***[3]

An investigation of J-Horror reveals how psychological horror delves into the repressed of society through an exploration of mental states and primal fears.

Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *Cure* (1997), Miike Takeshi's *Audition* (1999), and Nakata Hideo's *Ring* (1998) exploded audiences' perceptions of the horror film in the 1990s, with their supernatural elements and social criticism of modern life. **J-Horror** emerged within the historical moment of millennial Y2K paranoia as the 20th century drew to a close, and it addressed how celluloid, now an antiquated technology, began to be replaced by digital technology. These films explore the cinematic medium and find cultural "ghosts" within the technology. J-horror meditates on Japan's meteoritic economic rise after their defeat in World War II and the cost of this rise on the Japanese individual. Concerned with the spiritual emptiness of the modern individual, their alienation, and loss of identity and tradition, these films provide a commentary on Japan and the modern self. The J-Horror genre features urban and suburban settings, using apartment complexes as sites of social and familial estrangement. The everyday is turned strange through inventive and eerie sound designs. The main editing technique of the horror genre, the **jump scare**, is eclipsed by the creation of unique soundscapes that create psychological spaces of madness and terror. Although composed of various narratives, in J-horror the supernatural narrative tends to dominate. It is the vengeful, wet female ghosts (***onryou***), stemming from Japanese folklore and literature, with their long black hair, corpse-pale skin and inhuman movements that are the principal trope of J-Horror. Like many psychological ghost stories, the point of view or story of the tragic ghost wronged by society is important to the narrative arc of J-Horror. Solving the mystery of the ghost's haunting allows a deeply critical insight into alienating modern life and the fractured family. Mothers and (ghost) children haunt the cinematic frame and the figure of the father is an especially distant or absent one.

Ring, for example, follows a news reporter and single mother, Reiko Asakawa, as she attempts to solve the mystery of an anonymous video tape before it kills her and her son, Yoichi. Seven days after viewing the video, an *onryou*, called Sadako, emerges from a well to wreak her vengeance on the spectator. A young child murdered by her parent, Sadako ultimately seeks a mother figure in Reiko, whose own family unit is broken. Through the figure of the abandoned child embodied by Sadako, both Reiko and her estranged ex-husband come together to save their own child and fleetingly reunite the family. Nakata continues this theme of modern alienation and broken households through his film *Dark Water* (2002) and its young, lonely ghost, Mitsuko. *Dark Water* positions the single working mother, Yoshimi, in the midst of an ugly divorce and custody battle with her husband over their young daughter Ikuko. With little money, Yoshimi moves with her daughter into an old apartment with a small leak on its ceiling that over the course of the film grows like a pregnant belly until it finally bursts in a torrent of dark water and black hair of the *onryou*. The spreading stain on the ceiling and constant dripping water becomes a metaphor for the growing anxiety felt towards the tarnished Japanese household that the professional woman fails to maintain. Herself a child traumatized by parental neglect, Yoshimi must embrace her role as a mother and form a family with Mitsuko, her new uncanny child, in order to save her real child. There is a concern with mothers in these films, and Nakata, in particular, points to the professional woman in both *Ring* and *Dark Water* as the problem in modern Japan. Both Reiko and Yoshimi ultimately have to adopt traditional roles of caretaker and nurturer to lay their respective ghosts to rest.

Ring (Nakata, 1998)

Dark Water (Nakata, 2002)

Mothers proliferate in the slasher film genre, but where these mothers are just "bad" mothers, mothers in J-horror can also be the films' heroes and are given opportunities to achieve redemption through great suffering and sacrifice. The *onryou* and other ghosts in J-Horror return us to Wood's concept of "the return of the repressed" in the horror film. Ghosts within Japanese horror point to a sense of something lost or repressed within the culture of Japan that forces itself into sight and examination through the genre of horror. Subtext, what lies behind the literal, is essential to understanding Horror.

Horror genre: Broadly covers themes of violence, terror, taboos, fears, and anxieties. Sometimes allegorical, focusing on issues of female bodies, gender, and sexuality. Stylistically built on low-key lighting, sound effects, and jump scares.

Slasher Film: Horror sub-genre popularized in the 1980s that typically features naive teenagers who become the prey of a serial killer.

Final Girl: A slasher film trope coined by Carol J. Clover. Describes a female character who survives the serial killer's attacks and becomes the film's hero.

J-Horror: Horror sub-genre from Japan that critiques alienating modern life through figures of ghosts (*onryu*) and familial relations.

Film Noir

Film Noir, literally translated as "black film," was a term coined in French journals in 1946 to initially describe a similarity of content and style in five Hollywood films: *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Laura* (1944), *Murder, My Sweet* (1944), and *The Lost Weekend* (1945). Considered the quintessential American film genre, film noir must be situated historically and culturally to explain what lies behind the growth of these dark films during the 1940s. Film noir brid-

3 *"'An Introduction to the American Horror Film," in* American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film. *(Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 1979), p.10.*

ges World War II America— a time when the nation was still struggling out from under the Great Depression and President Roosevelt had instituted the New Deal in an attempt to stave off the massive unemployment rocking the nation. Many men felt impotent and humiliated in their inability to support their families during the Depression, and these feelings were exacerbated with the entry of women into the workforce during the war. The very real presence of the working woman would give rise to the femme fatale or deadly woman in film noir, a villainous love interest who inevitably dies, but not before leading (or attempting to lead) the male protagonist to his doom. The ***femme fatale*** is often balanced out by the "good", but bland, woman who acts as a safety net for the male protagonist.

In the first decade of its incarnation, film noir reflected the anxiety and pessimism of the times. Influenced by popular detective novels and German Expressionist cinema, these noir films dealt with essentially fragile and disillusioned men despite their appearance of tough machoism. Humphrey Bogart epitomized the noir anti-hero, who was typically an investigator or detective, spoke in fast--paced dialogue, was cynical towards women, and lacked moral scruples despite having a code of his own. In *The Maltese Falcon*, when Sam Spade explains why he must turn in his femme fatale lover to the cops, it is not solely because she confesses to killing his partner for her own gain, but largely because he fears being made to look the fool over her. Perhaps it might be better to call film noir a cinema of fear or a crisis of masculinity as the stock characters all work to shore up the masculine confidence of the male lead. In contrast to the anti-hero, the villains of film noir are habitually foreigners and are often coded queer through their style of dress or mannerisms. Against the excessive masculinity of the American noir lead, foreigners are shown to be less masculine and, sometimes, feminized. Noir cinema reflected a changing America filled with uncertainty and perversity both through its generic characters, and through its use of low-key lighting and cinematic angles.

The 1930 Hays Production Code was a form of self-censoring in Hollywood that, among other things, limited sexuality and violence in the cinema. Queerness, adultery, perversion and lustful kissing were also prohibited under the auspices of the Production Code. Directors had to find clever ways of visually representing the decadence of the film noir world. Through lighting, symbolism, and the use of ellipses, these dark films would suggest sexual interactions between couples without explicitly showing them. In *The Maltese Falcon*, for example, Spade bends over to kiss Brigid, who is lying seductively on the couch. The camera frustrates any completion of the action, moving past Sam and towards an open window. When next we see the couple, they call each other "sweetheart", suggesting the changed status of their relationship. The cinematography of film noir functions to deepen the tension and sense of anxiety that suffuses the frame. From a deep focus camera emphasizing foreground and background, extreme close-ups and low angles that bring ceilings into view, film noir undermines Classical Hollywood's mode of invisibility and realism. Cinematic space becomes dynamic and psychological, unsettling the audience and revealing new aspects in characters and objects.

Many consider the year 1947 as the death of film noir in its original form. It is not that noir films stopped being made, in fact, film noir continues to be one of the more recognizable film styles in cinema today, but film noir changed with the coming of the Red Purge to Hollywood. The men and women who had used the film genre for social critique found themselves largely silenced and encouraged by the President of the Motion Picture Association of America to create films that glorified American life. There continues to be much argument over whether film noir constitutes a genre. Some argue that film noir is a director's style rather than a typified collection of films. For our purposes, it is clear that the distinct look and feel of film noir immediately creates generic expectations within the viewer. While today's film noir no longer looks like the films of the 1940s, it has evolved to cross numerous genres and to meet the needs of the times.

The Maltese Falcon
(Huston, 1941)

Film Noir: Genre of the 1940s that features low angles, close-ups, harsh shadows, and deep space to represent psychological turmoil and anxiety. Associated with several historical moments: post-Depression threatened masculinity, the Hays Code, and the Red Scare.

Femme fatale: A seductive yet dangerous female villain in the film noir genre.

It is important to understand that genre is heterogeneous; despite its marketability or surface appearance as one fixed category, most contemporary films are composed of multiple genres. Genres bleed across barriers like amoeba to touch other genres and produce unpredictable texts, often in the midst of narrative predictability. Even when a film is dominated by one clear genre, it will often test the boundaries of its form, leading to continued argument over what determines one genre from another. Illustratively, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* provides a point of argument between those who label it a slasher film, for its obvious slashing of young teenagers and presence of a Final Girl, and those who claim the film for psychological horror with its supernatural killer. Despite its imitative character, and thus often predictable outcomes, film genre does not close off the possibility of different readings. In the end, these categories depend on how audience desires drive the popularity of certain types of films and how successfully individual films change the form of their genres to surprise and titilate audiences.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:
GENRE

(1) Exploring genre in terms of its conventions, themes and iconography makes clear our own pre-existing knowledge. For example, examine a poster of a movie that you have seen. What is the genre? How do you know based solely on what is represented in the poster? Then make your own poster of the same movie, but one in which you change the genre to another of your choice. What are the conventions, themes and icons that now best suit this poster in light of its new genre?

(2) If we can argue that all film today is composed of multiple genres, is the very idea of genre antiquated and no longer useful for categorizing films? Can you think of other ways in which we organize our viewing pleasure and expectations of a film, for example, by a star (Will Smith films), a studio (A24 films), or director (Tarantino films)?

CHAPTER EIGHT

BEYOND GENRE

DOCUMENTARY	**117**
EXPERIMENTAL FILM	**120**
ANIMATION	**123**
NORMAN MCLAREN (INSERT)	*127*

CINEMAS BEYOND GENRE

Beyond narrative cinema genres, film can also take the form of non-fiction storytelling, form experiments, and animation. Each of these cinema categories might also include narrative genres or traditional narrative structures, but their style of storytelling separates them as unique categories. Unlike narrative cinema's genres, which organize certain conventions of storytelling, documentary, experimental film, and animation are categories that are determined by form.

Documentary

The cinematic form of documentary carries with it a few false assumptions. When we hear the term "non-fiction" cinema, we assume that these films have a natural relationship to objectivity and to "the truth". Though many of these films do claim to be objective, when we look at the nature of filmmaking, we can see that no film, fiction or non-fiction, can actually fulfill such a promise.

Let's imagine that a conversation is taking place across a table. One person is being asked a series of personal questions, and they are uncomfortable, but are starting to loosen up as the conversation continues. They are feeling the close intimacy of the situation and are learning to trust their companion, whose calm gaze has a reassuring quality. Now, let's place a camera in front of the questioner. The intimacy of the situation immediately changes. The interviewee suddenly feels on edge, choosing their words very carefully because they are being recorded and sitting up straighter with more poise since their image will be recorded for an unknown audience – maybe dozens, maybe millions of viewers.

The very fact of the camera's presence changes the environment of a conversation. When we think that we are being observed, we tend to enter a mode of performance. This might mean that we speak louder, or answer questions with less honesty, or behave in a way that meets the expectations of the audience. It is unreasonable to think that observation has no impact on behavior. And so it is unreasonable to think that a camera can catch "reality" as it exists unobserved.

> ***The very fact of the camera's presence changes the environment.***

We also tend to assume that documentaries present us with a slice of the "real world". But by using the tools of narrative cinema, non-fiction film manipulates "real world" footage into the language and grammar of entertainment. Documentaries often are organized by a three-act structure. And, they often follow individuals – narrative heroes – whose stories track a goal and its achievement. Documentaries also make heavy use of camera style to effect the look of the scene and the characters: low camera angles can make characters look powerful, slow motion can give weight to a moment of crisis, and color palettes can set our narrative expectations. Music has the same emotional value in non-fiction cinema as it does in narrative cinema. Grand orchestral themes can bring tragedy to a scene and pop music can bring familiarity to a scenario. Editing montages create the illusion of repetition and speed. Lighting, moreover, can change the way that we view a character: bright, natural light is associated with innocence; low-key lighting is asso-

ciated with villainous or suspect behavior. These types of filmmaking techniques that have become so naturalized in the realm of narrative storytelling have manipulative qualities, and so it is strange to import them into non-fiction film that claims "objectivity". Documentary forms are constantly battling the line between entertainment, which necessarily uses manipulative filmmaking techniques, and the mission of truth-telling.

Therefore, even though documentaries are based on footage of the "real world" – meaning, they are not filming acted performances – this footage can be manipulated and edited to create a product that is far from unobserved "reality". This is not to say that all documentaries contain false messages or are merely unsubstantial entertainment. But that all documentaries relate their stories from a certain perspective, and make aesthetic and editing choices aimed to sway the viewer in one way or the other. Whether or not visualized through the presence of a 'host' or voiceover narrator, the documentary is shaped by the intent and moral values of a filmmaker. It is important to keep in mind that the rise of narrative style in documentaries has created a very stylized and constructed product. In fact, documentaries have recently seen a great resurgence because of this imported style – more people watch documentaries now than ever before because these films are so well produced and tell stories in such an engaging way.

Nanook of the North (Flaherty, 1922)

Man with a Movie Camera (Vertov, 1929)

Throughout documentary history, some filmmakers have tried to resist these unavoidable problems of subjectivity, manipulated "reality", and performance. The earliest documentaries of the 1920s claimed to be **ethnographic studies**, which showcased a foreign culture that was generally inaccessible to the film's audience. *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty, 1922), a very popular documentary in the 1920s, highlights an Inuit community in Alaska. The film picks a hero to follow, Nanook, named for the film by the director Flaherty – and sets up scenarios for Nanook to perform indigenous acts, like ice fishing, igloo building, and walrus hunting. Though the footage is technically "real" in that Nanook is actually performing these acts and is spending time with his actual family, the documentary is highly staged. Rather than present an unfettered view of an Inuit community, Flaherty's involvement in the scenarios – from giving his hero a name, to staging events and shaping a narrative about a "traditional" community absent of modern technology – created a very subjective film that speaks more to Flaherty's image of the Inuit than to any ethnographic study about this community.

The 1920s also saw a trend in **city-symphonies**, poetic documentaries made of footage taken from around a city. *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) follows a cameraman as he finds unusual ways to film several Soviet cities – from underneath train tracks to atop horse carriages and bridge suspensions. The scenes are carefully framed and are playful in how they are presented to the audience. Everyday Soviet citizens merge with urban life and machinery in distortions of perception. Objects are animated through stop-motion techniques, while sequences move between slow motion and rapid editing for dramatic effect. Split screens are also used to show two separate views of the city in the same frame, doing more to upend reality than to reinforce it. Though technically, *Man with a Movie Camera* is a film comprised of non-fiction footage, mostly of urban infrastructure, the playful presentation makes the documentary feel like an experiment in film form rather than an objective view of Soviet life.

Grey Gardens (Maysles, 1975)

In opposition to clearly subjective modes of non-fiction film, some documentary movements aim for as unobtrusive and unmanipulated style as possible. In the 1960s, **Direct Cinema**, also called "Observational Cinema" in Europe, preferred unmanipulated long takes, unnarrated footage, and undramatic editing. Several American filmmakers became famous for this style of filming, though they did not use it for their entire careers: Frederick Wiseman, who focused on institutions like schools and hospitals, D.A. Pennebaker, who became most famous for his coverage of music festivals, and Albert and David Maysles, brothers who focused on individuals on the fringes of American popularity. The Maysles' most famous subjects, the Beales in *Grey Gardens* (1975), were former socialites who had fallen from social circles into a state of reclusiveness and hoarding. A mother and daughter duo, the Beales are wild characters full of theatricality, and the contrast between this verve and their low quality of life evokes tragedy without the Maysles needing to manipulate footage or layer on narrative explanation.

As a natural extension of Direct Cinema tendencies, **essay films** comment on their own film form and evoke an intentionally subjective view of the world while commenting on its subjectivity. Many types of filmmakers, both narrative feature-based and documentary-based, have participated in this mode of storytelling. Orson Welles's *F for Fake* (1973) describes filmmaking as a sleight of hand magic trick and as art forgery while filming magicians and art forgers. Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988) summarizes cinema history while also manipulating its footage and describing cinema as paradoxical and farcical.

All conventional techniques of documentary filmmaking have, at one time or another, been critiqued by documentaries. The convention of **talking heads**, where the film frame cuts off interview subjects at the shoulders as though they are heads floating in abstract, uncontextualized space, has been critiqued by films that choose to include the interviewer in the frame. Trinh T. Minh-ha's essay film *Reassemblage* (1982), an un-narrated film featuring Senegalese women, critiques ethnographic documentary films by refusing to make broad statements about a culture or a people. Instead, Minh-ha includes footage of herself watching a film to point to every film's necessarily artificial nature. **Reenactments**, pieces of staged scenarios based on past events, have become a standard in non-fiction storytelling about the past, and many documentaries have pointed to how problematic these fictional pieces of film are within the non-fiction format. Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) uses multiple versions of the same slow-motion reenactment, sprinkled throughout the film as different interview subject give different accounts of a past event. As the "history" of the event changes, the reenactment changes, showing us that this type of storytelling is innately unreliable. More recently, Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012) invites Indonesian genocide perpetrators to stage reenactments of how they killed hundreds of people. By filming the process of reenactment staging, the film comments on the process of remembrance as it critiques its subjects' actions.

Though documentary filmmaking is necessarily un-objective, this struggle with the idea of objectivity has created some very creative answers to questions about truth-telling. Our current modes of documentary cinema include imaginative uses of technologies, like GoPro footage and motion-capture animation. The documentary form is not restricted by any one conventional style, and perhaps this is why documentaries are having a shining moment on today's streaming stage.

Ethnographic film: A visual anthropological study.

City-symphony: Poetic film celebrating a specific city.

Direct Cinema / Observational Cinema: A 1960s movement that featured unmanipulated long takes, unnarated footage, and undramatic editing.

Essay film: Self-reflexive films that critique or openly discuss documentary conventions.

Talking heads: Common convention in which interview subjects are cut off at the shoulders.

Reenactments: Common convention of including staged scenarios of past events within non-fiction film.

Experimental film

Unlike mainstream narrative cinema, which is part of a film industry whose primary aim is to make a profit, experimental cinema has different goals. Sometimes the goal is simply to experiment with the form of cinema to see how far it can be pushed. Sometimes the goal is to give representation to cultures and lifestyles often missing from mainstream cinema. Sometimes the goal is to make a political statement and share it as widely as possible. Funding for these experimental projects is quite different from mainstream sources too. An experimental film might aim to have no costs at all so that it can be further removed from the profit-goals of traditional narratives – all equipment and labor would be donated, in this case. An experimental film might be funded by a grant aimed at supporting the arts generally. Lastly, exhibition for these experimental films uses circuits outside of mainstream theaters. Some experimental films are shown in museums or galleries as installation exhibits; some are shown at universities as part of screening series; some are shown as "events" in living rooms, rented halls, or after-hours community spaces.

The main principle for many experimental projects is to be **avant-garde**, French for "vanguard", or ahead of the times. The term "avant-garde" has been adopted by art studies, but it is originally a military term which describes scouts who move ahead of the main army to test out new terrain. Applied to art and cinema, "avant-garde" describes a willingness to experiment, find radical new forms, or cover unorthodox subjects. What we find over the course of film history is that experimental filmmakers will often discover this new terrain through experimentation, and then mainstream film will adopt these radical techniques, turning them into conventions of film language. In this way, the main army, or mainstream film, catches up to the avant-garde in order to make use of the new terrain. For example, the experimental

Koyaanisqatsi (Reggio, 1982)

Scorpio Rising (Anger, 1961)

Empire (Warhol, 1964)

documentary *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982) extensively used **time-lapses** to show the effects of human technology on landscapes and urban environments. In 1982, the time-lapse technique was not yet popular and looked quite strange to the average viewer. Nevertheless, when enough mainstream films dipped their toes into this avant-garde technique, it became normalized and has now become an industry standard for showing time passing in a stylistic way. Today, we see time-lapses used quite freely in TV shows, like *House of Cards* (Willimon, 2013-2018) and *Breaking Bad* (Gillian, 2008-2013), proving that the cinema "army" has made it to the new time-lapse terrain scouted by experimental film.

Ironically, experimental film does not necessarily feel that it is working *with* mainstream film, but rather *against* it. **Underground films** of the 1950s and 1960s explicitly rejected mainstream films by showcasing sub-cultures that were generally ignored by Hollywood, such as avant-garde artists, hipsters, and queer communities. Kenneth Anger made surrealist films in this era about homoeroticism and the state of American culture. His most famous film *Scorpio Rising* (1961), about the dissolution of American culture, mixes footage of a biker subculture with provocative images of Nazi emblems and religious iconography, taken from a Christian documentary. The film became both extremely popular among counter-culture communities for its boldness and extremely controversial, becoming briefly banned by a California court.

Andy Warhol, best known for his graphic pop art, was also an experimental filmmaker, and many of his films tried to push the boundaries of acceptable film form and subject. Some of his films, such as *Sleep* (1963) and *Eat* (1964), quite simply show the titled action being performed in one long take. His film *Empire* (1964) is an 8-hour long take of the Empire State Building. Very little action happens in this long take – the lighting changes over eight hours and at times a small plane is visible flying in the distance. But generally, the film is meant to be as close to a photograph as possible while still taking the form of film. When *Empire* screened at a small rented theater for the first time, Warhol encouraged his friends to bring food, entertainment, and company with them. By questioning the conventions of mainstream cinema – who says that a film must be two hours long? – Warhol turned his film into an "event", similar to the experimental "happenings" of the 1950s and 1960s in the art world.

Some of these same sentiments about film expectations have been adopted in a more accepted high art form, slow cinema. Filmmakers intentionally make slow narrative films

that are meant to deviate from Hollywood standards of action and momentum. Abbas Kiarostami's film *Taste of Cherry* (1997), a prime example of slow cinema, moves leisurely through Tehran and its surrounding area in a series of long takes that cover undramatic conversations and periods of waiting. Though the film seems quite simple, it is not a passive viewing experience. Kiarostami's films slow our heartbeat and focus our attention so that we experience sensations differently, newly. Though based in an experimental sentiment, *Taste of Cherry* won the prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and was widely screened across the world, proving that slow cinema is no longer an obscure, avant-garde concept as Warhol's *Sleep*, *Eat*, or *Empire*.

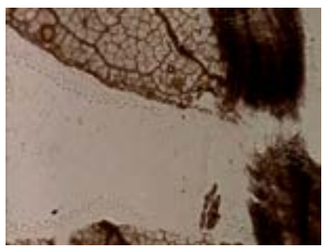
Taste of Cherry (Kiarostami, 1997)

Other experimental films aim to outline a political message through an abrasive style. Most famous for its political filmmaking, **Third Cinema** of the 1960s and 1970s began in Latin America by arguing against neocolonialism, capitalism, and the profit-oriented system of Hollywood filmmaking. In Argentina, filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino considered themselves "militant" artists whose films were screened in homes at secret meetings and distributed by hand from neighbor to neighbor. Their most groundbreaking work, a three-part film *Hour of the Furnaces* (1968), critiqued Western influence in Latin America with a collision of images, editing together footage of Western-style discos with global war photographs. The film ends with a bold statement that hands the conversation over to the viewer: "Now it is up to you to draw conclusions, to continue the film. You have the floor." In this way, Third Cinema asked that viewers not receive the material passively, but be aggravated, shocked, and pushed to action.

Hour of the Furnaces (Solanas/Getino, 1968)

Throughout experimental film history, there have been experiments in film form that push the boundaries of what cinema should look like. Surrealism of the 1920s experimented with bringing surrealist art principles, like collage and non-sequitors, into short film form (See Ch1: Film History). These principles were extended into feature experimental films, like Alejandro Jodorowsky's *The Holy Mountain* (1973) and David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977). Other experimental shorts played with poetic modes of cinema, looking for visual ways to evoke universal themes and mythology. Stan Brakhage's shorts, like *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959), explore life, death, sexuality, and nature through silent montages of images and manipulation of the film stock. By scratching and writing on film stock and exposing it in creative ways, Brakhage brings attention to the film medium and its potential shapes. This is **pure cinema**, a type of experimental film which overcomes audio-visual boundaries and restrictions through the manipulation of its film form. Using the principles of pure cinema, Brakhage's *Mothlight* (1963) attaches pieces of grasses, leaves, and moth wings to

Window Water Baby Moving



Mothlight (Brackage, 1963)

film stock rather than film these materials. The effect of these materials literally moved through a projector is confusing and breathtaking: they take on abstract shapes and flickering lines, very unlike the original organic material. This experiment brings attention to the unnatural means by which film tends to replicate the natural world, and demands an unfettering of vision from the 'rules' of a mainstream cinema. When actually placed through a projector, the natural world becomes a beautiful mess.

Such experiments in pure cinema have made their way into small moments of feature film through fantasy sequences and flashbacks. And they are also consistently featured in opening credits of films and TV shows. David Fincher's *Se7en* (1995) pays homage to Brakhage in its opening, where crew names are "scratched" into individual frames to create haunting and crackly effects. TV shows *Dexter* (Manos, 2006-2013) and *Halt and Catch Fire* (2014-2017) use textural and abstract experimental footage to evoke a tone and mood rather than to explain narrative details, like character, motivation, or setting. Such small touches of experimental film within the more common field of narrative storytelling showcases the creative possibilities of playing with form, style, and expectations.

Avant-garde: Vanguard, or ahead of the times. Avant-garde film is experimental in form, style, and/or subject.

Underground film: Film movements of the 1950s and 1960s that showcased sub-cultures ignored by Hollywood, such as avant-garde artists, hipsters, and queer communities.

Slow cinema: A style of poetic cinema that intentionally deviates form Hollywood standards of action and momentum.

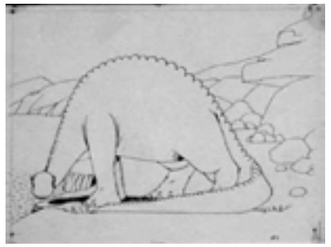
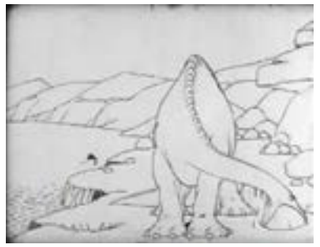
Third Cinema: A political filmmaking movement originating in 1960s and 1970s Latin America that critiques neocolonialism, capitalism, and profit-oriented filmmaking.

Pure cinema: Experimental cinema that focuses on manipulating film material itself, like scratching and painting the celluloid, and creating shapes and forms rather than narrative story.

Animation

On the simplest level, animation is distinct from live-action film because it is recorded as individual frames, and because it creates the illusion of motion rather than recording motion in front of the camera. However, as animation has become increasingly integrated with live-action, through computer graphics imagery (**CGI**), the distinction between the two categories has become more and more difficult to discern. All blockbusters now fluidly combine computer graphics with live action footage. Moreover, most feature films include at least some post-production manipulation of individual frames.

In early film history, animation helped filmmakers to understand **persistence of vision**, the principle by which we optically perceive individual images as if they were in motion. In

Gertie the Dinosaur (McCay, 1914)

the 19th century, Thaumatropes, flip books, and zoetropes showed images in quick succession so that the images appeared to become animated (See Ch 1: Film History). Early 20th century film experiments in animation, like *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914), drew individual frames entirely from scratch, just like a projected flip book. Though cumbersome to make 10,000 individual frames unique, *Gertie the Dinosaur* comes alive with individual movement in every part of the screen: the dinosaur's body, the tree in the foreground, and even the background details.

It quickly became obvious to animators that shortcuts would need to be taken in order for the animation form to be made quickly and efficiently, especially as animation was becoming more complicated and colorful. Some animators began drawing on rice paper, which could be layered and reused for multiple frames. Soon, the industry standard for animating efficiently became celluloid sheets, the same material used for feature filmmaking reels. **Cel animation**, using celluloid sheets, employs a static background layer and a character layer that is re-drawn and switched out for every frame shot. This way, the background layer does not have to be re-drawn, and only a small piece of the frame is moving at any one time. As animation became more popular, especially with Disney's revolutionary decision to create animated films aimed at a child audience, the cels became more complicated, with each character on their own cel sheet, stacked on top of each other in layers.

Though cel animation has dominated the field of hand-drawn animation, there are other, more rare, types of animation that utilize other materials. Various painting styles create very different textures in animation. Ink wash animation from China transforms traditional Chinese paintings into animated subjects with a watery texture. Paint-on-glass animation uses oil paints, manipulated in multiple stages of drying, and light projected through the glass on which they lay. Some animated films have experimented with painting individual canvases as individual frames of animation. Recently, *Loving Vincent* (Kobiela/Welchman, 2017) used 65,000 oil paintings, created in the style of Vincent Van Gogh's art, to generate the frames of its animation. Each canvas was carefully planned using computer previsualization, and then the frames themselves were hand-painted by over 100 artists. Each element of the foreground and background moves with this hand-made technique, and this creates the impression of Van Gogh's art coming alive through the medium of film.

Loving Vincent (Kobiela/Welchman 2017)

The Cameraman's Revenge (Starevich, 1912)

Stop-motion animation uses manipulated objects to create each film frame. The same object is used in multiple frames, but it is manipulated slightly between frames so that, taken together, the frames create the illusion of motion. Some well-known examples of this style are **Claymation**, which slightly molds clay models between takes, and **puppet animation**, which moves puppets into slightly varying positions between takes. Claymation and puppet animation have always been used for both children and adult genres. Puppet animation early pioneer Ladislav Starevich, for example, humorously examined sexual infidelity, revenge and filmmaking through stop motion animation of dead insects in his 1912 film *The Cameraman's Revenge*. Puppet animation has recently become even more adult with R-rated films like *Team America* (Parker, 2004) and *Anomalisa* (Kaufman/Johnson, 2015), which received accolades at film festivals.

Hedgehog in the Fog (Norstein, 1975)

Pinscreen animation uses movable pins that cast a shadow during filming. Sand animation pushes sand around between takes to give the impression of randomly created wind patterns. In cutout animation, another style of stop-motion animation, characters and their environments are comprised of flat, 2D paper figurines. Cutout animation was made famous by Russian animator Yuri Norstein, who places cutouts on several tiers of glass to create a foggy, poetic, layered effect in *Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975) and *Tale of Tales* (1979). Cutout animation has been used in the comedy genre too, including TV shows Monty Python's *Flying Circus* (MacNaughton/Davies, 1969-1974) and *South Park* (Parker/Stone, 1997-).

Computer graphics changed the animation scene entirely. Using digital means of drawing, animators can save time and energy in creating both foreground and background information. Additionally, **digital animation** can move the "camera" of the scene into areas inaccessible through hand-drawn cel animation. Since traditional animation re-uses the same background cel for multiple frames, only switching out foreground cels to make certain characters move on top of their environment, there is no way to move into the background, only across it. But with digital animation, the background can change with every frame, thus allowing for more complicated and interesting movements within the scene.

The Rescuers Down Under (1990) was the first film to use Disney's Computer Animation Production System (CAPS), which composited scanned cels with digital backgrounds and multiplane effects. The film's opening credits speeds the "camera" over a field of flowers, through rock crevices, and into a house. This sequence would not be impossible to produce using hand-drawn animation techniques, but it would take a great amount of time and energy to zoom into the background and redraw much of the environment details, which are constantly in motion. The digital process makes this sequence much easier to produce since any part of the image can be adjusted frame by frame. *The Lion King* (1994) used the same CAPS software to create several cinematic camera movements, like tracking shots and dolly zooms. The famous stampede sequence, when wildebeests pour over a cliff and fill the screen, was achieved by digitally creating some individual wildebeests, then randomizing their movements and digitally multiplying them into a crowd.

Similarly, computer graphics imagery (CGI) has been used extensively in Hollywood blockbusters to help efficiently and safely create scenarios that are difficult to film as live-action performances, including extreme stunts, property damage, and pyrotechnics. The increased popularization of the fantasy genre, accelerated by Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* (2001), has encouraged more digital technologies that merge animation with live

The Lord of the Rings (Jackson, 2001)

action. **Motion capture technology** translates live action movement to computer graphics in order to create more authentic movement and weight in digitally animated creatures. Andy Serkis's portrayal of Gollum, a digitally created creature, involved motion capture of Serkis's body movements in an empty studio and also his live performance amongst the other characters in order to achieve real reactions from the cast. The motion-captured digital character was then rotoscoped onto the live performance, thus merging digital animation with a live action scene.

Green screens, for backgrounds, props, or characters, have long allowed for films to incorporate multiple layers of footage, filmed separately, into one believable space. Recently, we have seen such an excessive amount of green screening, motion capture, and digital animation used in blockbusters that actors are having a hard time evoking convincing performances when they are forced to work in isolation with little partner or environment feedback. Some critics of this mode of filmmaking describe it as the "Post-Cinema Age". In a way, the increased use of animation as a substitute for live-action filming has indeed exceeded our classical notions of "cinema", or the capturing of motion onto celluloid. By filming only small portions of the frame at any one time (foreground characters or background environment), heavily using matte composites, and working with the image on a frame-by-frame basis, our blockbuster movies have incorporated so many animation principles that it is fair to say that they have moved "beyond" cinema.

CGI: Computer graphics imagery created in post-production. Often merged with live action footage.

Persistence of vision: The effect of an afterimage on the retina persisting after an image has been shown. This allows for sequential images, as in optical toys or in film, to blend together to appear to be in motion.

Cel animation: Celluloid sheets are painted and layered, then photographed in succession so that they appear to move.

Stop-motion animation: Uses manipulated objects to create each film frame. Includes claymation, puppet animation, pinscreen animation, sand animation, and cutout animation.

Digital animation: Frames are drawn in a computer rather than by hand.

Motion capture: Technology that translates live action movement to computer graphics in order to create more authentic movement and weight in digitally animated creatures.

"Animation is not the art of drawings that move

but the art of movements that are drawn."

-Norman McLaren

Norman McLaren

DR. JEFF MARKER

Understanding film as an artistic medium begins with learning film form. Knowing the terms to describe what we're seeing and hearing is our ticket for entry into the conversation. Things often become most exciting, though, when we encounter a work of art to which the usual vocabulary does not apply. A film that engages us deeply yet doesn't fit into any of the usual categories or allow us to easily apply what we already know is not only a special work of art, it's the kind of work that opens up new possibilities for the medium.

Norman McLaren's *Neighbors* (1952) is such a work, a short filmed on 16mm that stands out even among McLaren's eclectic body of work.

McLaren is primarily known as an experimental animator, although he also produced commercial work and deserves as much recognition for his inventive musical scores as his imagery. He was famous for drawing on and scratching raw film stock to create images, and he used the same technique to create the musical scores of many of his films, creating music with no instruments.

Unlike most of McLaren's work, *Neighbors* was filmed entirely in live action and includes no hand-drawn animation in the film itself.

Neighbors begins with two men sitting in front of forced-perspective houses, each reading the newspaper and smoking a pipe. The men are equal in every way: virtually identical houses, chairs, clothes, etc. McLaren is careful to frame the men symmetrically so each occupies, or owns, an equal half of the frame. Nothing is dividing the neighbors, and all is peaceful.

Both story and form begin to change, though, when a flower springs up in the middle of the frame. Each man becomes enamored with the flower, which McLaren expresses by using an animation technique called pixilation, in which the filmmaker photographs living subjects frame-by-frame. It is essentially stop-motion animation that replaces clay figures or puppets with posed human actors. It is a rarely used animation technique that straddles the line between live-action and animated filmmaking.

In *Neighbors*, the technique first creates moments of silly, surrealistic comedy, as both men react to the flower with an absurd degree of joy. The tone shifts, though, when the men begin to argue over ownership of the flower. The story turns decidedly dramatic as the tension rises between these formerly peaceful neighbors.

Arguing escalates to violence, and the film quickly becomes an extended action sequence of sorts. Rather than play the fight for thrills, though, McLaren makes the men increasingly grotesque, and the violence takes a shocking turn. One neighbor knocks down the other's house, revealing his neighbor's wife and infant child. The man brutally assaults the wife and hurls the child to the ground, presumably killing both. Then the other neighbor does the same. This scene was so shocking when the film was first distributed that many theatres cut it out prior to showing it. The escalating violence reaches its inevitable crescendo as the men kill each other. In death, with their families and homes destroyed, each gets his own flower.

So what would be the result if we applied the basic tools of film analysis to *Neighbors*? The film defies generic categorization. It is a comedy, drama, action, social satire, and tragedy, all in a film less than nine minutes long.

More profoundly, even the form and mode of filmmaking in *Neighbors* is debatable. Is it a live-action or animated film? It is both, of course. It is also an experimental film. However, the Academy Awards recognized it with the Oscar for Best Short Documentary, even though it is entirely scripted. Thus, there isn't even consensus on what this film is.

Even though the film defies our usual descriptions, it is our knowledge of the language of film form that allows us to understand the film. The conflict of forms mirrors the film's theme of human conflict, and the most powerful dramatization of the destructive human desire for control and power is the film's clashing of genres and styles.

McLaren's film is personal yet offers a universal plea for peace, attempting to cut to the core of human conflict. It reduces cinematic form to its basic property, the juxtaposition of image against image, yet eludes basic analysis, pushing both filmmaking and film scholarship toward a new vocabulary.

"NORMAN MCLAREN" CONTRIBUTED BY
DR. JEFF MARKER
CMJ DEPARTMENT CHAIR
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH GEORGIA

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION: BEYOND GENRE

(1) Can you think of other examples of slow cinema being created today? Taiwanese director Tsai Ming-liang, for example, considers slowness to be a form of rebellion against a modern cinema that limits the expression of the filmmaker due to its obsession with speed. He created a Walker series where the still individual is set in the midst of urbanity. Many viewers who watched the films in Tsai's series felt driven to anger by his slow approach to cinema. What are your thoughts about slow cinema? Do you consider slow cinema to be cinema, or, like some audiences, a waste of your time?

(2) More recently Walt Disney Studios has gained a lot of attention for their repeated translation of animated films like *The Lion King* (1994) and *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) into live action adaptations. How is animated film similar to, yet different from traditional live action cinema? Think here about our expectations of animation and how we 'read' an animated film. How can we think about realism as pertains to the animated film and its live action counterpart?

(3) Documentary films use different techniques and strategies to convince the viewer that what we are watching is real. At the same time, editing and other aesthetic choices can suggest meaning to us that makes the viewer read more into the moment than what we objectively see and hear on screen. Examine, for instance, a popular docuseries like *Tiger King* (2020) or *Cheer* (2020). How can you see the filmmaker attempting to capture the 'truth' of real people and situations and, conversely, sway us to particular ways of understanding a story?

CHAPTER NINE

WRITING FILM ANALYSIS

FILM ANALYSIS 131

QUESTIONS TO ASK 132

PAPER EXCERPTS 133
CLOSE ANALYSIS SAMPLE 133
COMPARE-AND-CONTRAST SAMPLE 135

WRITING TIPS 138

FILM ANALYSIS

Excellent film analysis will explain how a film has been made: which filmmaking techniques have been chosen and why, how the visual storytelling supports the narrative, and the effect that filmmaking elements have on the viewer. It brings together the explicit facts of the film – mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, sound – with the implicit or subliminal effects of the film on its audience.

We often can immediately describe a film's plot and how the film made us feel. These are easy qualities to identify that do not require analysis to understand. But what is much harder to explain is how filmmaking choices support the film's narrative and how the film creates the feelings that the audience experience. Film analysis aims to make visible the qualities of film that usually remain invisible. To do this, you must be trained in film literacy – which you have been through your Film Appreciation course! – and you must apply this training to a film that is worthy of being analyzed. Not every film warrants a close reading of its parts. But a film that is worthy of being examined will flourish under analysis and reveal itself to be a complicated system of moving parts that is just as exciting to admire as it is to experience.

This chapter includes resources for your film analysis paper writing. Papers should start with gathering data about the filmmaking of your chosen film. Use the "Questions to Ask" list to gather information about the film's visual storytelling. See student samples for how this data can be turned into analysis paragraphs. To form a thesis and larger argument, use the "Writing Tips" list to keep your paper focused and organized.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

These are questions to help you gather data for analysis. You do not need to answer every question in your essay.

MISE-EN-SCÈNE. How do props and costumes convey characters and themes? Are particular colors dominant (or absent)? Is the setting significant? If so, how is it presented? How does the lighting help convey the setting and the action? How is character blocking and placement used? Are there any motifs introduced in your film? Where do they occur in the film, and how do they cue the viewer's expectations?

SPACE. Is the film space deep or shallow? How is space framed to allow a greater understanding of characters and story? How do editing and sound construct the space of the scene, and how does this space relate to the overall narrative action of the film?

CINEMATOGRAPHY. Where is the camera placed in relation to the action? How do particular compositions draw attention to elements of the settings, characters, or themes? How does camera movement function in the scene? Are different focal lengths or depths of field used? How does cinematography reinforce the mise-en-scène?

EDITING. What kinds of transitions are there between shots? Are these always the same? Do they change? Does the editing have a particular rhythm, and is it consistent? Does it conform to rules of continuity, or does it seem disjunctive and discontinuous? What spatial and temporal relations are articulated through cutting? Graphic relations? Rhythmic relations? Associative connections?

SOUND. What sounds are present? When does volume or pitch change? Is silence used? Are specific sounds linked to cuts or camera movement? When and how are onscreen and off-screen sound used? Are sounds diegetic or non-diegetic?

SAMPLE OF CLOSE ANALYSIS

First published by James Barrie as a play in 1904, the classic story of Peter Pan, the boy who wouldn't grow up, has been told countless times across the century. Today, the story: "Peter Pan stands in our culture as a monument to the impossibility of its own claims" (Rose, 94). P. J. Hogan's 2003 live action film, *Peter Pan*, attempts to draw in the viewers to a world where imagination and reality are indistinguishable to children. In a single shot from the 2003 film, the clip during which Wendy, Peter and the boys first begin flying over the city is presented with a tone, which contributes a more romantic element that is unrealistic at such a young age. Primarily, as the four fly over London, the focus of the scene is centered around interactions between Wendy and Peter rather than all four of the children and the environment. The choreography of the two characters conveys a more romantic relationship through the proximity of the actors' faces, the facial expressions of the actors, and the motion of their heads and hands toward one-another. Similarly, the lighting in the scene during the sunset creates a more romantic tone than a lighthearted one of childhood. The depiction of the characters flying through the pinks, reds and oranges of the sunset with low fill lighting, backlighting, and warm tones creates a sense of romantic ambience which distracts from the novelty of the flying experience.

In combination with this, the director's choices in the framing and setting create a more character-focused scene rather than a thematic scene. The setting claims to feature London yet includes nothing but chimneys and a rather empty street. In choosing a less detailed setting, Hogan's film detracts from the connection of reality to the imagination. Because the children are not easily

The claim "romantic tone" is proven with choreography, framing, lighting, and color evidence.

Connects terms with visuals. "Thematic scene" is linked with setting-oriented reality. "Character-focused scene" is linked with a bare setting and imagination.

Terms used to prove that how the film privileges imagination over reality.

identified to be in a realistic, established city, the imaginary aspect of flying above a city loses much of its connection and context with the film's theme of blending reality and imagination. While the children briefly fly past Big Ben, they interact amongst stars and planets for a significant amount of time. In "space," the director's choices for the setting mimic a project or mobile and even include a few unrecognizable planets to significantly emphasize imagination over reality.

The connection of the nursery shot and flight shot serves to both contrast and connect imagination and reality. The scene centers much more upon the experience of the characters than the overall theme. Both the nursery scene lighting and the lighting in the flight shot utilize warm, fill lighting. It can be argued that this version of the film is actually set in the land of make believe, rather than linked between the imaginary and the real. The use of snow in the setting before the children begin to fly contributes to the youthful attitude of imagination in contrast to the rigidity of the adults in the scene. The choreography of the young boy "tumbling" behind the heads of the adults contrasts his movement to that of the grown characters. By including this, the adult's focus on the loss of the hat rather than the fact that the children are flying symbolizes the blindness of adults to the imaginary world of children. The vivid coloration, despite the low-key lighting, connects to the setting as fantasy as well. Although Big Ben is still included briefly in the children's flight, it is featured so much less than the vivid planets and stars that its inclusion seems to be an afterthought.

Links mise-en-scène with symbolic meaning.

Connects two scenes through lighting, choreography, an color to show overall pattern in filmmaking.

SAMPLE GENEROUSLY CONTRIBUTED BY HOPE GANDY, UNG CLASS OF 2021, FROM HER PAPER "PETER PAN"

SAMPLE OF COMPARE-AND-CONTRAST ANALYSIS

To get a better understanding as to what the expectations are for the classic shootout scene, one merely must look back to the American Western. One of the most classical and cultural well-known variations of the shootout is the "Mexican standoff". One famous example that contains the Mexican standoff is Sergio Leone's 1966 spaghetti western *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly.* This version of the shootout consists of two or more people standing face to face at a set distance. There is a slow build-up of tension as everyone is anticipating when the other men are going to draw their weapons and fire. It all builds into a climactic and swift gunfight that usually ends with the main character prevailing over his foes in an epic showdown. This type of shootout is the most satisfying for the audience as the tension building up leads to a conclusion in which all enemies to the hero are vanquished and the hero can walk off into the sun victorious over evil.

Overview of one genre's style, including framing, tempo, and duration. Will be used later to prove difference from other genres styles.

The shootout scene in Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), however, is used in a less traditional manner than what could be expected from genres like the Western. *The Grand Budapest Hotel* is a comedy with a fictionist historical setting. Although the cast includes a wide array of well-known actors, this film can easily be considered an alternative film. The shootout scene in question occurs at the climax of the film and has a short duration of one minute. Although shootout scenes are more associated with the action genre, Anderson has already set up the audience's expectation to how this shootout will occur. His sense of humor and use of comedy prepares the audience for how ridiculous the scene ends up being. If there was one shot throughout the entire scene that truly expresses what Anderson was trying to convey with this scene it is the extreme long shot pointing straight to the ceiling as a blaze of gunfight is exchanged through the

One stylistic element is isolated to showcase the film's overall style.

chamber. No one can be seen firing the guns; the audience can only see the muzzle flashes and the walls getting impacted by an absurd quantity of bullets. This shot also puts into perspective as to how big the space of the hallway floor is. As for the entire sequence, it all started with the main villain firing at our heroes. This act of sudden violence leads to more and more people exiting their rooms with weapons drawn already and proceeding to shoot and continually miss each other. The majority of shots during this sequence are wide angle with some panning shots to further explore how huge the room is and to show the amount of random people that have entered the shootout. The amount of firepower occurring in this scene with no one ever getting injured is humorous, and the ending with the constable arresting everyone for the shootout is not how we would expect this scene to end. This seemed to be the actual climax where a lot of people, including the villain and maybe even the heroes, would die. However, Anderson merely used the shootout scene to have a quick excerpt on the absurdity of how a scene like this can play out. And his use of the shootout scene works very well for his comedic purposes that fits seamlessly in his style of humor.

As for *Bad Boys II*, Michael Bay's 2003 portrayal of the shootout scene is seemingly more straightforward with a modern twist to it. Starting with the music, it is more upbeat and central to the action as a non-diegetic source to help keep the pace. One series of shots that portrays Bay's style in earnest is the 360 degrees rotating camera. The camera physically travels through walls in a few separate long takes to reveal what the Haitians and the cops are doing simultaneously. The camera is continually in motion, which adds to the fast pace and intensity of the scene as the

Close analysis of mise-en-scène.

Explains humor by naming audience expectations and how they are defied by the scene.

Proves scene "intensity" with cinematography details, like camera movement and long takes.

audience can get a grasp of what each side is doing to outmaneuver the other. The camera in this case is restrained to medium and close-up shots focusing more on the characters as the space is more cramped, which is fitting for this type of shootout as both parties are forced to fight head on. Additionally, this scene does include a hint of comedy. However, the comedy mainly comes from the dialogue. The focus of the scene is clearly the action as the comedic elements like Marcus and Mike's banter or toilet water splashing onto Mike's face are secondary. This type of blunt humor is also a staple of Michael Bay as the jokes are simple and to the point. It is unmistakable that Bay is more concerned with making sure that the audience is fully engaged in the firefight and wants them to take it for what it is; a battle between the good guy cops and the previously unexcepted enemy that we want the cops to defeat because they are established to be criminals.

Each of these two-shootout scenes are different as they were made by two different directors, yet there are also similarities as these scenes do come from a common place. They both in some way go against the cultural expectation of what the shootout scene should be. They were able to subvert these expectations through their direction and sense of genre. The genre from each film depends on how the director orchestrates the scene. One used in a quirkier form of comedy while the other is used for pure action and excitement. The shootout scene ultimately is about conflict between the leading characters and an opposing force. It was originally meant to add tension and a sense of danger for the characters the audience has grown to root for. Even if these two scenes are used in different manners, both scenes achieve creating a build-up that would lead to a satisfying end whether it was meant to be funny or action packed.

Differentiates this humor from Anderson's style with specific comparison: dialogue.

Clearly states two specific similarities, while keeping the styles separate in this comparison.

SAMPLE GENEROUSLY CONTRIBUTED BY ERIC AZOTEA, UNG CLASS OF 2020, FROM HIS PAPER "EXPECTATIONS OF THE SHOOTOUT SCENE THROUGH DIFFERENT GENRES"

WRITING TIPS

FIND A FOCUS. Establish an argument upon which your ideas hinge. Think about what stand or point your paper is making. Analyze your film to prove this larger point.

IDENTIFY PATTERNS. Look closely at the visual and aural choices that the film has made. Find patterns, and draw conclusions to help develop your argument.

AVOID PLOT SUMMARY. Organize your essay around key points in your argument, rather than a chronological recap of the sequence.

USE EXAMPLES, NOT EXTENDED VISUAL DESCRIPTION. Select specific filmmaking examples to fully analyze rather than describe everything that you see on screen.

BALANCE EVIDENCE WITH ANALYSIS. For every sentence or two of observations, follow with a sentence or two of your analysis.

REPLACE EVALUATIVE LANGUAGE WITH EXPLANATION. Analyze the effects of techniques used, not their reception.

"The costumes are strange" → "The clothing looks tight, almost suffocating the actor. This costume choice limits the character's movement through space and symbolizes his oppression."

USE PRECISE FILM TERMS. Is the camera movement a track, tilt, pan, or zoom? Is it a high-angle shot or a low-angle shot? When in doubt, check the glossary.

AVOID VAGUE LANGUAGE. Aim instead to analyze the specific effect of individual techniques.

"The use of lighting in this scene is very effective." → "The light creates a shadow across her face, which tells the audience that her intentions are impure."

CONCLUSION

FILM AS MASS MEDIA

As we have learned in this textbook, film appreciation takes two parts: analyzing film form and film style. The elements of film form are the building blocks of cinema: all of the tools that a filmmaker has at her disposal to tell her story. Form includes mise-en-scène – the ability to externalize the themes and subtext of the story. It includes editing – the ability to manipulate time. It includes cinematography – the ability to immerse the viewer within the storyworld.

Film style describes the choices that are made with these building blocks of film form. A filmmaker might choose contemporary costumes for a historical adaptation to show the continued relevance of the story to contemporary audiences. They might choose to film in long takes to draw out time and make the audience feel as though they are experiencing the film co-presently with the characters. They might choose to film in tight close-ups rather than high crane shots to make the audience more aligned with character emotions.

As cinema became the most popular form of entertainment in the 20th century, other medias started to adopt film form and style. Books started to adopt cinematic qualities. Late modernist writers, like Virginia Woolf, started to rethink the form of literature by looking at the form of film, which had offered artists a new way of perceiving the world. Literary narratives of the 1920s became more interested in multiple points of view, "long take" stream-of-consciousness writing, and images of movement.

The early 20th century also saw the development of comic strips and graphic novels, which turned the cinematic experience into a textual one. Readers could merge text and image in their minds to create cinematic movement and editing. Some magazines even turned film stills into comic book frames, colorizing and captioning them so that the reader would be able to experience the film anew. For example, in the 1930s, *Movie Comics* used the Italian Fumeti style of rendering to bring current films to the page. It mixed film stills with line art and original dialogue to give films like The Son of Frankenstein a new or alternative life.

Movie Comics, 1939

This hybrid of photorealistic and hand-drawn images accustomed audiences to the style of animation, which and in also adoptinged film form to make made animated characters feel as though they were in a live-action film. Mickey Mouse was given close-ups. Cinderella was "filmed" in tracking shots as she danced across the ballroom. Lady and the Tramp were given glamourous "three-point" lighting as they fell in love. But the relationship between animation and film worked both ways. Just as animation drew from film form, cinema started to adopt more and more elements of animation in its special effects and visual effects. Matte paintings and green screens merged two planes of image, just like traditional cel animation. Motion-capture technology turned

actor motion into digital data, much like traditional rotoscoping that lifted one element from a frame to import it within another frame.

As more and more animation and special effects were adopted by cinema, film form started to look more like a hybrid and less like a pure art that has its own distinct style. As digital technologies entered the industry in the 1990s, cinema started to become less reliant on its traditional modes of creation: celluloid, heavy cameras, and hands-on editing. For this reason, the 21st century mode of digital filmmaking is often described as the "Post-Cinema Era" or "The Digital Turn".

Our current state of filmmaking, within this Digital Turn, still relies on film form such as costume design, lighting setups, camera movement, and editing. But its style has changed radically. The popularity of films like *The Lord of the Rings* and *Avatar* have solidified a film style that includes very little true live-action filmmaking. Actors perform on green stages and are covered in motion-capture reflectors while most of the film is animated in post-production. Digital creatures become the most coveted "actors" of a blockbuster film. And highly dangerous spectacles, like flying, falling, and crashing, become the most acceptable style of entertainment.

Online streaming has radically change the viewing experience, as the landscape of cinema has become occupied by platforms over theaters and as the cinema spectator has changed. No longer do we go to the movies to sit in the dark as a community to experience a film collectively. Now, we see the rise of the solitary cinema viewer, one who chooses to stay at home and stream movies. And some platforms are beginning to make films with that spectator in mind.

The 21st century has seen a radical change in the landscape of cinema , but it has also seen the rise of quality television that has exceeded the high standards of 1950s "Golden Age" TV to create a "Platinum Age" of entertainment. This new phase of television – from HBO's *The Sopranos* to FX's *Atlanta* to Netflix's *The Witcher* – differentiates itself from classic television by adopting a cinematic style. This TV content has blockbuster-grade budgets, the most advanced technology, and has enticed the most sought-after film actors. It adopts film form and mimics film style, but at its best, it also exceeds the capability of film form entirely. We could call this era of high-quality television "long form" cinema because it gives us eight-hour movies that have been chopped up into episodes, such a lengthy project that no theater would be able to screen it.

In the face of these changes, we find that it'is hard to define the term "cinema" anymore. Cinema has become hybridized with other medias. And other medias have been so inflected by film form and style that some have become better at producing films than cinema itself. So in the 21st century, we come back to the classic question with which we started: What is film? It's a classic form of storytelling, yes. But cinema still serves the same function as it did at the beginning of the 20th century: it is a new mode of vision that makes us see the world differently, and it is a visual language through which we communicate.

GLOSSARY

180-degree rule: Do not cross the axis of action within a single scene. Adhering to the 180-degree rule maintains directionality of characters (one character always sits on the left of the screen; the other character always sits on the right).

Actualities: Early non-fiction short films that were often composed as static one-shots. The first films in cinema history were actualities.

ADR (Automatic Dialogue Replacement): An actor records her own voice in post-production for crisper sound quality.

Analogous color: Three colors next to each other on the color wheel; a dominant color, a supporting color and a color that is a mixture of the two preceding colors or an accent. Eg. blue, green and blue-green.

Anamorphic widescreen lens: A specific lens developed to capture more image onto the film stock through compression, which then would be expanded in projection. Had similar distortion problem as other wide-angle lenses.

Aspect ratio: The ratio of width to height of a screen.

Asynchronous sound: See Lack of Fidelity

Avant-garde: Vanguard, or ahead of the times. Avant-garde film is experimental in form, style, and/or subject.

Axis of action: An imaginary line that can be drawn between two characters in a shot/revere-shot setup. This line is the "180-degrees" of the 180-degree rule.

Back light: Defines the actor outline, separating them from the background. Can create a "halo effect" in blond hair.

Backstage musical: Musical subgenre that is self-reflexive, telling the story of the making of a musical.

Benshi: Film narrators who describe a silent film while standing just to the side of the screen. A Japanese tradition.

Black & white cinema: Films absent of color hues. Can be achieved with black & white film stock or in digital post-production.

Blimp: A large box that encases a camera to dampen the sound of cranking.

Blocking: See Choreography

Boom microphone: A mic attached to a long pole. Allows dialogue to be recorded discreetly, without microphones embedded in costumes or props.

Breaking the 180-degree rule: The camera crosses the axis of action in a conversation or fight scene so that each character flips positions in the screen with cuts. Creates a sense of unease or disruption.

Camera Obscura: a box with a hole on its side that reproduced a naturally occurring optical illusion.

Canted-angle / Dutch-angle shot: Camera is tilted on its axis to evoke imbalance, anxiety, or a mental break.

Causal narrative: Story events progress in a cause-and-effect relationship. Every event is the cause of a certain action, often creating predictable outcomes. There is little room for randomness or non-sequiturs in these narratives.

Cel animation: Celluloid sheets are painted and layered, then photographed in succession so that they appear to move.

Celluloid: A malleable thermoplastic. Used in cinema as photographic film stock.

CGI: Computer graphics imagery created in post-production. Often merged with live action footage.

Chiaroscuro lighting: See High-contrast lighting

Choreography / Blocking: The design of movement in space and time.

Chronophotography: Photography that captures a quick succession of movements in several images. Originally used for scientific study of body movement.

Cinema of attractions: Concept developed by theorist Tom Gunning to describe how early moviegoers were attracted to cinema primarily as a shocking and exciting new technology.

Cinématographe: A small, portable recording camera, printer, and projector, invented in 1895 by Frenchmen Louis and Auguste Lumière; known for being the first all-in-one commercially viable film camera.

City-symphony: Poetic film celebrating a specific city.

Clapboard: A film slate or device that creates synch points for image and sound.

Classical Hollywood narrative: A specific storytelling structure developed in early American cinema that has become the norm for narrative film. Includes elements like the three-act structure, causal relationships between events, clear character motivation, and often, a closed ending.

Claymation: A type of stop-motion animation that slightly molds clay models between takes. A joining of the words clay and animation.

Closed ending: The film ends with a clear resolution to story events. Most often seen in Classical Hollywood narratives.

Clothesline staging: the staging of so many characters side-by-side to fill a film frame that they look like they are pinned to a line.

Color correction: Adjusts color hue, light, and saturation across shots to create cohesive sequences.

Color grading: Creates world immersion by casting scenes in a particular color hue.

Color palette: Combination of color hues and saturations to convey mood and tone through visual means. Includes monochromatic, analogous, complementary, and triadic palettes.

Complementary colors: Colors opposite each other on the color wheel (a circle showing the relationship of colors to each other). These colors strongly contrast with one another, and create tension in the storyworld.

Continuity system / Hollywood system: Standardized film conventions that make it easier for the viewer to understand the film's time, space, and movements. Includes establishing shots, shot/reverse shots, the 180-degree rule, match-on-actions, and eyeline matches.

Costumes / Costume design: What a character wears in specific scenes to aid in the creation of meaning for audiences, for example by denoting the historical time period, characters' emotions or development over the course of a story.

Crane shot: Camera and cinematographer sit on a crane, which films from above and can "fly" over the set.

Crosscutting / Parallel editing: A sequence that stitches together shots from two different spaces to show two events occurring at the same time.

Cut: The most common editing technique used to transition from one shot immediately to the next shot.

Dada: A short movement of the 1910s that expressed meaninglessness and disillusionment in the world. An absurdist view of life is portrayed with nonsense, unstable camera movements, and play with fast and slow motion.

Deep focus: A style developed in the late 1930s, often attributed to Orson Welles. Creates sharp focus through several planes of space in the frame. Requires a wide-angle lens, small aperture, set light, and deep space in the mise-en-scène.

Deep space: Many planes of space moving off into the distance, created by set design.

Defamiliarization: Taking an everyday, familiar object and rendering it strange in order to introduce new ways of seeing and experiencing the familiar thing.

Depth of field: The range of distance that is kept in sharp focus within the frame. A shallow depth of field keeps a small amount of space in focus. A large depth of field keeps a large amount of space in focus.

Diegesis: A story world within which characters live and interact with its own set of rules and customs. Includes what is seen in the frame and also what exists beyond the edges of the frame that characters react to.

Digital animation: Frames are drawn in a computer rather than by hand.

Direct address: When characters on screen appear to look at and speak 'direct' to the camera in an acknowledgement of the audience's presence, often called 'breaking the fourth wall'.

Direct Cinema / Observational Cinema: A 1960s movement that featured unmanipulated long takes, unnarrated footage, and undramatic editing.

Directional microphone: A mic that captures sound from a single source. (As opposed to "omnidirectional mic")

Discontinuity editing: Does not follow conventions of the continuity or Hollywood system. Points attention to itself by disregarding "invisible editing" rules.

Dissolves: Transition between two shots where one image slowly disappears as the other image slowly appears.

Dolly shot: Camera is placed on a moving platform attached to a track. The track can be set up in a line or a curve. The cinematographer sits on the platform (dolly) with the camera as it is pushed along the track.

Dolly zoom / Vertigo Effect: A style developed by Hitchcock for his film Vertigo (1958) where the environment appears to contract or expand. Achieved with a dolly track and zoom lens.

Double dolly shot: Both camera and actor sit on dollies whose movement is linked. Creates a dream-like effect of interiority.

Drone shot: A drone-mounted camera films from the air. Often used for establishing shots, and the footage is usually rendered in slow motion for a smoother effect.

Dubbing: One actor's voice is replaced with another's in post-production.

Dutch-angle shot: See Canted-angle

Elliptical editing: See Montage sequence

Essay film: Self-reflexive films that critique or openly discuss documentary conventions.

Establishing shot: A common way to introduce a new space at the beginning of a scene. Most often an establishing shot is an extreme long shot of a landscape and characters interacting within it.

Ethnographic film: A visual anthropological study.

Eyeline match: A shot of a character looking off-camera cut with a shot of an object. The cut suggests that the object is a point-of-view shot from the character's perspective.

Fade in: A solid color gradually becomes an image. Usually signals the beginning of a story segment.

Fade out: An image gradually becomes a solid color. Traditionally often used to conclude a film.

Fast motion: Image is captured at a slower speed and so appears to speed up when projected.

Femme fatale: A seductive yet dangerous female villain in the film noir genre.

Figure expression: The posture of an actor and the expressions of their face.

Figure movement: An actor's gestures and character action.

Fill light: A soft light that fills out the shadows cast by a key light.

Film / Movies / Cinema: Moving images and the telling of stories; the celluloid or film stock upon which these moving images were printed

Film Noir: Genre of the 1940s that features low angles, close-ups, harsh shadows, and deep space to represent psychological turmoil and anxiety. Associated with several historical moments: post-Depression threatened masculinity, the Hays Code, and the Red Scare.

Film Stock: See Celluloid

Final Girl: A slasher film trope coined by Carol J. Clover. Describes a female character who survives the serial killer's attacks and becomes the film's hero.

Foley: The reproduction of everyday sounds using various materials in a studio. Named after the sound-effects artist Jack Foley.

Frame / Film Frame: a still image on a strip of celluloid that together make up the entirety of a film.

Framing: Using the rectangular edges of the camera viewfinder to compose and choose what will be shot onscreen.

French Impressionism: A cinema movement of the 1920s in which character psychology is portrayed with point-of-view storytelling, lighting, mobile framing, and optical effects.

Genres: Categories of story-types that are used by studios for marketing purposes. The predictability and repetition of genre elements is the basis for film-watching choices, audience expectations, and creative surprises.

German Expressionism: A 1920s art and cinema movement that expressed suffering and angst through exaggerated acting, harsh shadows, and off-kilter set geometry.

Gimmick: An extraneous device or event meant to attract attention. Examples are marketing campaigns and 4D theater tricks.

Graphic match / Match cut: Adjoining shots use objects that take up similar shapes in the screen. This creates a comparison between objects. In discontinuity editing, the objects usually have no relation to each other and the non-sequitur is jarring. In continuity editing, the similar shapes help to blend the two shots together and the cut becomes “invisible”.

Green screens: Vivid green backdrops that, through a process called Chroma keying, allow media technicians to layer any other footage or background behind actors or foreground making one composite believable space.

Handheld camera: The camera is held in the hands of its operator, often to produce a shaky and more realistic effect.

Hard lighting: Lighting that casts sharp and defined shadow. Often shows imperfections.

High-angle shot: Camera is tilted down to film an object or character from above. This shot often makes a character look vulnerable and small.

High-contrast lighting / Chiaroscuro: A type of low-key lighting that emphasizes the difference between shadowy spaces and light spaces. Often used for metaphorical effect.

High-height camera: Camera is placed high above the ground to capture something in the air or a distant view.

High-key lighting: Brightly lights a scene with few (if any) shadows.

Hollywood system: See Continuity system

Horror genre: Broadly covers themes of violence, terror, taboos, fears, and anxieties. Sometimes allegorical, focusing on issues of female bodies, gender, and sexuality. Stylistically built on low-key lighting, sound effects, and jump scares.

Iconography: Objects that instantly identify a genre or subgenre.

Implicit meaning: Story meaning that is not given directly to the viewer, but is hidden and needs active interpretation to unpack.

Invisible editing: The prime goal of continuity editing is to be invisible to the viewer. This way, the viewer does not focus on the editing, but rather focuses on emotions, story, characters, etc.

Iris wipe: A transition used in early cinema that typically takes a circular shape and gradually grows smaller until the screen is left black and no image is visible.

J-cut: A type of sound bridge that bleeds the next scene’s sound into the first scene’s image.

J-Horror: Horror sub-genre from Japan that critiques alienating modern life through figures of ghosts (onryu) and familial relations.

Jump cut: A cut between two shots where the camera position remains the same. A small piece of film is cut out, so that the object on screen looks "jumpy".

Jump scare: A technique used in horror cinema to surprise or scare audiences through sudden movement or abrupt changing of an image. Usually punctuated by a character’s scream or an uncanny sound.

Key light: The main source of illumination.

Kinetoscope: A type of peep show device activated by putting a coin in the slot and invented by Thomas Edison and William Dickson in 1891.

Kuleshov Effect: The psychological principle that adjoining shots influence each other’s qualities in the viewer’s eyes.

Lack of fidelity (asynchronous sound): Sound effects are obviously different from the prop’s “natural” sound. Often used for exaggerated or comic effect.

L-cut: A type of sound bridge that bleeds a scene’s sound into the next scene’s image.

Leitmotif: A musical phrase that comes to be associated with a particular character or place.

Linear editing: A form of early film editing where strips of film were cut with a razor blade and taped back together with clear tape (splicing), arranging images and sound in a logical sequence to tell a story.

Low-angle shot: Camera is tilted up to film an object or character from below. This shot often makes a character look powerful and large.

Low-height camera: Camera is placed low to the ground, without a tilt. This shot may capture someone on ground-level, or it could capture feet.

Low-key lighting: Creates a dark, shadowy look with a softer key light.

Magic Lantern: One of the earliest pre-cinematic projectors that used a transparent plate, lens and light source to screen its images to audiences.

Match-on-action: A cut between two camera angles is "hidden" by an action that is shown in both shots. For example, the action of a door opening, when matched in two shots, "hides" the fact that one shot was filmed from inside a room and the next show was filmed from outside.

Matte painting: A painting that is composited with live footage to take the place of an on-location set.

Monochromatic color: Multiple saturations or values of the same color hue.

Montage sequence / Elliptical editing: A sequence that condenses great expanses of time by showing small portions of actions stitched together.

Motif: Any significant element of a film that is repeated to deepen narrative meaning.

Motion capture: Technology that translates live action movement to computer graphics in order to create more authentic movement and weight in digitally animated creatures.

Multiple exposures: A technique where two or more shots are superimposed in the same frame by exposing the original frame or still image repeatedly to light or other images.

Musical: New genre created in response to the rise of sound film. Features singing, dancing, and spectacle-driven camerawork.

Mutoscope: A type of flip-card peep show device invented by William Dickson and Herman Casler in 1894.

Narration: The subjective telling of story from a specific point of view. This point of view can be seen in plot organization, in a voiceover, and in cinematography, editing, or mise-en-scène choices.

Narrative film: A fictional or fictionalized story. As opposed to documentaries, which are often called "non-narrative" films.

Narrator: The character or characters from whose point of view the story is told. The character(s) may be on-screen or off-screen; they may be diegetic or non-diegetic.

Nickelodeon: Permanent indoor exhibition spaces that charged a nickel for admission in the early 1900s.

Non-diegetic: Elements that exist outside of the diegesis, or story world. Characters in the story cannot see or hear non-diegetic elements, for example credits, subtitles, or orchestral soundtrack. When a narrator is non-diegetic, they exist outside of the diegesis and characters on screen are not aware that he is speaking.

Objective / Objective Perspective: Everything that is visible before our eyes or understood about the storyworld. There are no emotional insights from a character's perspective. This camera often keeps us at a distance, making us voyeurs.

Observational cinema: See Direct cinema

Off-screen: Events that occur beyond the film frame provided to the viewers. These events are in the diegesis and characters may have access to them, but viewers must learn of off-screen events by deduction.

Off-screen sound: Diegetic sound whose action is out of frame.

On-location: A real space is used as a set for a scene. As opposed to a "studio" set.

Onryou: Vengeful, wet female ghosts stemming from Japanese folklore and literature. Characterized by their long black hair, corpse-pale skin and inhuman movements that are the principal trope of J-Horror.

Open ending: The film intentionally leaves the audience uncertain about the future of characters.

Pan: Camera swivels from side to side.

Parallel editing: See Crosscutting

Pedestal: Camera axis is lifted up or down while camera itself remains level.

Persistence of vision: The effect of an afterimage on the retina persisting after an image has been shown. This allows for sequential images, as in optical toys or in film, to blend together to appear to be in motion.

Phantasmagoria: A horror exhibition chiefly produced through a magic lantern that projected images of demons and skeletons onto walls, smoke, and transparent curtains to frighten its audiences.

Phi phenomenon: The mental act of suturing the gaps between frames or images.

Photography: The creation of permanent images with light on a light-sensitive material, often an emulsion on paper or celluloid.

Pinhole Camera: See Camera Obscura

Plot: The arrangement of story elements in time. Events can be organized chronologically or told out of temporal order.

Prop: Short for "property". Any object used in set design.

Psychological horror: A subgenre of horror that positions the spectator within the growing fear and mental instability of its characters.

Puppet animation: A type of stop-motion animation that moves puppets into slightly varying positions between takes.

Pure cinema: Experimental cinema that focuses on manipulating film material itself, like scratching and painting the celluloid, and creating shapes and forms rather than narrative story.

Ramping: Fast motion and slow motion used sequentially in a single shot.

Rashomon Effect: A term used to describe the unreliability of eyewitness accounts. Based on the film Rashomon (Kurosawa, 1950).

Rear projection: Footage is projected onto a backdrop while the actor is filmed in front of it.

Reenactments: Common convention of including staged scenarios of past events within non-fiction film.

Reestablishing shot: A return to a wide view of the setting, after the closer view that followed the establishing shot, to remind us of the map and where characters are situated within it.

Restricted narration: Both the protagonist and the audience are given access to the same story information.

Romantic comedy: Genre that follows a simple structural convention: a boy and girl alternate loving and hating each other until they are reunited through a grand romantic gesture.

Room tone: An ambient sound that is emitted from every room. Recorded room tone provides naturalism to a scene and helps to blend together sound recorded from different sites (for example, on set and in studio).

Scene-to-scene editing: Editing that stitches together multiple sequences. Often this type of editing moves between times and/or spaces.

Science Fiction / Sci-Fi: Speculative genre that follows themes of science, technology, ethical or moral anxieties, and social philosophy. Includes iconography of futuristic technology, scientists, or a dystopian setting. Often allegorical stories that address historical events and social systems through subtext.

Sequence: A larger unit of film that is made of several shots stitched together with cuts. Each sequence exists in a single time and space.

Set design: The dressing or décor of a set and the way that space is staged.

Shaky cam shot: A rough, bumpy shot often associated with Direct Cinema documentaries of the 1960. Can be achieved with a handheld camera on set or with computer graphics in post-production.

Shallow space: Few planes of space (sometimes only two). Often gives a sense of claustrophobia or a flattened image.

Shot: A single piece of footage without any cuts. The smallest unit of film.

Shot/Reverse-shot: A common way to edit two characters in conversation. One shot features one character; the other shot (the “reverse-shot”) features a second character. Cuts move us between these two shots as the characters converse.

Shot-to-shot editing: Editing that stitches together multiple shots into one sequence.

Slasher Film: Horror sub-genre popularized in the 1980s that typically features naive teenagers who become the prey of a serial killer.

Slow cinema: A style of poetic cinema that intentionally deviates form Hollywood standards of action and momentum.

Slow motion: Image is captured at a faster speed and so appears to slow down when projected.

Soft lighting: Diffused light that hides imperfections.

Sonic close-up: The volume of a certain sound effect is increased to bring attention to an object or experience.

Sound bridge: Bleeds sound from one scene into another. Creates a sense of continuity between sharp cuts.

Sound fidelity (synchronous sound): Each prop that we see on screen makes a believable sound in post-production. The image and sound appear to match.

Sound-on-disc: Early sound technology that synched a record player’s sound with the projector’s image.

Sound-on-film (optical soundtrack): Sound technology that prints the sound track directly on the film strip itself. For celluloid film, this became the standard of production.

Sound perspective: Matches camera distance to sound volume. Sonic close-ups are matched with visual close-ups. Sound becomes muffled when it is far away from the camera or unimportant to the story.

Special Effects: Magic tricks or effects not occurring naturally that are achieved on set (commonly abbreviated as SFX) as compared to visual effects (VFX) that are added afterwards with a computer.

Steadicam: Technology developed by Garrett Brown in the 1970s where the camera can be attached to the cinematographer’s body with stabilizer mounts to create a smooth movement while walking.

Stop-motion / Stop-motion animation: Uses manipulated objects to create each film frame. Includes claymation, puppet animation, pinscreen animation, sand animation, and cutout animation.

Story: A series of events that form the building blocks of narrative.

Structural conventions: Expectations of plot, character, setting, or style.

Subjective / Subjective perspective: Places us within the character's experience, that is, the particular emotional or mental state of the character.

Subtitles: Captioned dialogue printed on the screen on top of the film image. Used to provide translated dialogue information in foreign-language films and captioned dialogue for hearing-impaired viewers.

Surrealism: A 1920s art and cinema movement that focused on dream logic, absurd combinations of shots, and shocking imagery.

Suture: To fully immerse audiences into the screen so that they forget they are watching a film and identify with characters.

Talkie: Early term for sound cinema. The Jazz Singer (1927) is commonly descried as the first "talkie", since it was the first sound film to feature spoken dialogue.

Talking heads: Common convention in which interview subjects are cut off at the shoulders.

Telephoto lens: Range in focal length from 70mm to 300mm or more. Captures a long range of space, which makes it optimal for filming at long distances. The distance of the telephoto lens flattens planes of space in the frame, making objects appear extremely close together.

Temporal frequency: The amount of times that an event or shot recurs in a film.

Thematic codes: Subtext embedded within genres and subgenres, often based in historical context.

Third Cinema: A political filmmaking movement originating in 1960s and 1970s Latin America that critiques neocolonialism, capitalism, and profit-oriented filmmaking.

Three-point lighting system: A convention of lighting that includes a key light, fill light, and back light. Part of the Classical Hollywood system that created "glamour" shots.

Tilt: Camera tilts up or down on its axis.

Time-lapse cinematography: Allows a naturally slow process to be accelerated, like the germination of a seed to a plant.

Tracking shot: A smooth camera movement that follows (tracks) a character as they move. Often achieved with a dolly or Steadicam.

Transitions: A style of scene-to-scene editing that uses an optical effect, like a fade, dissolve, wipe, or iris. These styles are usually meant to be obvious in order to mark a change in time and/or place.

Triadic color: Three complementary colors arranged in a triangle on the color wheel.

Underground film: Film movements of the 1950s and 1960s that showcased sub-cultures ignored by Hollywood, such as avant-garde artists, hipsters, and queer communities.

Unreliable narrator: Narrators who defy our expectation to be told the "true" story. Unreliable narrators have compromised memories, intentionally blur the truth, or straight out lie to the viewer.

Unrestricted narration: The audience knows more information than the protagonist. Often used to evoke suspense in narrative progression.

Vertigo effect: See Dolly zoom

Viewfinder: What the cinematographer looks through in a camera to compose his shot. It gives an idea of the scope of the subject or area to be recorded. In modern cameras, it is found in the center of the camera.

Voiceover: The voice of a character layered over the film image. This voice may be an omniscient perspective or an inner voice. Voiceovers most often are associated with the film's narrator.

Wide-angle lens: Range in focal length from 24mm to 35mm. Captures a wide amount of space at close range, which makes it optimal for filming big sets. The shape of the wide-angle lens creates "bulging" at the edges of the frame and creates distance between objects.

Widescreen: Aspect ratio developed in the 1950s to create a bigger, more exciting image for theaters.

Wipe: A transition effect where a boundary line travels from one part of the frame to the other to signal one shot's replacement by another shot.

Zoom lens: A variable lens that can move between several focal lengths, potentially creating both wide-angle and telephoto effects.

Zoopraxiscope: An early cinematic device invented by Eadweard Muybridge that created the illusion of moving images by rapidly projecting images painted on a rotating glass disk onto the screen.