

Screen Play

Audiovisual Narrative
and Viewer Interaction



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Introduction

In 1916 one of the earliest works of film theory was published: *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* by Hugo Münsterberg. Münsterberg's short treatise examined the correlation between film and story telling and the internal psychological responses of the viewer. The flashback was an evocation of memory, the close-up intensified emotion, the dissolve restructured a sense of time; for Münsterberg cinematic discourse represented an on-screen display of internal psychological processes. The screen, rather than a 'mystic gulf' between viewer and story, was a kind of playground – a 'free and protected space' – for the viewer's experience of dramatic enactment.

It is an approach which seems singularly contemporary – as relevant today, not only in the field of cinema studies, but to the broader application of understanding viewer engagement with the audiovisual narratives of film, television and computer. In addressing the question of the 'mystic gulf' – the divide between viewer and narrative – a re-assessment of early film theory plays an important part in coming to terms with the *fin de siècle* playground represented by the *cinematographe* a century ago, and the digital IT playground of the present, and an emergent narrative discourse, in whatever form it may take.

With *The Photoplay* and the concept of play within a cultural context as points of departure, this dissertation examines the correspondence between the screen – whether the 'free and protected space' of the cinema screen, or of television, or the computer – as a game board with its own game conventions and conditions of play. Thus, the viewer's role is that of an active participant constructing internal narratives from the audiovisual narrative games displayed on-screen. From this perspective I examine the game the viewer plays with audiovisual narrative, and the strategies such play entails.

Rather than address future scenarios – such as how the viewer will experience stories in the future, or in which direction audiovisual narrative will evolve – I have confined this study to the experience of viewing, and how viewing constitutes forms of game playing. The issues addressed include; defining the game, the 'rules' of discourse, and the

'conditions of play.' Also, what options and strategies can the viewer adopt to develop game playing skills? How does the viewer devise strategies to best negotiate with narrative regardless of form?

A screen play theory begins where perception theory ends. Screen play theory begins with the way the player responds to what is perceived, drawing the distinction between the game – the external narrative; the player – the internal experience; and response – the interpretations and meanings of that experience. Screen play is the fusion of the external screen narrative and the internal and individual scenario.

Objectives

Within a framework of cinema studies, narrative and game theories and phenomenology, the aim of this thesis is to provide a viewer-orientated game theory which incorporates audiovisual narrative to the viewer's participation. The viewer, in the phenomenological sense, is the scenarist – a manufacturer of stories. By broadening the scope of the thesis to encompass audiovisual narrative in general, allows a theoretical perspective to explore the validity of various claims relating to new forms of interactive narrative. It is not however an attempt to speculate on how technology affects and determines narrative discourse; rather a reflection on the strategies of play for emergent media and the narratives they purport in whatever form they may take.

I suggest that the dramatic structure of audiovisual narrative is a game of strategy and moves, while the viewing experience allows for games of interpretation. The game defined by the narrative is consistent – an invariable – play is determined by individual and subjective styles and readings defined by a range of variables. I consider how the viewer's 'play' links cognitive comprehension and hermeneutic interpretation, and the distinction between the hermeneutics of reading, with its unlimited number of interpretations, and the cognitive processes of comprehension, limited to the rule observant basics of cognition.

The central questions to the thesis are three fold: what forms of game and play distinguish the audiovisual narratives of cinema, television and computer? what are the implications of 'interactivity'

within the context of the audiovisual narrative? what is the role of the viewer within 'the participatory narrative'?

Primary sources include audiovisual narratives from cinema, television and CD-ROM. Secondary sources fall into the following categories: on the nature of play as a cultural activity, Johan Huizinga and Gregory Bateson; on game theory – a range of texts on the applications of game theory within the social sciences, in economics, computer sciences and strategic thinking in general; on narrative, text and reader-orientated theory – Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco; and on the schemata of dramatic structure and the cinema – David Bordwell, Seymour Chatman and Edward Branigan. I also consider the processes of narrative 're-framing' (acculturation, remediation) with the work of Marshall McLuhan in focus, and subsequent contemporary evaluations which assess parallels to new media and media interaction.

The more theoretical aspects of this study draw upon cinema studies and its contemporary foray into cognitive and applied psychology (Hugo Münsterberg, an strong proponent of the latter), and on phenomenology and related areas within psychology, the social sciences and philosophical theory.

Summary

Various approaches derive from aspects of game theory, narrative theories (primarily within the context of cinema studies), and phenomenology. Firstly, the basics of game theory with its applications to social sciences, economics and strategic thinking, provide a means of evaluating how 'speculation' and 'dilemma' function within the narrative context. Game theory extends to theories of cognitive psychology and addresses the ways in which the individual calculates strategies, hypothesises and 'interacts' with narrative at a problem-solving level.

Secondly, narrative theories, and in particular the cognitive approach to film narrative of David Bordwell, Edward Branigan and others, as well as recent research into human-computer interaction and alternative narrative forms, provide a framework with which to evaluate the viewer's role in narrative, and the 'interactors' role regarding

computers. Thirdly, a phenomenological approach grounded in the philosophy of Franz Brentano and Edmund Husserl provides a theoretical foundation with which to consider the individual experience of narrative, in whatever form it is presented.

This merger of disciplines constitutes a methodology that Gaston Bachelard defines as a 'dispersed' philosophy, which, he suggests, 'must always turn toward other disciplines as part of a renewing process.' Bachelard – himself grounded in the philosophy of phenomenology – advocates an academic discourse of 'shifting character' founded on 'the essential mobility of concepts.' The 'shifting character' of this dissertation is divided into three sections founded on the correspondence between audiovisual narrative and game play: 'The Game', 'The Game Board' and 'The Player'.

The first section describes game playing and game playing strategies in general terms; how game and play relate to audiovisual narrative, and the mentality of the viewer and how drama and narrative relate to the individual phenomenological experience. I begin by defining play as the basis of cultural activity and draw upon the theories advanced by Johan Huizinga in *Homo Ludens*. I suggest that the transition of play to game is through the formality of conventions, rules and conditions of play – a transaction between player and game. The formation of cinema narrative has precedents in various forms of picture play; from comic strips, magic lantern, optical illusions and exhibitions to the visual technology of the late 19th century. Thus, film narrative can be described as an interaction between spectator and spectacle – a psychological fusion between story and viewer – a theoretical perspective posited by Hugo Münsterberg's *The Photoplay*.

I define the film game as a dynamic between narrative rationale – plot and structure; and drama – the irrationality of human behaviour. Within the parameters of game film discourse and film narrative is distinguished by discourse as rule-bound rather than convention bound, and narrative adhering to conventions or norms relating to causality, structure, character and intrigue. As game player the viewer has options which include: to reconstruct narrative cohesion, to observe or participate, to assimilate or to interpret. The game's play

constitutes a narrative interaction alternating between speculation ('what happens next?') and dilemma ('what would I do?')

Game theory models of strategic thinking can be applied to the strategies involved in playing film narrative games, but, I suggest, a theory of computational functionalism has limitations as implied by viewer response to narrative dilemma. Where dilemma positions the viewer and prompts an emotional response, strategic thinking can only partially address the choice of options prompted by a dilemma. Prisoner's dilemma is an extension of game theory to address this issue, which is analogous to the dramatic narrative positioning the viewer.

I relate a viewer's response to narrative dilemma to dramatic and emotional engagement in contrast to the intellectual involvement afforded by speculation and strategic thinking. Dramatic structure can be described as an escalating causeway of actions based on a protagonist's minimum required effort, orchestrating events to intensify narrative dilemma. I propose a four act neo-classical square – rather than the traditional (classical) dramatic triangle – as a dramatic model to define the classical Hollywood narrative discourse 'schemata of play.' Each act is defined by narrative sequences or 'assertions'; situation – problem – motivation – decision – obstacle – action, culminating with a moral point; a thematic reiteration as posed by the narrative. A dramatic form of narrative requires specific strategies – lyric and epic cinema define alternative schemata of play requiring alternative strategies.

I consider the 'moves' which engage the viewer 'to play' a film; how player options are determined by individual styles and an individual's own 'centre of narrative gravity.' Strategies of play are founded on (a) speculation ('what happens next?') primed by narrative causality, and (b) 'positioning' or role-play ('what would I do?') prompted by dilemma. Game theory evaluates strategies and options available to the player – a phenomenological approach considers how the player plays the game and meanings the player invests into play.

I evaluate how idiographic readings relate to diversity of thinking styles; bivalent, ambivalent, multivalent and valent, which define the options a player provides regardless of the options provided by the narrative. Further, players enter a game scenario with an open agenda (expectations of the game) and a hidden agenda (individual

mindsets) which determine play. Player activity consists of speculating an outcome, identifying a dilemma and assimilating insight necessary for the resolution of the dramatic conflict (speculation – identification – assimilation). This schema corresponds to Franz Brentano's 'psychognosy' which divides mental phenomena into three classes: presentation – judgement – affective attitude.

I maintain that a screen play theory reconciles an idiographic psycho-logical/phenomenological approach to individual narrative readings and to the broader spectrum of theories encompassing narrative, text and visual fiction. I draw a correlation between story mood (cognitive appraisal) and the type of character/situation investment made by the viewer. I reject the notion of character identification, but not the process of identification; players identify the dilemma and identify with dilemma, processing dilemma in deference to character. The function of 'role-play' can be described as a two fold process; firstly, as an option to assume the role of 'player', and secondly, to assume stereotype and character roles within the game. I define stereotypes as representations of limited options, and character as representing extended options.

Part Two, 'The Game Board', considers the screen as a point of departure for examining how screen functions as interface between viewer and narrative, whether cinema, television or computer screen. I examine narrative and narrative models with a focus on how narrative games prompt the player to recreate an imaginary fictional world onto an internal mental screen. The theatrical screen is a proscenium stage, the literary screen – a printed page, the cinema screen – a white sheet, the television and computer screen – a sheet of glass. The physical screen represents a mental 'game board' regardless the narrative form.

Classifications of plot, game, story or dramatic situation, function best when linked to the pragmatic considerations of the relationship between game and player. I consider the ways in which industry praxis has shaped fiction film's narrative agenda, and how it is industry praxis which shapes the agenda of narratives through genre. I conclude with an evaluation of narrative morphology and how it constitutes a valid approach to defining a narrative 'game plan.'

I consider the distinctions between different narrative screens – cinema, television and computer; how the ‘inner world’ is addressed cinematically by filmic modes of viewer interaction linked to Münsterberg’s ‘internal states’ – attention (subjectivity); memory (flashback); imagination (scopophilia); and emotion (intensity of experience). These constitute modes of interaction through discourse – forms of screen play assimilated into narrative film games: subjectivity games – which align the viewer to an individual perspective; scopophilic games – which align the viewer to the illicit view of another person’s field of vision; recollection games – which posit the viewer with subjective evocations of past events, or events imagined; experiential games – which intensify the experience of film viewing through sentient stimulation.

In addition, narrative interaction is provided by (a) acculturation, whereby the film narrative reconstitutes or revises a familiar narrative in a version tailored to the constraints of film narrative and discourse; (b) reflexivity – the film narrative refers back to its own morphology; (c) ludic narration – whereby film narrative is a self-acknowledged representation of a game and characters are self-defined players.

I consider the basic types of narrative film ‘game plan’, which include the causal-plot orientated classical film narrative; the causal-character orientated ‘epic’ narrative; the introspective ‘art film’; and the reflexive – post modern film narrative. As game plans these provide codes of definition rather than definitions themselves. I conclude that viewer interaction remains a psychological option, not a physiological one, whereby emergent and divergent narrative forms may necessitate new codes to cue the viewer to information and responses necessary for narrative comprehension.

I consider the distinctions between the cinematic and television ‘screen play’ which include: film’s narrative discourse founded on literary and dramatic precedents and television’s ‘folkloric’ mode of discourse; and, the cinema’s high investment level contra television watching as a domestic diversion. I examine ways in which television has re-framed the audiovisual narrative – through serialisation and segmentation. Serialisation with its roots in 19th century literature and

radio and cinema serials; segmentation in both early film screenings and as an appropriation of the postmodern which introduces additional components into the game playing of audiovisual fictions. I suggest that television critique is levelled at a disproportionately modest percentage of television output which relates to news, and current affairs – a ‘failing’ which addresses attitudes to television that deem television as something other than ‘dramatisations’ – the viewer’s comprehension of the game enables play grounded on those conditions.

I define ‘tele-play’ within four general ‘modes’ – theatre, amusement, contest and chance: theatrical drama, the serial or the series; amusement – comedy and entertainment; contest – news, documentary and sport, played out between two contenders as a contest of will against will – in contrast to games of chance – game shows, or speculation games played for personal gain – which relate to will against luck or fate; structure and form integrated with randomness. Television’s multi-linear, multi-character and multi-perspective narrative, I suggest, influences the form and developing discourse of computer fiction. The postmodern television narrative provides the viewer with the standard components of the narrative game, and invites the viewer to create their own. Narrative ‘cues’ purport the artifice of narrative – that texts contain texts within texts – inviting the viewer to participate as a secondary author, to restore a narrative order of their own devising.

I consider the ‘screen play’ of digital environments – how computers do not generate narratives, but generate the pretext for the construction of narratives. The computer screen provides an interface between narrative-structuring (‘machine-logic’) and story-constructing (‘human-emotion’). I consider the implications of ‘interactivity’ – how optimum interactivity allows a ‘user’ to do what they want when they want, and to be able to act within the representation itself. I question the interactivity implied by the multi-optional computer game, which is, after all, limited to the options provided by the software programme. Computer game interactivity can position a player with a limitation of options, rather than an extension of options.

I describe the disparities between computer game narrative and fiction film game narrative as; the absence of character, an impedant narrative trajectory, a random narrative trajectory, and the indeterminate

or self-determined duration of play. I maintain that the narrative game processes of formulation and fabulation (or construction / reconstruction; reading / 'writing', etc) are psychological processes – the end result is a subjective evaluation regardless of the technology.

I examine how Internet defines an intertextuality in which viewer is both player and game master, a manipulator of texts upon a collective playground in which narrative is secondary to textual fragmentation. Internet as a storytelling medium which implies two forms of 'narrative assemblage' – associative links and random 'digressions.' These are not necessarily contradictory attributes, rather Internet's storytelling potential may well lie in these two disparate strategies finding a complimentary platform.

Part Three, 'The Player', focuses on the individual response to narrative. The process of narrative scripting is defined in psychological terms, and the imaginative processes of interpretation are related to the viewer as scenarist. I examine the role of the viewer as game-player, beginning with the intertextuality games of the audiovisual narrative which constitutes a trivium of primary, secondary and tertiary texts. Classical cinema is not only played, but re-played – manipulated into new texts which have in turn created cinema-based games devised by writers, computer programmers, theorists and viewers.

I consider how 'narration' is analogous to 'game board' – the game board provides a structure, a paradigm and a context, whereby meaning is dependent upon the investment made by the player. The game board functions as a system of representation in which play provides the simulation of Life dilemma / problem / intrigue within the risk-free context of the Game – an exploration of possibilities. In addition, the game board provides a context by which the player can devise idiographic scenarios as responses to narrative dilemmas / intrigues. I define different levels of interaction as determined by 'levels of investment' with diminishing/escalating returns where 'comprehension' represents a break-even point; endurance, encounter and perception as diminishing returns, and interpretation, assimilation and participation as 'escalating returns.'

I compare the theoretical implications of 'the participatory universe' of quantum physics defined by John Wheeler, Karl Popper and

others, to 'the participatory narrative.' The audiovisual narrative game is only a story when experienced by a viewer, subject to the individual viewer's interpretation. The role of the 'observer' in modern physics is elevated to 'participator' – (a participatory universe); likewise, narrative is 'the participatory narrative' – a psychological process, in which the advances of technology are peripherals. The viewer, I suggest, is a scenarist – a psychologically active 'author' realising 'narrative' from the options provided by the audiovisual narrative game.

In the conclusion I assess the parallel between Hugo Münsterberg's work in film theory, which set out to dismantle the gulf between the viewer and the screen at a time when the technology of the cinema was a radical social innovation; and the theories of film and narrative as applied to today's technological playground with new forms of textual and narrative interplay. Also, I consider the implications of an 'anything goes' subjectivism in regard to the audiovisual narrative experience and the academic discourse that surrounds it.

A Note on the Text

Throughout the text I have chosen to use the word viewer rather than spectator. The word spectator (L. *speculari* – observe, fr. *specula* – watchtower), although in keeping with the narrative theories proposed by David Bordwell, Edward Branigan, Tom Gunning, suggests an observational ‘passivity’, in contrast to ‘viewer’ which implies a greater degree of participation. A viewer has ‘a point of view’ (conviction), can ‘express views’ (opinions), may ‘have a view to...’ (intent), ‘have in view...’ (form a judgement), ‘have strong views’ (moral values), and can ‘review’ (reconsider, revise). Jonathan Crary suggests that ‘observer’ (as opposed to ‘spectator’) suggests a more active engagement implying the observation of specifics and particulars in relation to the whole.

The choice of ‘viewer’ may seem at odds with the proposal that ‘speculation’ is part of the viewer’s playing process – a word which shares the same etymological root with spectator, yet, this is an issue central to the thesis – screen play consists of both speculation, but also the identification of/with dilemma and assimilation of insight – levels of participation better articulated through ‘points of view’ than ‘spectatorship’ or ‘observation’.

Computer and computer game interaction prompts such terms as ‘user’ and ‘interactor’, which, although arguably more accurate in defining the psychological processes involved, overstate the issue within the film and television viewing context, just as the term ‘player’ (from the perspective of this thesis, the most appropriate term) may be misconstrued by virtue of the breadth of the word’s applications.

1. Play

Homo Ludens

The English word 'play' has a variety of applications. Games are played; to play is to be amused and entertained; to take part in a sport or game, to perform, to gamble, involves play. The VCR has a play button, not a work button; yet machines work, they do not play. Records, CD's, tapes, discs, like musical instruments, are played. Play can mean act or pretend; feelings can be played upon or played with. A speculator plays the stock market. The exhibition or show constitutes a display. The play is performed on stage, and performed by players. Business dealings and negotiations, corporate policies and transactions, are executed by players.

Gregory Bateson's 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy' (1955) considers play as communication in which, firstly, the messages and signals exchanged in play are based on pretence; and secondly, whatever it is which signalled does not exist. Bateson's anthropological study establishes that the actions of play are signs and signals representing an action which carry the message 'this is play.' Bateson gives an example of two monkeys playing in which actions or signals were similar to but not the same as combat. Child's play requires pretense and suspense of disbelief, and role-play, whether playing 'cops and robbers', 'cowboys and indians' or teddy bears afternoon tea party. Play is a ritual enacting life, like drama, imitative, mimetic. In drama and cinema, the viewer recognises the actions and signals expressed in a fiction film as play. The action may represent a recognisable non-playing situation, but is play nonetheless.

'The discrimination between play and non-play,' says Bateson, 'like the discrimination between fantasy and nonfantasy, is certainly a function of secondary process, or ego. Within the dream the dreamer is usually unaware that he is dreaming, and within play he must often be reminded that "This is play."'

In *Homo Ludens* (1949) Johan Huizinga describes man as the player and his activities as forms of game playing. Play, he maintains, is an essential part of culture. The voluntary nature of game playing allows

the players to create order controlled by the players themselves. Huizinga defines play as ordered activity, distinct from ordinary life; that play '... creates order, is order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection. Play demands order absolute and supreme.' However, play can also be subversive – a process by which to test restraints and control. John Fiske, for example, describes play as 'active pleasure: it pushes rules to the limit and explores the consequences of breaking them...' Besides being a source of pleasure, play is also a source of power, writes Fiske. The 'game' on the other hand, represents restraints and the 'order' to which Huizinga alludes. The aesthetic factor of play, suggests Huizinga, is the same impulse to create order, and that the element of tension in play motivates the player to want to succeed.

Play in culture, is, in effect, a 'play of signs', which Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin define as 'the process of remediation.' As the focus of this study concerns play and audiovisual narrative I propose a brief outline of media as forms of play, and how each new medium constitutes play with preceding media. Bolter and Grusin suggest that medium is best defined as 'that which remediates,' a view that echoes Marshall McLuhan's claim that the content of any medium is always another medium.

For Bolter and Grusin remediation means that: 1. media depends on other media; 2. all media remediate reality; 3. media refashions, rehabilitates and reforms other media. Bolter and Grusin's survey of media and their respective 'remediations' covers computer games, digital photography, graphics, digital art, film, virtual reality, 'mediated spaces', television, Internet and computing. Where McLuhan considered a medium 'hot' or 'cold', Bolter and Grusin distinguish between 'immediacy' – where the medium is concealed (film, for example); and hypermediacy – where the medium is acknowledged (television, Internet, computer games).

Whereas Bolter and Grusin's concern lies with text and medium, this study centres around narrative and viewer; yet the guidelines of 'remediation' I find are applicable to viewer interaction with the narrative discourses of cinema, television and computer. New digital media, writes Bolter and Grusin, '... emerge from within cultural

contexts, and they refashion other media, which are embedded in the same or similar contexts.' The cultural and medial play which shaped film narrative a century ago, shapes a contemporary IT playground and an emergent 'remediated' narrative discourse.

Lev Manovich writes: 'All culture, past and present, is beginning to be filtered through a computer, with its particular human-computer interface....' Manovich employs the term cultural interfaces to describe evolving interfaces used by the designers of Web sites, CD-ROM and DVD-ROM titles, multimedia encyclopedias, on-line museums, computer games and other digital cultural objects. Three key cultural forms are shaping cultural interfaces in the 1990s, suggests Manovich; cinema, print and a general-purpose human-computer interface (HCI). Cinema is most influential, he concludes – 'the language of cultural interfaces is in its early stage, as was the language of cinema a hundred years ago.'

The focus of this study - with audiovisual narrative as subtitle - is directed primarily to cinema for this reason. The significance of cinema may be self-evident as medium for audiovisual narrative, but it is from the audiovisual narrative games of the cinema, that the divergent narrative discourses of television and computer are 'remediated' or acculturised (> Chapter Six). An ongoing trans-medial play shapes the narrative games that stimulate a viewer's screen play. For this study the issues concern: why games? and, why play?

According to Marshall McLuhan 'games are popular art, collective social reactions to the main drive or action of any culture.' He describes games as 'dramatic models of our psychological lives providing release of particular tensions. They are collective and popular art forms with strict conventions.' McLuhan traces the development from games and rituals as the detribalisation process of ancient cultures – to the verbal narratives of antiquity – to the wide appeal of contemporary games and sports. Football, baseball, ice hockey, says McLuhan, 'seen as outer models of inner psychological life, become understandable. As models they are collective rather than private dramatisations of inner life... all games are media [my italics] of interpersonal communication... extensions of our immediate inner lives.'

Bolter and Grusin define medium as: 'the formal, social, and material network of practices that generates a logic by which additional instances are repeated or remediated, such as photography, film, or television.' The definition is as precise as it is cumbersome, yet prevaricates the intermediary essence of media. As a 'network of practices' it is, as the word suggests, in the middle; a mediating process between the text and the reader, between game and betractor (McLuhan), and between game and participant (screen play). Media creates mediators – the individual in the middle who reaches an understanding through negotiation – the process that defines audiovisual narrative and screen play (> Chapter 2). 'Play implies interplay', writes Marshall McLuhan.

Picture Play

The play and interplay of moving pictures subscribe to the components of play described by Johan Huizinga: order, tension, movement, change, solemnity, rhythm, rapture. The interplay of images is the basis of cinematic montage – the principles of the pictographic script committed to celluloid. Sergei Eisenstein maintained that 'collision montage' derived from Japanese kanji pictographs; characters developed from simple illustrations of objects and phenomena of daily life. Objects represented by some kanji pictographs are still recognisable:

yama (mountain – 3 peaks)
kawa (river – flowing water)
hi (sun)

Pictographs serve as building blocks for more advanced characters, and the interplay of combining pictographs (or ideographs, representing abstract concepts) formed logograms that Eisenstein regarded as a source of inspiration in collision montage:

hayashi (tree + tree) woods
mori (tree + tree + tree) forest
mei (sun + moon) light

In his essay 'The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram' (1929) Eisenstein lists:

dog + mouth = bark
mouth + child = scream
knife + heart = sorrow

Eisenstein's 'collision montage', which he defines as the starting point for the 'intellectual cinema' is picture play – an essential component of play within the film game. This is play as pleasure, amusement, distraction, as a form of fictionalising, which Huizinga suggests resists analysis and logic; which cannot be reduced to another mental category. Montage is the play of riddles in picture form, juxtaposing images, suggesting metaphor. Johan Huizinga suggests that poetry too is a form of riddle game. Andrey Tarkovsky's critique of montage is based on this 'playfulness'; that 'montage... is incompatible with the nature of the cinema... Art can never have the interplay of concepts as its ultimate goal.' And later: 'Montage cinema presents the audience with puzzles and riddles, makes them decipher symbols, take pleasure in allegories, appealing all the time to their intellectual experience.'

Both Eisenstein and Tarkovsky use the word 'intellectual' to define the editing process, as this fusion of imagery addresses mental processes of cognition and syntax. Yet playfulness is its essence – the impact of the much imitated Odessa Steps sequence is in the images playing off each other, inviting the viewer to fuse the disparate images into narrative fragments. A hundred years earlier John Ayrton Paris' thaumatrope (1825) illustrated the principle of the pictograph. An empty guardhouse on one side of a circular disc – a sleeping watchman on the other (or bird and cage, acrobat and horse, an artist with a blank canvas – A side, and artist with portrait – B side) spun together created a third image. The thaumatrope – from the Greek words wonder and turn – 'a

toy which performs wonders by turning round', had engraved upon it an epigram 'the point of which is answered, or explained, by the change which the figure assumes during the rapid whirling of the card.'

The grammatical brevity of pictographic communication has its drawbacks – the lack of precision, for example, to which the number and variations of translated Chinese texts can testify; the ambiguity which demands a greater degree of reflection and interpretation. In addition, the pictograph is more dependent on the context than linear forms of communication represented by phonetic alphabets.

Eisenstein was not alone in drawing the parallel between cinematic imagery and pictographs. In *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915) Vachel Lindsay compared moving pictures to old Egyptian picture writing. The art of moving pictures is departing from the theatrical towards 'the mood of the art exhibition.' Indeed artists since man's beginnings have played with images to create movement – the nineteenth century provided the technology to accomplish it. A film screened at the 1962 Annecy Festival in France consisted of photographs of prehistoric cave paintings put together on a strip of film to show a running bison, the bison falling into a pit, and the caveman capturing his prey – the drawings had accurately reconstructed movement – the technology of the cinema realised it.

Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) is further indication of the preoccupation with picture play during the late Victorian epoch. The fascination with the imagery of the subconscious, the dynamic role of European art movements from Impressionism and Futurism, and attempts to portray motion in a single image – to the rise of the comic strip, suggest that this play with images is not solely the domain of the kinematograph, but an aspect of the human imagination striving to reproduce the internal processes of picture play.

Political cartoons had graced the pages of American and European newspapers since the 18th century, but placing a number of pictures into a cohesive narrative did not occur until the late 1800s. One of the earliest strips, *Ally Sloper*, appeared in Britain's 'Judy' magazine in August 1867, written by C H Ross and illustrated by his French wife, Marie Duval. *Ally Sloper's* popularity continued nigh on 50 years, but the comic strip form was only really established with the comic papers

that began to appear in the late 1880s. The first weekly comic paper, *Comic Cuts*, for example, was published for the first time in London on May 17th 1890.

On January 5th 1896, the Sunday edition of *The New York World* featured the debut of *The Yellow Kid*, drawn by Richard Outcault. *The Yellow Kid* began as a single comic drawing but by the end of the year Outcault had developed the character into eight frame narratives. Outcault had previously worked as a technical illustrator for Thomas Edison in the US and France. John Fell suggests the comic strip, like movies, found favour through industrial technology, mass distribution and a commercial appeal to semi-literate audiences. The popularity of these strips in Europe and the US meant that by the turn of the century both the term 'comic strip,' and its recognition as an established form of entertainment was ensured. Regular characters began to appear around 1896 and comic papers around 1900. By this time the comic strip emulated depictions of movement, close-up and point of view.

The late 19th century European comic strip phenomena pales beside the thousand year tradition of Japanese manga, again in the realm of the pictograph and the picture play that inspired Eisenstein's collision montage. *Chojugiga*, or 'animal scrolls' from the 12th century are the oldest surviving examples of Japanese narrative comic art – the stories unrolled in scrolls up to 80 feet in length. The *grande explosion japonaise*, occurred in the mid to late 19th century, when first Paris, then Europe, embraced Japanese art, including prints of early forms of manga comic strips. How much Japanese manga influenced European comic strips is not the issue here; rather the extent and variety of late 19th century pre-occupation with picture play, culminating in the photoplays of the early 1900s. The exhibitions, shows, work fairs, museums; the displays: the rebirth of modern Olympics (Athens, 1896; Paris, 1900); exhibitions from the audacious to the scientific, from carnival freak shows to world expositions flourishing during this period, are further examples of an age preoccupied with viewing and experiencing spectacle.

More specific cognitive forms of picture play have developed within psychology bearing comparison to the film viewing experience. The Rorschach inkblot test developed by Hermann Rorschach in the

1920s, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) developed by Henry Murray in 1935, and projective techniques generally, are story telling games used in therapeutic counselling to assess imaginative projection (as opposed to Freudian projection). In particular, TAT provides subjects with the unstructured stimuli of deliberately ambiguous images which they are invited to 'structure' into narrative. Whether or not a story emerges depends on an individual's readiness to perceive in a specific way, hence apperception. Also as with Rorschach inkblots, and the cinema screen, the 'dramatic arena' consists of a predetermined space – originally 30 black and white illustrations on cards and one blank card.

In 1928 Margaret Lowenfeld at the London Institute of Child Psychology developed sandplay, initially as a therapeutic aid. Sandplay is also picture play – a creative and projective medium, which, according to practitioners, enables the contents of the imagination to be made real and visible. Participants are provided with a tray 50 by 75 centimetres, some water and a collection of miniatures, and given free reign to create whatever images they wish. Thus sandplay is a form of active imagination but the images are concrete. Unlike spontaneous play, sandplay is limited by time and space; what psychotherapist Dora Kalff describes as the 'experience of the symbol in the free and sheltered space' of the sandbox.

In sandplay, playing is a form of therapy, what Estelle Weinrib describes as 'active imagination where the opposites, consciousness and the unconscious, meet in transcendent function... When a person makes a sand picture, whether molding the sand or choosing and placing figures, that person is concretizing unconscious impulses, thereby merging idea and reality, uniting the inner and outer worlds.' Like film viewing, the participant's engagement determines the depth of emotional experience. The free and sheltered space of the sandbox can be likened to the 'secured-symbolizing field' or 'transitional play space' where there is both freedom and protection, the limitlessness of experience within the confines of space and time; in effect the attributes of the cinema screen and the film viewing experience.

Huizinga suggests the significance of the limitations of space in play constitute a process of performance and ritualisation: 'Just as there is no formal difference between play and ritual, so the 'consecrated

spot' cannot be formally distinguished from the playground. The arena, the card table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc, are all in form and function play grounds... within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart.' Huizinga defines image making – the imagination – as both a poetic function and a ludic function. Similarly, the viewer's game with cinema narrative is a fusion – an interplay – of cognitive and interpretative dimensions of picture play.

Interplay

The host of devices which played upon pictures and movement, from the thaumatrope in the 1820s to Eadweard Muybridge's zoopraxiscope and the Edison kinoscope in the early 1890s, the technology of the Lumière Cinématographe (1895), in retrospect characterise a period of technological play. In the subsequent epoch of the photoplay (ca 1902 - 1913), filmmakers' play constituted experiments of applying technology to storytelling, preceding what would become the game of film narrative. The conventions of the game however required more than the integration of the technology of moving pictures and the basic components of drama. It is, like other games, further defined by parameters of space and time, of form and structure, and a context of audience and spectatorship.

Vanessa Schwartz points out that cinema was more than just one of a series of turn-of-the-century novel gadgets because it incorporated many elements to be found in modern life. Three areas of popular culture in late 19th century France – the Paris Morgue, wax museums and panoramas – maintains Schwartz, reveals that 'Spectacle and narrative were integrally linked in Paris's burgeoning mass culture: the realism of spectacle... contingent on the familiarity of real-life newspaper narratives.' This 'new mobilised gaze of the precinematic spectator...' suggests Schwartz, particularly in regard to wax museums, 'relied on the public's recognition of and familiarity with its characters...'

Schwartz writes that 'to many fin-de-siècle observers, Parisians demonstrated a new and marked taste for reality' although the displays examined suggest more a predilection for drama – the 'blurring of life and art...' Schwartz concludes that rather than identify the beginnings of cinema spectatorship 'this sort of flânerie for the masses instead points to the birth of the audience.' Although audience reception (as opposed to viewer) is beyond the scope of this study, the significance of mass spectatorship is in the context it provides for individual screen play. Charles Musser suggests that screen spectatorship dates back to the 17th century and early versions of *laterna magica*, preceding the Lumières by centuries. Yet Javanese *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet theatre) constitutes a form of screen play with a tradition of at least more than a thousand years.

In contrast to these traditions, which incorporate screen play with narrative game, earliest cinema emphasised the act of display, according to Tom Gunning, providing a 'brief dose of scopic pleasure.' In his re-assessment of 'a cinema of attractions' Gunning suggests that: 'Rather than being an involvement with narrative action or empathy with character psychology, the cinema of attractions solicits a highly conscious awareness of the film image engaging the viewer's curiosity... aware of the act of looking, the excitement of curiosity and its fulfilment.' Speculative devices included: action (as in the implied collisions of early railroad films); performance style (showmanlike gestures to camera), and a lecturer (the off-screen showman delivery of views to the audience). Turn-of-the-century cinema constituted 'a cinema of instants, rather than developing situations,' suggests Gunning, yet while the distinctions between spectacle and narrative may be valid from an historical perspective, as screen play from a phenomenological perspective the divisions are arbitrary. The film viewing experience constitutes an interaction between spectator and spectacle, play and game; the fusion of projected narrative as filtered – perceived, comprehended and interpreted – through the internal narratives of the viewer.

Hugo Münsterberg's *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916), one of the first English language studies of the new medium, was not concerned with the technology of filmmaking, nor with the performance of the actors, the directing or photography, nor with the

script or the writer. Münsterberg's field of research concerned the viewer, and the psychological processes at work in watching film. 'The mind of the spectator works to complete the filmic illusion from the stimuli incom-pletely supplied by the perceptions,' wrote Münsterberg. He described the photoplay as 'a mixture of fact and symbolism (in which) we invest the impressions with them.' The imaginative participation of the viewer, he maintained, was more important than the visual perception.

'Is it not really a new art which long since left behind the mere reproduction of the theatre and which ought to be acknowledged in its own aesthetic independence?' Psychology and aesthetics belong together, argued Münsterberg and drew examples from films such as Neptune's Daughter (1915) and Carmen (1912). He made various parallels between physiological and psychological responses of the viewer and the modes of cinema narration: 'The close-up has objectified in our world of perception our mental act of attention...', the cut-back (flashback) is 'an objectification of the memory function'; the film can 'act as our imagination acts... obeys the laws of the mind rather than those of the outer world,' and the dissolves 'symbolises the appearance and disappearance of a reminiscence.'

Münsterberg, born in Danzig 1863, and settling in America in 1897, published a number of psychological texts in the early 1900s; Psychology and Life, Psychology and the Teacher; Psychology and Industrial Efficiency; Psychology and Social Sanity; Psychology, General and Applied, and described his approach as applied psychology. In his study of the photoplay he drew the correlation between what the viewer sees and how it is interpreted; how 'the objective world is moulded by the interests of the mind.'

The Photoplay was published against a background of the systemising of film production, distribution and the formalising of narrative modes. Between 1911 and 1916 the multiple reel film came to dominate the US market, somewhat belatedly compared to Europe and elsewhere. (The five reel The Story of the Kelly Gang for example was released and distributed in Australia in 1906). A regularised feature film national distribution was initiated by Warner's Feature company in 1913 and by other companies the following year. In 1915 - 1916 the industry

shifted to multiple reels over a brief period which marked the formation of the industry's key players for the decades to come – Paramount, Warners, Metro, Universal, Fox (1912 - 1916) Goldwyn and Mayer in 1917.

Distribution was facilitated during this period with the emergence of venue, providing a fixed placement for viewer screen play, from the makeshift and ephemeral screenings in vaudeville theatres at the turn of the century to the nickelodeons by the early teens. Regarding the formalising of narrative conventions, Tom Stempel records that the earliest 'plans' for written films date as early as 1897 and that from 1898 scenarios 'provided the structure or framework for the films.' The success of story films led to an increase of scenarios and scenario writers, suggests Stempel, with Biograph – as an early example followed by production companies later – setting up a story department controlling 'scenario' production between 1910 - 1915.

When Münsterberg delivers what seems an overtly simplified argument to the modern reader, that every film must have unified action and consistent characters, it is against the background of the classical cinema coalescence of an emergent narrative form, discourse (visual interplay of editing, and *mise-en-scène*), and industry praxis (distribution and screenings).

In keeping with film industry strategy to acculturise the new medium, (> Chapter 6) the screen magazine *Paramount Pictograph* employed Münsterberg in 1915 to write a series of articles to provide the industry with intellectual credibility. At the same time he was engaged as a spokesman for the German cause in events in Europe, directed toward preventing American intervention in the Great War. *The Photoplay* was published in April 1916, and Münsterberg died in December the same year, some months before America sent troops to Europe. According to Richard Griffith, Münsterberg's political activities prevented a fair assessment of his psychological study of the photoplay, and the book quickly lapsed into obscurity.

Ana Lopez provides an alternative assessment of Münsterberg; the conflict between the pragmatist applying psychological theories to home, work and education; and the theorising academic who sees the cinema as 'a tool for the manipulation or 'teaching' of the masses

by an intelligentsia.' Lopez suggests Münsterberg saw 'the cinema was destined to be the great egalitarian tool which would ultimately dissolve distinctions based on the privileges of knowledge.' Similar claims would be made by Münsterberg's contemporaries; Vachel Lindsay, D W Griffith, Sergei Eisenstein, for example. Within his own area of proficiency, in psychology and phenomenology, Münsterberg's viewer-orientated approach to film is pertinent to both contemporary film studies, and to the broader application of game theory to film narrative.

Firstly, by the way in which the film narration (as defined by David Bordwell > Chapter 2) plays out a game manipulating characters through various plot-points within a diegetic framework, and secondly, the interactive screen play of the viewer with the narrative game. The correlation between the narrative and the internal psychological responses of the viewer, was Münsterberg's field of interest, an approach which seems singularly contemporary, yet emerges as one of the first theoretical responses to the cinema. The screen, rather than a mysterious division between viewer and experience, was in fact a representation of the viewer's psychological experience of dramatic enactment.

Compare Münsterberg's views to those of psychologist, Hugo Mauerhofer, who, in *Psychology of Film Experience* (1949), claims that the viewer is passive, that the spectator's 'isolation from the outside world' demands a concentrated form of film narrative, intensified by a continuity of action in order to overcome a 'feeling of boredom...' Mauerhofer considers the affinity between the 'cinema situation' and dreams and daydreams, concluding that the cinema is symptomatic of 'the terrifying lack of imagination in modern man... The experience of film canalises the imagination at the same time providing it with the material it urgently requires.' For the spectator the on screen characters represent 'secret wishful thoughts'... identified with 'uncritically ...'

The modest intellectual demands of the film experience, suggests Mauerhofer, require only that the viewer follow his eyes and ears, and that the cinema's 'necessity' is its psychotherapeutical function, that it provides the viewer with an escape from reality. The spectator's role can be summarised with three points: 1. the increased readiness of the imagination: 2. the uncritical voluntary passivity; 3. the spectator's anonymity enabling the viewer to withdraw into a private sphere. The

viewer emerges from the cinema 'possessed by the "bright reflection" of life... until reality leads him relentlessly back to its characteristic harshness.'

Against Mauerhofer's contention of the 'passive' film viewing experience, is the viewer's screen play – options which enable different viewers to interpret the same story, to activate the narrative through play. Unlike dreams the film experience is immediate – the images are tangible.

Again a parallel to sandplay and the projective techniques of cognitive psychology can be drawn whereby '...an unconscious problem is played out in a sandbox, just like a drama; the conflict is transposed from the inner world to the outer world and made visible. This game of fantasy influences the dynamics of the unconscious...' Huizinga refers to the closed space marked out for ritual/play; for the viewer it is the 'free and protected space' of the cinema screen, which, until the teens of the new century, provided a playground for the scenarists developing a new kind of storytelling game.

2. Game

The Text Game

Roland Barthes maintains that the reader plays a text like a game. The reader accepts certain conditions, a contract, and creates meaning and identity from the text. These conditions (norms rather than rules) allow for freedoms and restraints; freedoms of interpretation; restraints within the story world of the game. Thus the player experiences the 'pleasures' of freedom and control.

A game is a test of wits, an interaction between the game and the player enacted within a matrix defined by conditions of play. If the player does not accept these conditions, the game is no longer a game, only diversion. Games structure time by providing a representation of reality while maintaining a distance to reality. Players suspend disbelief, but unlike real life, can withdraw from the game if the experience fails to meet expectations. The game serves as a metaphor for reality yet remains fiction; it must be realistic but not real. The player retains the option to play, or not to play.

A game, like a novel, a fiction film, or a television drama, is a form of make-believe, a metaphor for a specific facet of the human experience. The game substitutes pretence for real life – it is a system of representation. A game of chess is like a battle but it is not a battle, a game of Monopoly is like the transactions of business, but it is an imitation, a simulation. When the game is over the players abandon the game's fiction and return to the routines of daily life.

Once a reader enters a narrative, regardless of form – a novel, newspaper, television – it installs 'all at once and in its entirety, the narrative code we are going to need', writes Barthes. Narrative 'has an articulation and an integration, a form and a meaning...' with the form characterised by distortion and expansion: distending its signs over the length of the story, and inserting unforeseeable expansions into these distortions. Barthes' reference to dream and novel is relevant, in that the film provides a more germane comparison: that all the deviations of the film narrative – the distortions and expansions – like the dream, are contained within its form.

The text prompts response in the form of assessing possibilities. In film narrative cues are provided for the viewer by which to interpret possible directions and plausible resolutions. The viewer 'plays' both by accepting the character roles, and by attempting to predetermine the most plausible conclusion prompted by a series of assumptions. From the outset the viewer considers probabilities, speculates on outcome, prescribes a resolution. Narrative addresses the fundamental human preoccupation of 'what might be...' The resolution which fails to meet expectations provides a further viewer option – to 're-write the ending.'

For Umberto Eco 'in a communicative process there are a sender, a message and an addressee...'; the relationship between them constitutes a 'textual strategy.' In a causal linear narrative the strategy consists of a syntagmatic chain of cause and effect events establishing an intrigue and anticipating a resolution which affirms the predetermined matrix established at the beginning of the narrative. Eco describes the process as a 'signposted promenade', an 'inferential walk' whereby the reader walks through the text, like the process of making moves around a game board. The role of the reader during the 'inferential walk' suggests Eco is that of forecasting: 'the fabula is always experienced step by step... to wonder about the next step of a given story means to face a state of disjunction of probabilities.'

Espen Aarseth rejects the narrative-as-game correspondence, and argues that however deeply engaged in the story, the reader is 'powerless.' 'Like a spectator at a soccer game, he may speculate, conjecture, extrapolate, even shout abuse, but he is not a player.' Aarseth compares the reader to a train passenger, free 'to study and interpret the shifting landscape...' but 'not free to move the tracks in a different direction.' Aarseth suggests the reader's pleasure 'is the pleasure of the voyeur. Safe, but impotent.'

In later chapters I shall discuss the screen play implications of computer games, Internet and MUDs, and the distinction between scopophilic games ('the pleasure of the voyeur') and the hypertextual games of 'the stalker'. As Aarseth suggests, the hypertext/cybertext (what he terms 'ergodic literature') is quite distinct from the linear literary text; it is nonetheless a narrative form alongside other narrative

forms evoking the psychological processes of play. To speculate, conjecture and extrapolate is to play; game and gamble and the Old English *gamenian* are synonymous with play. How 'powerless' then is the viewer/ reader? Can a reader be a player, or is the reader, as Aarseth suggests as 'impotent' as the spectator of a soccer game, or a passenger on a train journey? Where does involvement end and play begin? What is required to participate, to be part of a game?

There are many kinds of games and many forms of play. An awareness and employment of options and of divergent strategies, constitutes play, from narrative games to corporate games to war games. The issue, however, lies not in the semantics of game and play, but why it is essential that narrative is a game, rather than whether it is a game. Narrative includes stories, fables, legends, myths, tales, anecdotes, yarns, allegories, parables, chronicles, accounts; forms of narrating comprise: literature, drama, audiovisual, multimedia, verbal, and so on. Further, narrative is, in the words of Paul Feyerabend, 'the only form adapted to the complexities of human thought and action'; and to be found in economics, legal discourse and scientific discourse, psychoanalysis to mundane conversations and self-introductions. All embrace narrative as a means to facilitate understanding; in essence 'the narrative mode of discourse is omnipresent in human affairs.'

Narrative as game implies an awareness of the experience; a reader/viewer/player tests out, hypothesises or internally dramatises situations and characters. To play a narrative is to participate while cognisant of the narrative process, a reflexivity, a recognition of a narrative as a simulated life situation, based on pretense, suspense of disbelief, and internalised performances structured around role-play. Alternatively narrative is not 'played' but 'believed'; the assumption of narrative represents the consumption of the reader, whereby individual evaluation is subjugated to the authority of the text. At one extreme narratives of nationhood, religion, science and law are either subject to the play of individual scrutiny; at another extreme, instruments of mass coercion. If not 'game' an alternative correspondence for narrative is doctrine, in the etymological sense of 'something taught.'

game < narrative > doctrine

At the outset I suggest that the correspondence of game is useful in illuminating the particulars of the psychological processes in the audio-visual narrative experience. But narratives are all-pervasive – from narratives of 'self' to national narratives, gender, history and the narratives of science and religion. Narrative as doctrine is narrative taught (or learned) as principle, 'accepted' and acted upon accordingly. Cultural narratives, gender narratives, ideological narratives, political and religious narratives that in being 'taught' prompt, not narrative systems, but 'belief systems.' When narrative is doctrine, play and pretense are dismissed as subversive, sacrilegious, disrespectful, blasphemous or contemptuous. An aspect of play is its subversiveness (3p. 14), the foundation of doctrine is in the authority of the text. If game is stimulation (intellectual, emotional, physical) and testing the skills and limitations of the self, doctrine implies the subjugation of the self.

In his study of 'historical narrative' Hayden White suggests that recognising what he defines as an Ironic perspective 'provides the grounds for a transcendence of it... Irony is only one of a number of perspectives on history.' A multi-perspective approach, he concludes, allows historians and philosophers free to 'conceptualise history, to perceive its contents, and to construct narrative accounts of its processes in whatever modality of consciousness is most consistent with their own moral and aesthetic aspirations.' Such an approach correlates to the creative free play of scientific discourse advocated by Johan Huizinga, contra the unicursal perspective of the doctrinal narrative.

A consequence of doctrinal narrative is considered by anthropologist Donald Brown's study of 25 civilisations comparing hereditary caste societies to non-caste societies. According to Brown caste societies develop myth and legend, instead of history and chronicles. Caste societies have no political science, social science, natural science, biography, realistic portraiture, uniform education, nor had they any tradition of writing accurate descriptions of the past. Under Hinduism India produced little history, compared to Confucianist China that had produced so much. Brown argues that caste societies gain nothing from the 'undermining' of scholarly research refuting claims of divine descendancy, and contrasts between the caste-like and the openly stratified societies include, 'tendencies to stereotyping as opposed to an

emphasis on the individual; tendencies to hagiography in place of biography; tendencies to iconography rather than realistic portraiture; and tendencies to spiritualism, ritual, and religion as opposed to secular humanism.'

The doctrinal narrative is fundamentalist and closed to interpretation or 'play', which works to the advantage of secular, religious and nationalist narratives, whether in the form of myth, legend or chronicle. The narrative game on the other hand is essentially polysemic, in whatever form, prompting play and the divergent strategies of interpretation that play entails. The doctrinal narrative cannot be played because there is no outcome over which to speculate; the significance of the narrative game and the play it entails is that the outcome is unknown. In a game a player anticipates and sets strategies for any number of possibilities. With each new consequence the game takes shape, but there would be no point in playing if the outcome was pre-determined. It is a sense of the unknown that defines the purpose of play; the negotiation with the narrative defines the substance of play. Thus the familiar narrative where the textual closure is a 'given' nonetheless qualifies as a negotiable narrative, modified by contextual factors of time and place, by connotation, significance or insight.

At the other extreme the non-negotiable narrative is without options – the fundamentalist narratives of religion, nationhood, science or ideology – constitute narrative as doctrine in which play is not a consideration. The non-negotiable narrative is unconditional, either accepted or rejected whereby rejection is not an option but a disinclination either to consume or 'be consumed' by the narrative. Negotiable or non-negotiable, narrative requires the self-deception of suspense of disbelief – the difference between the two is the distinction between conscience and nescience.

'...all [narrative] comprehension is an encounter between two discourses, a dialogue,' writes Tzvetan Todorov. Within spectatorship studies negotiation suggests different texts can be used, interpreted or appropriated in different ways. Judith Mayne writes that 'the emphasis on negotiation de-emphasises the primacy of the cinematic text, focusing rather than how different responses can be read, whether critically, symptomatically, or otherwise.' Mayne rejects 'apparatus theories' which

define a spectator 'locked into a programme of representation... to the agenda of the filmmaker or institution...' However, the other extreme – 'to define texts as offering only positions that viewers create for them...' suggests Mayne, is to 'substitute one monolithic political notion for another.' Such a position, says Mayne, mediates any notion of the cinematic institution out of existence. However, my defense of the latter is based on the consideration of the viewer as individual, with the individual-related agenda of screen play, as opposed to the spectator within the context of spectatorship studies in which Mayne considers negotiation, along with fantasy and address/reception within the context of the homogenous institution of the cinema, and the heterogeneous responses of the audience.

The individual focus of screen play counters Sergei Eisenstein's idea of 'playing with the spectator' founded upon an ideology of cinema as 'a tool to exert an influence on people, and to reeducate.' Eisenstein defines submission to the narrative as *exstasis* (> Chapter 9) – a positive phenomenon related to introspection and meditation putting 'the spectator's emotional and intellectual activity into operation to the maximum degree.' Jaques Aumont writes that 'ecstasy would therefore be presented above all as the means to an end – and more precisely as the efficient (the most efficient?) means to a doctrinal end.' (italics Aumont). What Eisenstein proposes, I suggest, is non-negotiable narrative – arguably enframed within one himself – which precludes the idea that once a viewer acknowledges their own 'player role', everything is negotiable, doctrinal narratives included.

Christine Gledhill argues that, as an analytical concept, 'negotiation... allows space to the subjectivities, identity and pleasures of audiences,' which addresses in part the role of viewer as negotiator and negotiation as play. Mayne notes that negotiation as a marketplace term can be construed as suggesting strategies of consumerism; yet negotiation is in essence the application of strategies to any conflict situation, thus germane to a screen play theory and the viewer/player role negotiating the conflict-strewn causeway of dramatic structure. In the words of negotiator Gavin Kennedy, 'everything is negotiable, but only if you make it so...'

The Film Game

A game is defined by conditions of play which determine a contest or competitive situation. My aim here is to provide an outline of cinema narrative in just such terms, as an interactive game between viewer (player) and the narration itself (the game). The viewer is provided with conditions of play at the outset of the film, and like other games, has an objective, and a result measured in gain or loss. 'Losing' provides a game's element of risk – the risk of losing through lack of skill, or through chance; the random elements of a dice throw, or a low card, or an opponent's unexpected move. 'Gain' provides game playing's motivation – the possibility of a win, or reward.

Defining film narrative as game distinguishes narrative as an abstract form from the experience of narrative characterised by the subjectivity of interpretation, and the breadth of individual experiences the story initiates. Whereas narrative is the subject of narratology and its focus on text, the narrative experience extends to a range of studies including cognitive psychology, phenomenology, reception theory, cultural geography, not least, game theory. The film narrative game encompasses cinema play, emphasising play's pretence and narrative's suspense of disbelief. Transgressions of continuity; a microphone in frame, reflections of a camera crew, unintentional glances toward the camera, dispel a suspense of disbelief – the game is disrupted. The experience of such transgressions however relate proportionately to the viewer's engagement, or investment, with the narrative.

The viewer selects options; to observe or to participate. To observe an 'automatic game' where the players have no choice of moves, and when once 'played' the outcome is pre-determined. Or to participate – to acknowledge that a reading of that outcome is self-determined – where screen play constitutes a hermeneutic game, an 'inner' game; interpreting, defining, and redefining the game with readings as varied as the players that play them.

While observing and analysing this on-screen game, the viewer plays out a reconstruction game: a plot game, a prediction game, a game of strategy played by linking one causal event to the next. Thus

the viewer reconstructs story based on plot syntax, cued into calculating plausible outcomes. It is the 'what happens next' game; a game of speculation, of anticipating moves. The goal is 'the happy ending'; the restoration of moral order, the victory of the protagonist. The reward, as viewer, is getting the ending desired, but not necessarily in the way anticipated. The risk is that the game provides no emotional or intellectual motivation; that as a game it is predictable, uninteresting, dull. The viewer has a further option – to play a game of interpretation – a reading game, hermeneutic by definition; an adopted game in which the player/viewer's goal is to provide subjective meaning to the film viewing experience.

In the audiovisual narrative the viewer and protagonist are joined through, what Eco describes as, an 'alliance forged by emotion' – a psychological bond through feeling, compassion, concern and sympathy resulting in engagement. Similarly, game playing requires a contract on the part of the players to adhere to prescribed conditions of play. As long as these conditions are adhered to and remain unchallenged by the player, the structure of the game will remain consistent. Thus the game matrix – the causal audiovisual narrative – consists of prescribed conditions of play regarding narrative, and rules in regard to discourse.

The fiction film game is played as viewed – the deviser of the game may be Alfred Hitchcock, as director of 'a Hitchcock film' (Thomas Leitch), or a production system (Thomas Schatz), the narration (David Bordwell), or what Seymour Chatman terms 'the cinematic narrator.' In any case the game is shaped by the player; a game is a contract based on mutual expectations, in the cinema defined by genre, suspense of disbelief, and the norms of film narrative representation. The framework of the classical narrative prescribes an interaction between game and player – film and viewer, plot and participant. The game of causal film narrative is based on the player's reading information as indices and speculating outcomes.

David Bordwell suggests 'a film cues the spectator to execute a definable variety of operations,' and takes up Meir Sternberg's proposition that information prompts the perceiver to certain hypotheses: a curiosity hypothesis, a suspense hypothesis, etc. The narrative text is a 'dynamic system of competing and mutually blocking

retardatory patterns.' The narration's schemata consists of 'organised clusters of knowledge' that prompt the viewer to manufacturing hypotheses.

Conditions of Play

The film game is made up of the dynamic between the rationality of the structure and syntagma of narrative (plot), and the narrative's emotional impetus, motivated by the irrationality of human behaviour – love, hate, greed, jealousy, revenge, passion (drama). The rationale of narrative structure implies a return to moral order – a narrative convention rather than a rule. Film narrative which resists this and other conventions prescribe a variation on conditions of play. Filmic discourse, on the other hand, is rule-bound as well as convention bound. Game conventions relate to parameters of time and space, the problem solving single protagonist, Aristotlean dramatic structure as a story telling form and genre as game-defining criteria. Rules of discourse relate to:

- maintaining suspense of disbelief
- continuity and consistency
- dramatic flow (cutting, 180° camera rule, etc)
- specific cues to comprehension (dissolve, fade, close-up and evocation of mental states listed by Hugo Münsterberg)
- temporal and spatial parameters

As in any other game, the rules of film discourse can be broken or disregarded, either through incompetence, or through provocation, and play disrupted. In addition, there are narrative modes and discursive modes; suspense, shock (surprise), mystery define specific narrative modes; *mise-en-scène* and montage describe modes of discourse. Narrative procedures include devices employed to optimise viewer engagement; the deadline, the countdown, the time limit, the 'dreadful alternative', obstruction/ impedance/ hindrance, the 'last minute rescue.' These are procedures developed during the formative

years of film narrative – the transition from play to game and the appropriation of narrative procedures from theatrical and literary precedents.

As Ludwig Wittgenstein suggests there exists similarities characteristic to all games, inclusive the 'language game.' 'Consider for example the proceedings that we call games,' he writes. 'I mean board games, card games, ball games... Look and see whether there is anything in common to all. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that.'

Similarly the games of cinema narrative are as diverse as the genres, plots and characters they contain, but common to these games are the similarities defined by conventions or norms; the relationships between discourse and narrative. An individual film proclaims its conditions of play at the outset, yet within the parameters of the fiction film's narrative conventions. Conventions of the film narrative game include:

- *causality: the cause and effect syntagma of plot development and narrative structure*
- *structure: the rising and descending arc of dramatic development, from crisis to resolution*
- *character: the fiction film's single protagonist as the norm maximising dramatic engagement and viewer interaction*
- *intrigue: the narrative game is based on problem solving, consists of three modes of operation: investigation (viewer + protagonist have the same knowledge), suspense (viewer has more knowledge) and shock (viewer has less knowledge).*

The different modes of interacting with intrigue or problem solving is founded on narrative implausibility. Implausibility implies that the narrative is possible, but unlikely. Implausibility engages as a narrative outside the parameters of everyday experience; impossibility is repudiated as a narrative removed from the parameters of rational acceptance. Implausibility and impossibility are of course subjective values – the fantasy scenario is (im)plausible to one viewer – dependent

on the criteria of a diegetic logic; impossible to another viewer who rejects the fantastic on principle. Hence, suspense of disbelief constitutes a condition of play – an option based on an implied contract between the player and the game.

The following scenario illustrates the rudiments of game playing, the contest, and the conditions of play that shape the game. In *Easy Street* (1916) Charlie Chaplin plays a police recruit assigned to a tough street in a tough neighbourhood. His formidable opponent is the local street bully, Eric Campbell, who has already hospitalised several policemen. The scenario is played out in six stages: (a) describing the situation (b) stating a problem (c) defining motivation (d) decision leading to action (e) opposition or hindrance (f) an outcome or turning point.

Chaplin meets Campbell and surveys the remains of police uniforms (a); is threatened by Campbell (b); is motivated to action by that threat (c); decides to act (d); three separate lines of strategy are thwarted (e); Chaplin tries phoning for help, but Campbell stops him – Chaplin hits Campbell on the head with a baton, but his blows have no affect – Chaplin tries running away, and Campbell stops him. Campbell demonstrates his strength by grabbing hold of a lamp pole and bending it over. Chaplin leaps onto Campbell's back, pushes the gas lamp over his head, and turns on the gas tap. Campbell passes out. (f).

Two opponents or two opposing sides engage (Player A: Main Character vs Player B: Opposition Character) in a conflict to determine a winner and a loser. The viewer's satisfaction is ensured by a narrative closure, from conflict to resolution, advocating a readily identifiable moral code (good defeats evil), encoded in a foreseeable outcome (brain defeats brawn) in an 'unforeseen' way (the narrative 'twist'). The unevenness of the contest (small Chaplin – large Campbell) preempts a number of viewer suppositions: (a) Chaplin can't win (b) Chaplin must win (or what else is the point of the story?) (c) How will Chaplin win? The structure of the contest establishes a paradox between what is plausible (Chaplin loses) and what is desirable (Chaplin wins).

On the diegetic level Chaplin and Campbell engage in a form of game playing, while the viewer is invited to play out the game of the narrative by attempting to predetermine the outcome – to speculate, to

gamble. The set-up suggests Chaplin will win the game (why tell the story otherwise?), the question posed is how. The scene's props provide the viewer with information and clues to help predetermine the development of the story: the street sign, lamp post, gas light, telephone, tattered uniforms. The scene's opening frame – diminutive Chaplin, dominating villain – highlights the disparity of the contest, whilst engaging the viewer through (a) speculation – 'what happens next?' and (b) dilemma – 'what would I do in this situation?'

The drama of the contest can be intensified – the higher the reward for the winner, the greater the shame for the loser – most dramatic is the 'matter of life or death' contest. The more identifiable the contestants' situation the greater the viewer's engagement. Classical film narrative follows the development of a main character, the emphasis on development and narrative clarity. In resolving the problem, the main character's situation changes; a transformation affected by reversal. In a 'static conflict' the character's situation remains unchanged, thus prompting new strategies of narrative comprehension. (> 'film games;' Chapter 6). The protagonist's course of action defines a narrative as (a) solving problem(s) and (b) resolving dielmma(s).

The life and death contest may not seem so playful, but as Huizinga suggests, 'seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include seriousness.'

3. Strategies

Game Theory

The negotiable narrative, like any negotiation, is a process founded upon a contract leading to an exchange of benefits. The gain of a benefit prescribes meeting a requirement. Whereas narrative requirements are centred around discourse, conventions and norms, the viewer's contract requires investment in story and character, a suspense of disbelief, and cognition of discourse, conventions and norms. Viewer benefits relate to the potential satisfaction of the narrative experience through comprehension and interpretation.

A negotiation is optimised by a game plan which Peter Farb defines as 'an interaction according to well-defined rules, in which something is at stake that both sides are attempting to win.' Farb suggests the language game shares 'certain characteristics with all other true games' such as: an individual's commitment to play; something at stake which players try to win (the reward suggests Farb could be a tangible gain negotiating a pay rise, or intangible like the satisfaction of winning an argument); and how a player is characterised by a particular style.

These variables make the language game unpredictable says Farb, but like other games it is structured by rules 'which speakers learn simply by belonging to a particular speech community.' A speaker must play by the rules or use the strategy of deliberately breaking them. Farb describes language as both a system of grammar and of human behaviour 'which can be analysed according to theories of interaction, play and games.' Consequently language as a system is governed by a shared system of rules and conventions 'mutually intelligible to all members of a particular community, yet a system which nevertheless offers freedom and creativity in its use.' According to Farb rules are not only enforcement – they create the game.

As rules create the language game from word play, so are audiovisual narrative games founded in screen play. Systems of rules may be founded on complicating aspects of reality, yet remain idealisations and abstractions. Rules governing scientific theory, suggests

Steven Pinker, 'are never visible in pure form, but are no less real for all that... our theories both folk and scientific can idealise away from the messiness of the world and lay bare its underlying causal forces.'

A game, once established through rules, conventions and norms, challenges the player to ensure that the exchange of benefits is to the advantage of the player. A film game for example requires an investment on the part of the viewer; investment in story and character, in addition to an understanding of the rules of narrative discourse, and a knowledge of narrative conventions and norms. Having decided to play there are strategies the viewer can adopt in playing out the film game. Avinash Dixit and Barry Nalebuff outline four 'strategy rules' for predicting outcomes in situations requiring strategic thinking.

- 1. Look ahead and reason back*
- 2. If you have a dominant strategy, use it*
- 3. Eliminate any dominated strategies from consideration, and continue doing so successively*
- 4. Having exhausted dominant strategies, seek an equilibrium of the game*

Strategies constitute options, I suggest, rather than rules, founded on 'skills' relating to familiarity with genre, filmic codes and narrative conventions. When the fiction film is played as a game of strategy – like economic or political agendas for which game theory was designed – then these options can be played out by the viewer during the course of the narrative.

1. The 'look ahead and reason back' option requires that the viewer anticipate where initial decisions will lead. In the Chaplin scenario there are two initial alternatives; confrontation or evasion, fight or flight. Successively other strategies are apparent (telephone for help, strike first, run) but as these strategies are eliminated the game returns to the initial confrontation or evasion.

2. Dominant strategy is often misinterpreted as the dominant strategy a player has over their opponent. This is not the case. The 'dominance' in dominant strategy is a dominance of one of a player's strategies over other strategies, not over the opponent. A dominant

strategy is one that makes a player better off than using any other strategy, no matter what strategy the opponent uses. In the Chaplin scenario a forehand knowledge and familiarity with the Chaplin character; Chaplin as the underdog, 'the little man', who overcomes adversity through brain rather than brawn, becomes a dominant strategy in speculating a favourable outcome. Dominant strategies might include familiarity with director, story, genre or the 'default values' of an actor's role. As David Bordwell asserts, the narrative world's correspondence with the natural world is aided with series of 'default values' which assumes conformity.

Dominant strategy in the film game depends on where the player invests meaning. The significance of a playing card changes depending on the rules of different card games; narrative codes, too, change according to different film games. If the player's dominant strategy is 'the cavalry will come in time' (an all too familiar narrative convention in Westerns), the icon of the charging cavalry in *Stagecoach* (1939) will be different to the charging cavalry in *Soldier Blue* (1970), likewise the Red Indian. The viewer watching *Rambo: First Blood* (1982) plays a different game as a 1980s Reaganist (Rambo is an American who fights for American individualism), than as an Australian aboriginal in Alice Springs (Rambo is an inarticulate dark skinned man avenging himself against the injustices of a white society). As John Fiske notes, 'the aboriginal meanings of Rambo were pleasurable because they were relevant... produced from the text and not by it.'

3. 'Eliminate any dominated strategies from consideration, and continue doing so', challenges the player to determine narrative ploys, intended or not, to misdirect or divert from (a) anticipating outcome, or (b) obscure narrative clarity.

In the former – anticipating outcome – a dominated strategy of casting against type (as one example) misdirects the player's anticipations. Henry Fonda's role in *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1969), constitutes Sergei Leone's manouvre against the dominated strategy of players familiar with Fonda and the 'default values' he represents as 'the good man'. The affect of Henry Fonda slaughtering children, not saving them, quickly establishes a game devoid of 'fair play.'

In the latter – obscuring narrative clarity – intercutting techniques where parallel developments conceal a linearity which the player must reconstruct to comprehend the narrative.

4. 'Having exhausted dominant strategies, seek an equilibrium of the game.' This constitutes an appropriate balance between narrative intent and viewer comprehension for the game to be played out. A UK television advertisement for *The Guardian* newspaper (first broadcast, May 1986) entitled *Skinhead: The Whole Story* presents three b/w sequences, filmed in three shots from three different camera positions: 1. A young skinhead looks down the road, a car pulls up and the skinhead starts running. (Voice-over: 'An event seen from one point of view gives one impression.') 2. The skinhead runs toward a businessman; the businessman raises his brief case as the skinhead makes a grab for him. (Voice-over: 'Seen from another point of view it gives quite a different impression.') 3. A craneload of bricks falls from a crane onto the road, missing the businessman, who has been pushed out of the way by the skinhead. (Voice-over: 'But it's only when you get the whole picture you can fully understand what's going on.')

The player considers the dominated strategies – casting against type, intercutting, etc – formulates plausible narratives (is the skinhead being chased by the police? by gangsters? will the skinhead rob the businessman? will the businessman fight off his assailant? etc); until the game reaches an equilibrium – all the options are played out; the player 'gains' by narrative comprehension, prompted to complete the game – 'the whole story' – the newspaper's advertising slogan.

To think strategically is to speculate, to plan ahead, to address a player's conjecture with 'what happens next.' Among the models and theories proposed to facilitate strategic thinking, game theory has the broadest range of applications – from military and political campaigns, to business, to the social sciences – any field in which conflict can be addressed with optimised strategies. Can game theory provide the viewer with optimum play strategies?

Game theory provides a player with a model for analysing available options in a conflict situation. In the unfolding narrative of fiction film the viewer is presented with options as plot points, thereby a

game theory approach may well suggest a means by which to distinguish between narrative strategy and narrative aesthetics. What is fiction film, after all, than an attempt to reduce the complexities of reality and the dramas of life to the confines and restraints of the narrative paradigm? The objective here is to distinguish the strategic game-playing elements of film narrative – the rational (what can be calculated) – from the apparent ‘randomness’ of irrational actions (what cannot be calculated).

Game theory dates back to 1921 when French mathematician Emile Borël defined pure and mixed strategies in game playing. Pure strategies were definite rules setting out the proper action in any contingency (as in classical narrative); a mixed strategy consists of two or more pure strategies, chosen at random, but with specified probabilities for each strategy. In 1928 the mathematician John von Neumann published his first paper outlining ‘the minimax theorem’, later developed in *Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour* (1944) with the economist Oskar Morgenstern, showing the best line of play guaranteeing the minimum loss in any game of strategy. The theory has found a range of applications including economics, military strategy, business. In short game theory can be applied to any form of competitive or conflict situation.

Game theory has been applied mostly to situations between two players, which von Neumann defines as ‘two-person zero-sum games’. With more than two players or two sides coalitions create too many options to have a clear application. Game theory can be seen as the application of statistical logic to a choice of strategies. It is a theory which describes a method of using mathematical analysis to select the best strategy within a game so as to minimize potential maximum losses, or maximise the minimum winnings. The game may be an actual game, as in chess or poker, but game theory has found a wide range of applications, particularly in the social sciences.

Any game with two players, with fixed rules, there exists optimal strategies for each player. According to von Neumann in any two person game, or zero-sum game whereby the loss of one player is the gain of the other, both players adopt ‘minimax’ strategies. For example in ‘scissors, paper, stone’ the optimal strategy for both players is

a 'mixed' strategy of choosing one of three options at random. Should one player opt for a 'paper' only strategy, the opponent can readily exploit the situation to gain the advantage.

Two person board games (chess, draughts, Monopoly) are 'perfect information' games, contests whereby the winner is determined by the players playing out a sequence of alternating moves. In such games there is always an optimal 'pure strategy', a complete set of rules to play out in any given situation. The possibilities of moves create so vast a number of possible strategies, however, that a workable matrix would be nigh on impossible to define. Noughts and crosses, for example, contains sufficient variables that a matrix (1, -1, 0) would amount to thousands of cells.

In a 'finite game' each player has a predetermined number of moves and a limited number of choices. In addition both players know the state of the game before each move, ('perfect information'), which according to von Neumann, means the game is determined; there is a pure strategy for one player that will ensure a win, or for both players that will ensure a draw. For example; child A puts both hands behind his back with a marble in only one of them (L or R). Child B guesses which hand holds the marble (l or r). If he guesses correctly he keeps the marble, if not he forfeits one. The game has four possible outcomes: Ll or Rr, which means child B wins; and Lr or Rl, which means child A wins. A fixed pattern of play can be risky (Child A keeps the marble in the right hand) as Child B, once establishing the routine, can readily exploit the pattern. The best strategy for both players is to choose left or right at random, ensuring the game is 'zero-sum'.

Game theory provides mathematical models to analyse the strategies of players' moves in games in general; can an application to the narrative game of fiction film elucidate the interplay between viewer and narrative? Thomas Leitch suggests such is the case, for Leitch however, the approach is courted with rather than applied in concrete terms. In *Find the Director and Other Hitchcock Games* (1991) Leitch defines Hitchcock's films as types of games, and surmises that game theory could be applied, rather than how.

Films from *Jamaica Inn* (1939) to *The Paradine Case* (1946) are Odd Man Out games, from *Rope* (1948) to *Dial M for Murder* (1953) Cat

and Mouse games, etc. For Leitch, Hitchcock is the game master playing with the audience, continually redefining the rules of the Hitchcock game. It is an approach that provides an insight into the Hitchcock films but defines the viewer as 'played' rather than player; as dupe or 'slave-player' to the manipulations of Hitchcock's game-devising skills. Although the game playing of Hitchcock films is extreme, they are games that do not exclude the viewer from game playing of their own. The ambiguity of many of Hitchcock's narrative closures (*Rebecca*, *Notorious*, *Suspicion*, etc), on the contrary, encourage a good deal of game playing, even at the expense of the 'game master' as suggested by analytical readings of Donald Spoto, the personalised readings of Robin Wood, the feminist readings of Tania Modleski, and the breadth of readings around *Psycho* compiled by David Bordwell.

'The importance of games for Hitchcock is not their significance within the diegesis but their role as a figure for the relation between the storyteller and his audience,' writes Leitch. Leitch's case for the application of game theory to film narrative, however, is diffused in a study structured around quasi-biographical readings of Hitchcock films which at times strain the arbitrary classifications described.

Leitch challenges Bordwell's description of 'viewer activity' which, says Leitch; 'allows for an audience's experience to evolve as it masters the codes of the film and makes more accurate and comprehensive projections of what is to come...' Game theory, on the other hand, 'allows a much more precise analysis of the audience's changing experience though the analogy with a game played repeatedly by the same two players.' Game theory's advantage lies in providing a new perspective to the analysis of film narrative, including provision for the random components of narrative.

Hitchcock is not a player, writes Leitch, but a designer of games. A two person game is not a precise model for film narrative as only one player has options. The audience can learn from its experience of the film and of films generally to anticipate likely developments and significant connections more precisely, but the film cannot benefit from this experience, suggests Leitch. Nonetheless, the 'director-as-game-deviser' perspective of Leitch's analysis of game theory and film narrative, underplays the role of 'viewer-as-player.' Game theory may

define the process of speculation and option selection – yet there is more to narrative game playing than strategic thinking. Before developing this line further however, the question remains as to what game theory can reveal about narrative game playing?

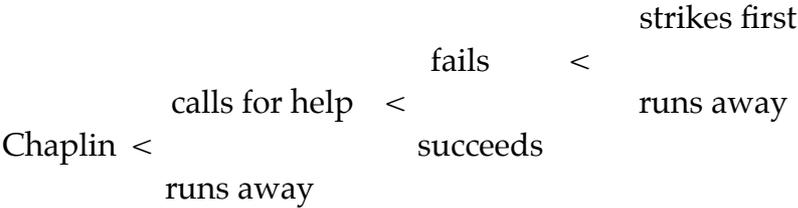
Game theory provides options for strategies within a contest – a rationale by which to speculate once engaged in the game of the dramatic conflict. An application of game theory enables the player to ‘play’ drama as a game of calculation, defining gains and losses on the player’s own terms. ‘A game is equivalent to a table of possible outcomes,’ suggests William Poundstone. ‘In game theory a strategy is a .. specific plan.. a complete description of a particular way to play a game.’ Game theory, as a method of using mathematical analysis to optimise strategic ‘play’, has been implemental in the development of computer programmes to play limited move games; noughts and crosses, draughts, chess, where all possible moves are known.

Alan Turing, exploring the idea of a definite method for playing chess, uses the term ‘slave player’, like a machine mindlessly following a book of rules, in contrast to ‘master player’ who exercises adaptive skills and strategies. In the 1940s, Turing applied game theory’s ‘minimax’ concept to the construction of a machine which could select a least bad move strategy in chess playing. Chess, draughts, Monopoly are ‘perfect information’ games whereby there is always an optimal ‘pure strategy’, a complete set of rules to play out in a given situation. To illustrate options and moves game theory employs ‘decision trees’ and ‘game trees’. Decision trees define options, game trees describe moves.

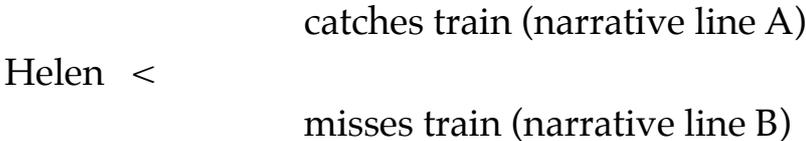
A decision tree outlining Charlie Chaplin’s options in his encounter with street bully Eric Campbell in Easy Street shows:

		get help
Chaplin	<	strike first
		run away

A game tree illustrating Chaplin’s first move and Campbell’s countermove could be shown as:



A decision tree branching off into two or more disparate narrative lines, describes the narrative structure of films such as the Krzysztof Kieslowski film, *Blind Chance* (Przypadek, 1981), *Sliding Doors* (1998), or examples such as *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946), *Mr Destiny* (1990) and *Groundhog Day* (1993); films structured around a player-orientated narrative model in contrast to the character-orientated game matrix of causal narrative. In *Sliding Doors*, for example, a decision tree shows:



In narrative line A, Helen (Gwyneth Paltrow) catches the train, meets James, returns home to find boyfriend Gerry together with his ex-girlfriend Lydia – leaves him, and begins an affair with James. She gets pregnant, discovers James is already married, walks into an oncoming car, loses the baby, and (maybe) dies in hospital. In narrative line B Helen misses the train, continues the relationship with Gerry while Gerry continues his relationship with Lydia. Helen and Lydia both get pregnant; Helen discovers Gerry’s infidelity, falls down stairs, loses the baby, wakes up in hospital, dismisses Gerry and, leaving the hospital, meets James.

The viewer is provided with two intercut narrative games, emphasising, not ‘what happens next?’, but rather ‘what would have happened if...?’ It is a narrative strategy that, on the one hand, increases

play options, yet on the other, provides a narrative schism which risks depreciating character dilemma. As a narrative strategy, the risk is that the viewer plays with diminished investment so that gain and loss are equivocal.

In *Blind Chance*, three divergent narrative lines befall principal character Witek following (once again) catching/missing a train: (1) He catches the train, meets a communist party member and becomes himself and active party member; (2) He misses the train, gets into an altercation with a railway official, is arrested, tried and convicted and sentenced to community labour working in a park. In the park he meets a member from the opposition resulting in his becoming a militant dissident; (3) He misses the train, meets Olga – a former student colleague – decides to resume his studies, marries Olga, becomes a doctor, and is sent abroad. In mid-air the plane explodes. Despite Kieslowski's misgivings of the film, he maintains the idea – a story with three possible endings – invites the kind of speculation familiar to everyone; that unknowingly the consequences of a choice of action can lead to disaster.

A similar strategy of play, although based on a different premise, is advanced in *It's a Wonderful Life*, where options relate to character action, in contrast to options of plot action:

George lives = town prospers
Bedford Falls <
George dies = town declines

The narrative provides two options, yet in this case the 'what if...' scenario is prompted by a character's attempt to steer his own fate through action, rather than a random incident of plot affecting a character's passivity.

Commenting on the commercial failure of *Patty Hearst* (1988), writer/ director Paul Schrader suggests that 'the definitive problem... is that it deals with a passive protagonist. Movies are about people who do things. The number one fantasy of the cinema is that we can do something – we are relatively impotent in our own lives so we go to the

movies to watch people who are in control of their lives. Patty Hearst violates the cardinal rule of cinema.'

Whether or not goal-orientated character constitutes the 'cardinal rule', it is, nonetheless, a 'condition of play' which determines a player's level of investment, as will be considered in divergent forms of screen play – cinema, television and computer.

Scanners

Game theory provides options for calculating 'best possible scenarios' – economic scenarios, conflict strategic scenarios – and devises a plausible sequence based on rational moves. The film narrative is a restricted scenario; unlike life games narrative concentrates on resolving a single intrigue, therefore it is possible to predict/anticipate/speculate on outcome, just as in other applications of game theory. The calculation game of film narrative is outlined as a series of events – 'assertions', plot points, segments – that make a syntactic 'table of behaviour.'

John Beasley lists four classes of games: 1. games of pure chance; 2. games of mixed chance and skill; 3. games of pure skill; 4. automatic games. Chance and skill are self-explanatory in the context of game playing; film narration (to use David Bordwell's term), however, insofar as that the player cannot alter the 'game board' constitutes a form of 'automatic game.'

Automatic games require a set of movable objects and an automaton which can assume various states. An example devised by the mathematician, Alan Turing, in the 1930s features a line of coins with the automaton (Turing's 'scanner') turning each one over in order to arrange a sequential structure. Turing devised this game to resolve a problem in the theory of computation; 'Turing's Game' became the 'Turing Machine'; the forerunner of today's computer. For Turing the machine demonstrated that the operations of computing (adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing – the basis of all computations) can be carried out by programming a 'table of behaviour.'

The viewer's reading of the film narration is comparable to the 'scanning' function of the Turing Machine, the precursor to the

modern day computer. Information is written out on a 'table of behaviour.' A scanner proceeds to 'read' one square after the other, absorbing data en route. The 'table of behaviour' is analogous to the film's *syntagma* of plot, each square represents a narrative unit or what Christian Metz terms an 'assertion.' Metz defines narrative as 'a closed discourse that proceeds by unrealising a temporal sequence of events.' The 'assertion' is the basic unit of the narrative (the predicate) – film narrative is a sequence of assertions or events. Thus, the narrative is a text which consists of a number of codes – messages with meanings. Like the squares of a game board, each move corresponds to a narrative unit or assertion. Each assertion provides specific cause and effect information relating to the unfolding of the story. The viewer 'scans' and evaluates information from beginning to end, 'filling in the gaps' where necessary.



Turing's Machine and a 'table of behaviour'

The process of 'filling in the gaps' is the process on which cinema is based. 'Critical fusion factor' describes the illusion caused by the eye's failure to register a flicker – described as the 'persistence of vision' in the cinema's formative years. The viewer's 'persistence of narrative,' on the other hand, sustains a narrative continuity. Or as David Bordwell describes the process, 'Narration is better understood as the organisation of a set of cues for the construction of a story.'

Narrative is not just metaphor – it is also computation. Benjamin Woolley describes the claims of the Turing Machine as follows: 'The machine would affect acts of recognition... a more complicated machine could also affect acts of decision.' The process of narrative comprehension similarly includes an on-going 'computing', making calculations required to 'fill in the gaps', to reconstruct, to comprehend. However, does human functionalism correspond to computational

functionalism? Computers, strategy and calculation provide models for game playing, but can they contribute to an understanding of the emotional involvement on the part of the player?

Randomness

As game theory was developed to describe and facilitate human gambling behaviour, 'utility' (gain) is its principle objective. In gambling and economics, utility is measured as money won or lost. In physical game playing (football, for example) utility gained may be measured in terms of prestige, honour, physical satisfaction, also financial reward, etc, against utility lost in terms of physical damage. In an amusement arcade game the utility gained in pleasure may be measured against the utility lost from how much it cost to play.

Randomness refers to the haphazard or element of chance; in mathematics and statistics randomness has several applications, all with a 'probabilistic framework': as in random numbers, random variables and randomised blocks. In games, the random factor represents chance, and the risk that chance entails. Risk is integral to game playing – a win or loss is not a certainty until the game is over. Randomness is the unforeseeable or uncalculated variable, or a seemingly inconsequential detail that leads to unforeseen circumstances. Does Helen miss the train? What are the consequences of mistimed 'sliding doors'?

In drama, the random element can also entail the irrationality of human behaviour; the unpredictability of the psychopath, the inconsistency or implausibility of behaviour through jealousy, greed, love, hate. Game theory, as it stands, defines strategies when players interact rationally. Drama, on the other hand, is an expression of the irrational, and the incalculable affects of emotion on human behaviour. Game theory attempts to 'separate those features of a problem that are susceptible to uncontroversial rational analysis from those that are not,' suggests Ken Binmore.

When play is reduced to what is termed computational functionalism game theory has its limitations. Marshall McLuhan's critique of game theory is that it ignores the importance of the game's

form; 'the pattern of the game gives it relevance to our inner lives; not who is playing, nor the outcome.' Game theory proves that optimal strategies exist but it does not necessarily show how to find them. The optimal strategy for noughts and crosses can be formulated, but what about more complex narrative games in which character options determine strategies founded on diverse forms of role-play? The answer to this is that there is no answer: it is a dilemma. To address the exclusivity of rational strategies, game theory's development led to a more complex game; a game in which purely rational strategies was insufficient to calculate the probabilities of an outcome.

Viewer's Dilemma

'... the most influential discovery in game theory since its inception,' was made in 1950, by two scientists at the US RAND Corporation, an organisation for military Research and Development. Merrill Flood and Melvin Dresher devised a game of strategy which has come to be known as Prisoner's Dilemma. Prisoner's Dilemma is both a dilemma tale and mathematical construct prompting options through strategic thinking on the one side, and instinctive emotional responses for self-preservation on the other. According to William Poundstone, the Prisoner's Dilemma is a universal concept, not only central to defense strategy, but occurring in biology, psychology, sociology, economics and law. As a mathematical game in narrative form, aiming to provoke an emotional response in the player, Prisoner's Dilemma sheds some light on the viewer's dilemma of the option selection process in the game of film narrative.

Two prisoners are arrested and placed in separate cells. The police officer admits he has no evidence against either but offers each the following choice: If one confesses he will go free, the other will receive a ten year sentence. If both confess they each get seven years. If neither confesses they will both be locked up on false charges for at least a year. Prisoner A does not know what Prisoner B is going to do. If B confesses and A remains silent, A ends up with a 10 year sentence. In which case it is better for A to confess and both end up with seven years. If Prisoner B

does not confess, A goes free on confessing, but gets a one year sentence by remaining silent. The best strategy is still for A to confess. Paradoxically, it is in the interest of both prisoners to confess – each ending up with a seven year sentence, although if neither confessed both would get off with the lightest sentence.

Economist Dr John Nash, awarded the Nobel Prize in 1994 'in recognition of the impact game theory has had in breaking with the orthodox free-market approach to economics' has lent his name to the 'Nash equilibrium.' This arises if, when the other person's choice is revealed, neither wants to change their behaviour.

Prisoner's Dilemma arises in any conflict situation where it is to the advantage of one side to hold back concealed knowledge – it was conceived in the context of nuclear arms expansion in 1950; how can one side encourage the other side to disarm without disarming first? The dilemma is how to create a contract which ensures both sides have an incentive to co-operate. In contrast to the zero-sum game – where one person's gain is another person's loss – in Prisoner's Dilemma there are possibilities for mutual advantage as well as conflict of interest. The popularity of Prisoner's Dilemma in game theory is that it introduces a paradoxical scenario in which irrational and emotive possibilities prompt speculation outside the realm of mathematical calculation and logic. Like fiction film.

The dilemma – and the strategic thinking required for working out alternative outcomes – is the dilemma each viewer confronts in the dramatic conflict of a fiction film. In folklore a dilemma tale presents a perplexing situation and poses the problem to the listener. An example is *The Lady or the Tiger* – a folktale about a princess who falls in love with a commoner. Her indignant father, the King, gives her lover the following choice. He is placed before two identical doors – behind one door is a hungry tiger – behind the other door a beautiful young woman, also a commoner, in a wedding gown. The prisoner must choose one door and accept his fate. The princess, however, has managed to find out which door conceals the secret bride and which door conceals the tiger. She sends a signal to her would-be lover. The story ends and the listener's dilemma begins. A or B? Did the princess

send her suitor to the arms of a rival woman, or to the claws of a hungry tiger?

Similarly in film, narrative dilemma positions the viewer and prompts a response – the viewer's dilemma is a choice of options by which strategic thinking can only partially address. The formality of narrative closure functions as either confirmation (affirming the viewer's option) or provocation (presenting an option the viewer rejects). A paradox, or conflict of interests, therefore exists between the industry praxis of avoiding ambiguity (cf US distributors insistence on the clarity of closure in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*; 4 pp. 61 - 63), and the viewer's engagement in contending with dilemma. Hollywood screenwriter, Wells Root, in keeping with industry praxis, rejects the ambiguous ending: 'audiences are accustomed to dramatic conclusions (and) dislike an incomplete or broken pattern...'

The significance of Prisoner's Dilemma, and the dramatic scenario in general, is that rational thinking is not only ineffective, it is a liability. In contests of strategy, as opposed to contests of chance, skill or strength, moves are based on predicting how the other side will respond. When confronted with irrational behaviour – people consumed by pride, love, jealousy, greed, hate or rage – the rational response is as much a disadvantage as with a dramatic scenario. What, after all, does the street bully of *Easy Street* care if told his behaviour is not logical? (3 pp. 41 - 42). Or a 'doomsday machine' with which a logical exchange is not an option? In *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), the US president's (Peter Sellers) attempt to negotiate rationally with his Soviet counterpart, is futile in the face of an automaton programmed to self-destruct.

There is no solution to Prisoner's Dilemma as there is no rational course of action to facilitate the speculation of an outcome in a dramatic scenario. There is an optimum strategy, however, which Robert Axelrod terms 'tit for tat', based on mutual co-operation step for step. It can be argued that Prisoner's Dilemma is easily solved when the two parties communicate their intentions, and through cooperation, come to an agreement. In any negotiation, open communication is a plausible strategic option. However, the basis of Prisoner's Dilemma lies in the two parties isolation from each other – two world powers during the

cold war, for example – the situation which gave rise to Prisoner's Dilemma, where communication was not an option.

Nor is communication an option for the viewer – the viewer is as much a captive (or captivated) – there is no communication with the controlled agenda of the narrative. The viewer can negotiate a 'reading' but cannot negotiate with the game to change course. Having undertaken the transaction to 'play the game' the viewer is ensnared by the fiction. William Poundstone's recommendation to 'avoid Prisoners Dilemma whenever possible' – lies contrary to the interests of the viewer who has willingly submitted to the dilemma of the fiction, precisely to enter an arena of moral quandary.

Dramatic Structure as Game Matrix

A dilemma is the basis of a dramatic conflict – dilemma provokes a response where strategic thinking is no guarantee for providing an optimum solution. The problem solving game of causal narrative invites the viewer to decipher clues and resolve a dilemma. If the strategic thinking of the speculation process of play is about evaluating 'best possible scenarios', then dilemma considers 'worst possible scenarios' and positions the viewer to selecting the 'least worst.' Should Chaplin confront the villain and risk a beating, or avoid the confrontation and fail to uphold his obligations? Such is the dilemma game offered to the viewer who chooses to follow the plot delineating a protagonist's efforts to resolve an intrigue, in addition to speculating moves and hypothesising an outcome. Dramatic structure is an escalating causeway of actions based on minimum required effort. Strategic thinking provides a player with a number of options – the rational choice is the one which is easiest to execute, the option requiring minimum effort.

For example, having (unwittingly) elected to play, Chaplin's first course of action is to telephone for help. It is the easiest option requiring only the exertion of lifting a telephone, at a minimum of physical risk. As this action is foiled Chaplin proceeds with a second course of action – to strike first. The ineffectiveness of this action is

proceeded by the third and final course of action – escape. Again Chaplin is foiled and having executed all available strategies is now faced with the narrative inevitability of confrontation in which the situation's dilemma reaches a dramatic culmin. Dramatic structure's function is to orchestrate events to intensify narrative dilemma.

Like narrative, a game begins, develops and ends; according to Aristotle 'an action that is complete and whole... has a beginning, a middle and an end... a well constructed plot must conform to this pattern.' The game of drama, like chess, has its opening, middle game and end game; like board games, or games of sport and competition. Hollywood screenwriting manuals describe 'crisis – climax – resolution' 'exposition – development and conflict – resolution' 'problem – conflict/ crisis – climax' 'the set-up – confrontation – resolution', 'crisis – complications – resolution', 'disturbance – struggle – adjustment'. Freytag's 'dramatic triangle' describes exposition, complication and resolution. However, is a definition of the narrative film game best served by the 'dramatic triangle' as described by Hollywood scenarists?

Evanthius, a fourth century grammarian, outlined a structural model for narrative comedy; a *protasis* (exposition), *epitasis* (complication) and catastrophe (cast down – fall into place), the culminating point of the drama, the denouement, ('untying the knot') or resolution. A further complication – *catastasis* (confusion), to follow the *epitasis*, was introduced by a renaissance scholar, Scaliger. In other words, exposition – complication – confusion – resolution, delineate a 'dramatic square' of a narrative game board, well suited to the evaluation of the comedically toned classical Hollywood narrative discourse.

Within each of these four 'acts' is a number of moves, or narrative 'assertions'. The *Easy Street* scenario comprises a single act made up of (a) situation (b) problem (c) motivation (d) decision (e) opposition (f) action (g) outcome. In more developed audiovisual narrative games an act culminates not with 'closure,' but a turning point leading into the next level or act of the narrative.

A 1913 scenario manual suggests photoplay structure should consist of: 'First, 'cause' or beginning; secondly, development; third, crisis; fourth, climax or effect; fifth, denouement or sequence.' Joyce

Jesionowski defines the process of 'speculation, prediction, anticipation, resolution.' Brenda Laurel adapts the dramatic triangle of Gustav Freytag, adapting the nomenclature of drama to equivalent terms for computer activity: (a) exposition, (b) inciting incident, (c) rising action, (d) crisis, (e) climax, (f) falling action, (g) denouement. Edward Branigan summarises the format of a 'narrative schema' as: 1. introduction of setting and characters; 2. explanation of a state of affairs; 3. initiating event; 4. emotional response or statement of a goal by the protagonist; 5. complicating actions; 6. outcome; 7. reactions to the outcome. Tzvetan Todorov describes narrative as a transformation process in five stages: 1. a state of equilibrium; 2. a disruption; 3. a recognition of the disruption; 4. an attempt to rectify the disruption; 5. a return to equilibrium. Vladimir Propp defines the structure of the hero's quest in Russian folktales over seven 'tables' of events, which can be summarised into a comparable five-stage structure: I-II. Initial Situation and Preparation; III. Complication; IV. Donors (Hero gets help); V-VI. End of First Move; Beginning of Second Move (Struggle with Villain); VII. Continuation of Second Move (Return; Recognition). Joseph Campbell describes the first stage of the heroic quest in terms of: (a) 'The Call to Adventure,' (b) 'Refusal of the Call', (c) 'Supernatural Aid', (d) 'The Crossing of the First Threshold', (e) 'The Belly of the Whale'; a mythological approach that has aroused interest among Hollywood studios since George Lucas' claim that Campbell's model provided the basis of the Star Wars (1977) script and its successors.

The commonality (for Joseph Campbell, a universality) of a dramatic structure describes the predominant matrix of the predominant Hollywood film game, the paradigm by which the player is causally prompted to speculate on 'what happens next.' The game is defined within parameters of a predetermined time limit and the adherence to rules of discourse, rules of genre, suspense of disbelief and the narrative conventions that David Bordwell terms 'rule of thumb.'

Play in any game depends on an unwritten contract undertaken by a player to abide by the conditions of play, to 'stick to the rules.' Disregard for such conditions, a breach of the unwritten contract, is to abandon the fiction's suspense of disbelief, tantamount to cancelling the game. If the knight in a game of chess can move like a queen, the

game becomes pointless; if the referee of a football match awards penalties for players heading the ball, the game becomes a travesty. In film narrative both diegetic and extra-diegetic norms apply in order to sustain suspension of disbelief. Speculation and dilemma provide the driving forces of both the game and the dramatic narrative, either as viewer or as player forecasting the outcome of who will win, who will lose.

The principle difference relates to the scenario – the unwritten scenario of the game, as opposed to the scripted scenario of narrative. The game is 'written' during play, resolved with an unforeseen outcome; the film narrative is predetermined with a defined resolution; definition does not preclude the 'open ending'. This is not so great a difference as might first appear. The point of most games is 'writing' the narrative as it is played. The end of the game's story is only known when the game ends. Hence the preference of a live football match coverage over a recording. Yet the sports enthusiast, as opposed to the casual viewer, can watch the recorded match in order to appreciate other elements of the game, rather than just the outcome. Similarly, the film viewer can choose to 'write' an alternative scenario to the one provided by the narrative.

The viewer's role is both participatory (as role-player, a coloured piece in the game playing the role of the protagonist); and reflective, as observer, invited to speculate on outcome. The strategies adopted and the information upon which those strategies are based are steered by the conditions of play. Umberto Eco guides an 'inferential walk' through Allais' *Un drame bien parisien*; the game matrix directs us through a walk around the board of the narrative games structured around the classical Hollywood paradigm.

Kind Hearts and Coronets (1949) despite the director's claim to be 'a film not noticeably similar to any previously made in the English language,' exemplifies the game matrix of causal film narrative and illustrates the dual aspect of 'play' as presented on the four sided game board.

Exposition: Situation [Ia] – Louis Mazzini – incarcerated – to be hanged at dawn, some 12 hours away. Louis's voice-over, narrating his memoirs, explains how he came to this situation via a series of flashbacks. Problem [Ib] Louis's mother, a D'Ascoyne, married an Italian

suitor for the sake of love, was thus ostracised from the family, and as a consequence, Louis also. Motivation [Ic] – Louis' must avenge his mother's death. Decision [Id] – Louis will eliminate the remaining eight members of the D'Ascoyne family in order that he assume the title of Duke of Chalfont. Obstacles [Ie] Louis has no opportunity to execute his plan. Action [If] Louis eliminates Ascoyne D'Ascoyne by releasing his boat moored to the bank of the Thames, despatching both Ascoyne and his fiancé to the watery depths of an open weir.

The deaths are bloodless – to the melodic strains of Louis' whimsical voice-over only the rowing boat is revealed – no corpses, no screams. *Kind Hearts and Coronets* is a comedy, a fun game. By the first side of the board – exposition – other token characters are introduced – seven D'Ascoynes and Sibella, Louis's childhood sweetheart. One D'Ascoyne is eliminated – Turning point [Ig] – and the game proceeds as an elimination game, like Ludo, like Odd Man Out.

On the second side of the board – Act Two – complications – new players are introduced; Sibella's fiance Lionel, Henry D'Ascoyne's wife Edith. Situation [IIa] – Louis has taken his first step toward his goal, and is now entrenched in the family business. Problem [IIb] – how to eliminate the remaining family members. Motivation [IIc] – any remorse is overcome at the funeral of Ascoyne D'Ascoyne's funeral; Louis recollects how his mother was denied burial in the family crypt. He vows to avenge his dead mother once more. Decision [IId] – Louis devises strategies for eliminating the remaining D'Ascoynes. Obstacles [IIe] – various hindrances. Action [IIf] – the Reverend D'Ascoyne is poisoned, suffragette Lady Agatha is shot down in a balloon, General Lord Rufus D'Ascoyne blown up with a jar of caviar and Admiral Lord Horatio D'Ascoyne eliminated by a chance naval accident. Only the Duke remains [IIg].

These deaths too heighten the ludic antics of both Louis and the narrative; the scenes are played as short comic sketches. Aunt Agatha's demise is effected with wry distance as Louis quips sardonically firing an arrow from his apartment window.

Act Three – Confusion: Situation [IIIa] – Louis is now bank partner preparing for the elimination of the Duke. Problem [IIIb] – Louis is playing a duplicitous game with Sibella (his mistress) and Edith (his

wife) which will be his undoing. Motivation [IIIc] – Sibella chides Louis for his humble background. Decision [IIIId] – invited to Chalfont Louis decides he must despatch the Duke forthwith. Obstacle [IIIe] – the Duke has remarried and is on the eve of propagating new heirs. Action [IIIff] – on an afternoon grouse hunt, alone with the Duke, Louis has him ensnared in a bear trap, aims the shotgun to his head and proclaims his act as righteous vengeance to redress the ignominy he and his mother suffered through the heartlessness of the D’Ascoyne family. Louis empties both barrels of the shotgun into the unfortunate Duke. [IIIg]

Here the game takes a macabre turn and the viewer is offered two choices; to applaud Louis’ act as justified given the circumstances that Louis has provided in the telling of his story, or to condemn Louis’ act as heartless as the D’Ascoyne family’s callousness he himself has castigated.

Act Four – Resolution: Situation [IVa] – Louis is now Duke. Problem [IVb] – at the ceremonial ball Louis is arrested and charged with the murder of Lionel, Sibella’s husband – the one murder he did not commit. Lionel committed suicide. Motivation [IVc] – Louis has been framed by Sibella. Decision [IVd] – Louis is found guilty. Obstacle [IVe] – Sibella provides Louis with an option – should Louis decide to marry Sibella, Lionel’s suicide note may well be found in time to prevent Louis’ execution. The last move but one; the story returns to the present tense. At the last minute [IVff] Louis is reprieved. The note has been found. Outside the prison Sibella waits in one carriage, and Edith in another. Alas, the written account of his having murdered the D’Ascoyne family remains in his cell.

The viewer is invited to write the ending [IVg]: does Louis choose Sibella, who represents all that is corrupt and opportunist of the privileged classes? does Louis choose Edith; moral, steadfast, officious, disdainful? or regardless of choice does Louis end up once more in the hands of the hangman, once the contents of his memoirs have been disclosed? Which option? A or B? Sibella or Edith? Or option C? The hangman? How does the viewer read Louis’ game? This depends on the viewer’s reading of Louis. For Louis has never objected to the privilege of his class, only to that he and his mother have been excluded from these privileges. Is Louis’ corruption and arrogance as much a part of

himself as the family he has successfully eliminated? In short an ideological reading of the game is quite different to the vindictive play upon which Louis has embarked.

US audiences played a limited-option game. Production Code decree required a new ending with Louis arrested once more; one option in other words – an 'A and only A' course of action in keeping with both decree and Hollywood praxis, of eliminating ambiguity to whatever extent film production allows. The viewer, however, can choose their own course of play regardless. The viewer can play out the 'automatic game' by investing principally in the character of Louis and playing the 'elimination game'; and/or, play out a subjective interpretative game, reading whatever ideology the viewer may choose, into the game itself.

The viewer learns how the game works by disengaging with the identification of the protagonist's dilemma at intervals in the playing out of the plot. Regardless of how conscious the viewer is of the game itself, the pretence of play is upheld; it is the self-imposed act of deception demanded by the conditions of play.

Alternative Strategies

Already in 1915 Vachel Lindsay defined three kinds of cinema: dramatic, epic and lyric. These described; action films, spectacle and costume drama films, and 'intimate films', romance and stories of self discovery, respectively. Applied to cinema they are terms imbued with divergent connotations, the considerations of which may go some small way in defining the diversity of strategies related to playing audiovisual fictions.

The epic form of Greek drama described heroic exploits of a central character and was episodic in style. According to Aristotle 'it is not the exposition of a single action that is required, but of a single period, and of everything that happened to one or more persons during this period, however unrelated the various events may have been.'

Homer's *The Odyssey* illustrates conventions of the epic form, which include the heroic figure and the performance of great deeds, the portrayal of a particular period, the intervention of the gods, and themes concerned with eternal human conflicts, mythical or historical.

Rudolf Arnheim, in his essay 'Epic and Dramatic Film' cites Goethe as his inspiration in defining an epic style of film. 'The epic poem preferably describes a man as he acts outwardly; battles, travels, any kind of enterprise that requires some sensuous breadth; tragedy shows a man led from the inside, therefore the plot of a genuine tragedy requires little space.' Dramatic narrative advances to the resolution of a problem or conflict, move by move to closure; the epic narrative describes a series of episodes. Dramatic film is characterised by suspense and plot development; 'what happens next?' – epic film neither deals with problems nor solutions, but the consequence of character.

Arnheim regards the films of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton as prototypes of the epic form, and suggest that together their films comprise a continuing narrative which can be presented in instalments because each episode is self-contained. Whereas the dramatic form begins with a crisis which the protagonist must resolve by the story's end, 'the epic style... is not concerned with change and solution but with the presentation of invariable existence.' Arnheim concludes that the epic style 'insists on the unchangeable nature of man.'

Further, the term epic and its application to the cinema, has been influenced by the so-called 'epic theatre' of Bertold Brecht (1898 - 1956) who, in the late 1920's, used different effects to deliberately create a distance between the spectator and the 'artificial narrative' enacted on stage. Lighting, film inserts projected onto a screen, and placards bearing slogans, were used to remind the audience of the drama's synthesis. Together with the German theatre director and producer, Erwin Piscator (1893 - 1966), this new form of theatre, developed in Berlin and later moving to New York, used montage, episodic scenes removed from the main narrative, and devices that made an audience reflect as much on the theatrical form as the narrative content.

Attributes of the Brechtian 'epic' correlate with the reflexive film games considered in Chapter 6. The Homeric epic, however, as Arnheim suggests, is comparable to the episodic ongoing film narratives

of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Jacques Tati, where specific episodes are dramatic in form, yet isolated within the broader context of the 'unchanging' character.

The lyric form, derived from lyre, the musical instrument used to accompany the poet, describes 'the personal sentiments of the poet as distinguished from epic and dramatic poetry.' The cinema, too, has its lyricists; Jean Cocteau, Luis Buñuel, Maya Deren, Andrey Tarkovsky and others, creating cinematic works which emphasise mood, not narrative. This does not exclude such films from 'play', but the shift of emphasis suggests different forms of play. The viewer watching, *Un chien andalou* (1928), *L'age d'or* (1931), *Le sang d'un poete* (1931), the Japanese film, *A Page of Madness* (Kurutta ippeiji, 1926), *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), provide extensive options in creating associations, correlations and determining meaning. Causality and problem solving are not the essence of the lyric film, rather it is a game of multiple options that allows the player the liberty of creating whatever associative game they wish. Siegfried Kracauer, described three 'intentions' of the experimental filmmaker, which relate to a cinematic lyric form.

1. He wished to organise whatever material he chose to work on according to rhythms which were a product of his inner impulses, rather than an imitation of the patterns found in nature.
2. He wished to invent shapes rather than record them.
3. He wished to convey, through his images, contents which were an outward projection of his visions rather than an implication of those images themselves.

Commenting on *Le sang d'un poete*, Jean Cocteau provides interpretations of the film's images; the poet who has a mouth in the palm of his hand; a statue that comes to life; children in a snowball fight; the poet seeking immortality. Of his own readings he concludes; 'I'd be right to tell you all that, but I'd also be wrong, for it would be a text written after the images... life creates great images without realizing it.' Cocteau plays the viewer's game of creating associations and meanings,

while extricating himself from the game playing options the film provides.

In his analysis of *La guerre est finie* (1966) David Bordwell describes how 'the narration maintains its game with the viewer'... with deviations from objective continuity with what might be flashforwards, or what might be flashbacks – a strategy, he suggests, suited to the art-cinema mode. Bordwell writes: 'The spectator will be asked to plot *La guerre est finie's* particular work against the extrinsic norms of the mode... (which) have an undeniably ludic component,' requiring that the viewer 'draw upon tacit conventions of comprehension characteristic of the art film.' These he lists as: objective verisimilitude, expressive realism, overt narration intervention, and 'rules unique to (a) film's narrational work.' In addition, says Bordwell, 'ambiguities... thwart an easy comprehension...'

Bordwell argues that the art-cinema forms a paradigm and that 'art-cinema narration has become a coherent mode partly by defining itself as a deviation from classical narrative.' Yet what emerges in examining the alternative strategies deviating from the demonstrable model of classical narrative (as outlined in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*), is, rather than a paradigm, game matrices as deviant and divergent as the narratives they embrace. Bordwell may be over-simplifying an indeterminate span of 'alternatives' (a term by definition rooted in a context of a dominant mode) in asserting the 'defining schemata' of a predominantly post WW2 'narrational alternative.' In the art-cinema of the 50s and 60s, suggests Bordwell, three defining schemata emerges: open ended narratives, a dramaturgy of chance encounters and the ambiguity of the fabula world. As schemata these constitute narrative strategies which in turn are 'played' or countered by viewer/player strategies; in essence, for every narrative schemata, there exists a player option in the form of a game plan. (4 Chapter 6).

Torben Grodal considers alternative strategies from a cognitive psychological perspective and suggests that epic and lyric indicate two types of the brain's dynamic functions; a left-hemisphere (dominant) epic function, which is stimulated by activities that are sequential and goal directed, and right-hemisphere (non-dominant) lyric function associated with musical patterns, rhythms and non-sequential

activities. These definitions are not necessarily at odds with the consideration of epic and lyrical in terms of narrative games eliciting alternative strategies of play. On the contrary, it is in the nature of game playing's diversity that different players favour the sequential goal-orientated game, while others are inclined to games favouring ambience, mood and rhythm; the games of 'amusement' consecrated to the muse of leisure.

It is apparent that both game and play are characterised by whoever is playing the game. Strategic thinking addresses the viewer's process of hypothesising, predicting and speculating outcomes, but does not address the emotional responses which engage the viewer, nor the viewer's level of investment. What, after all, is the essence of the moving picture, if not to move the viewer?

4. Moves

Options

Narrative game-play requires, to some extent, strategic thinking, calculation and speculation. It also requires an engagement from the player – some sense of emotional investment. There is in ‘moving pictures’ a word play that relates both to the apparatus that makes pictures move, as well as to what moves the viewer. This chapter considers ‘moves’ within the context of screen play – less with the literal sense of motion, and more with emotion – what makes drama ‘moving’.

Emotion is the cement that holds the narrative together, suggests Noël Carroll. An emotion is made up of two components: a cognitive component, such as a belief about some person, place or thing – real or imagined; and a feeling component – a bodily change and/or phenomenological experience. ‘Emotions organise perception. Emotions shape the way in which we track character behaviour,’ says Carroll, refuting the argument that emotions are irrational, in the sense that they undermine the rule of reason. A cognitive theory of emotions which challenges the ‘irrationality of the emotions’ maintains that emotional states are governed by criteria. For example, to respond with anger means to meet certain criteria that govern anger-response. Emotions become feelings – suspense results in a tension of muscles, joy with laughter, grief with tears, and so on.

Torben Grodal argues that emotional responses to ‘visual fiction’ rely on cognitive evaluations intensified by body activation; in other words a middle road between a purely cognitive approach (‘valenced reactions to events, agents or objects...’) and a body approach – that emotions are identical with body reactions. Grodal proposes a system of a four step brain-mind process: intensities, saturations, tensions and emotivities, which at the risk of oversimplification, describes a process from visual analysis to memory-matching to labelling (narrative construction) to emotional response (involuntary autonomic reactions).

Both Carroll and Grodal argue in favour of how a viewer’s emotional involvement with fiction relate to attention; and how

emotional responses to earlier scenes will generally contribute to organising the way in which to attend to later scenes. Although, from an evolutionary and cognitive perspective, there is an inherent logic to emotional responses, I propose a distinction between narrative rationale – plot and structure; and drama – the irrationality of human behaviour. Put simply, what is rational can be calculated (which is what the word means); what is irrational cannot (4 Chapter 3; Randomness).

When Carroll says 'emotions are not necessarily irrational' my point is that they can be, and in dramatic action, often are, as the dynamic that constitutes the narrative game, is the dynamic between plot and drama, between strategy and dilemma, the rational and the irrational. Whether what is rational pertains to structure or strategy, to speculating and hypothesising plot development and outcome, the processes on either side of the game board can be calculated through reason. What is irrational – character motivation (greed, love, hate, revenge, etc) random event (catastrophe, accident), relates to what cannot be calculated, reasoned or worked out. The question I pose here relates to options – what are the selection processes involved in emotional responses to those details in the narrative game devised to move the viewer?

Game playing skills are gauged through winning and losing, gain and loss. For the viewer, gain/loss is measured in comprehension (as in the 'gain' of listening to an anecdote and getting the point); a win can be measured in interpretation, gaining personal meaning; 'this story means something to me...' Imbued in the gain/loss scenario is investment (time, money); risk (lack of comprehension/no stimulation = loss); gamble (expectations for gain/reward). The narrative film consists of inner and outer games; the 'diegetic' outer game, a contest – a psychomachia – like chess, tennis or gladiatorial sport, played out on the screen. The 'narrative game', is both inner and outer game, consisting of story and discourse; the tale and the way it is told. The hermeneutic game is the game of interpretation, of finding meaning, where winning correlates to the gains of insight.

A game a predetermined structure which establishes what type of game by defining goals, obstacles and conditions of play. A game, like genre, is defined by conventions (production codes) and

expectations (player aspirations/anticipations). The game, whether a board game, a field sport or audiovisual narrative game, comprises limitations and possibilities. How a player 'reads' the game is the player's business. The object of a board game like Monopoly, for example, is to accumulate wealth and property and to bankrupt opponents. Yet Elizabeth Magie, who patented the Landlord Game, in 1902, Monopoly's precursor, consisting of 40 squares, four stations, a prison and capital which increases with each completion of 40 squares, had devised an anti-capitalist game in which players could not create monopolies. Parkers released the game commercially in the 1930s with an ideological about-face – the game's popularity was ensured once the ideological tag was removed allowing players to engage in ruthless speculation and give vent to an amorality of business practice otherwise denied most players by virtue of class disparities.

An ideological commitment for or against capitalism is not necessary to play a game of Monopoly, regardless of Elizabeth Magie's objectives. The game was banned in the former Soviet Union, for example, where, like many prohibited Hollywood films, it was in conflict with a political ideology. Similarly, the film game may be played regardless of intent a film narrative may imply. The images of the cinema are both external and internal projections – the collective experience from the projectionist's booth, and the individual experience from the viewer's own inner world. Illia (Melina Mercouri) in *Never on Sunday* (1959) watches a Greek tragedy played out in the Athens amphitheatre; her reading that Medea has only pretended to kill the children to spite Jason, opposes the more conventional interpretation proffered by visiting American scholar, Homer (Jules Dassin). In *We All Loved Each Other So Much* (1975) Antonio and Luciana watch a dubbed version of *Of Human Bondage* (1964) substituting the players' dubbed lines with their own, concocting a scenario of their own, both dependent and independent of the on-screen narrative.

These cinematic representations of the viewer as story teller represent the viewer's own process of projecting an internal narrative onto the collective narrative. That the viewer is drawn to the types of narrative more attuned to their own internal narrative, is not merely redirecting the rudimentary 'liked it/didn't like it' inclination of

personal preference; it is a manifestation of the dramatic narrative, a 'centre of narrative gravity' (Daniel Dennett's term; see below), within each individual. The viewer as player can select 'easy options'; 'turn off', 'tune out' 'give up,' determined by investment based on antipathy or apathy – levels of emotional involvement. With empathy or sympathy, player options include the bivalent 'problem resolving' causal structure of the classical Hollywood narrative, or the multivalent open-structure of the poetic cinema.

Noam Chomsky proposed a 'rich internal structure' which enables the acquisition of language. A child constructs an internalised grammar, wrote Chomsky in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, (1965) in a then contested theory of 'innate mechanisms,' that has now gained some acknowledgement within biology and physiology. Chomsky's view that 'the person who has acquired knowledge of a language has internalised a system of rules that relate sound and meaning in a particular way' relates as much to the natural phrasing of a narrative, as to the 'innateness' of language. Psychologist, D. Bannister gives the following example as to how the same 'event' or narrative can result in divergent interpretations:

A woman crossing a bridge may be 'a series of movements of force about a point' (engineers construing), 'a poor credit risk' (bankers construing), 'a mass of whirling electrons about nuclei' (physicists construing) 'a soul in peril of mortal sin' (theological construing) 'a likely dish' (young man's construing). None of these interpretations need be accepted; only that they are constructions which 'have some explanatory value and predictive utility, depending on the networks of constructs from which they stem.' From a narratological perspective the scenario is consistent; from a game playing perspective it is a vehicle for play and explication.

At the turn of the century forms of narrative game playing included parlour games based on morality tales and conjecture. *The Story of Lucy* is a Victorian parlour game in which participants are invited to consider from a list of *dramatis personae* as to who is most responsible for Lucy's fate. This example is used in cross-cultural management to illustrate core values in different cultures.

The Story of Lucy

Lucy is a young woman who lives in a house by the river. She is in love with Peter who lives on the other side of the river. She doesn't know what to do so she goes to her friend William and asks for advice.

'If you love him, go and tell him', says William.

'Yes' says Lucy, and goes to the river where she meets David, the boatman. 'Please take me across the river David.'

'Yes', says David, 'But what time do you need to return?'

'I'm not sure,' says Lucy. 'Why do you need to know?'

'I must be downriver at another port of call at six. If you want the ferry back you must be at the landing stage before then.'

They cross the river and Lucy goes to Peter's house. Peter opens the door. 'Peter, I love you', says Lucy. Peter cannot resist the temptation and makes love with Lucy.

When she recovers from the occasion Lucy is upset at the thought that Peter has taken advantage of her. She runs from the house and to the house where Michael lives.

Michael is in love with Lucy. He opens the door and welcomes her in. Lucy tells him the whole story, whereupon Michael is filled with bitterness and asks Lucy to leave.

She arrives at the river landing stage just after six. David has cast off and is rowing away. Lucy calls out: 'David, please take me back.'

David looks at his watch and calls back: 'Sorry Lucy – I did warn you.' And he rows off downstream.

Lucy decides to swim home. In midstream, she drowns.

There are five characters to this story. The rules of the game stipulate that participants rank each character, one to five, in order of responsibility for the death of Lucy. For example, if Michael is most responsible, he is placed first, then the other characters accordingly:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

For the Victorian parlour game players each character represents a moral value – Lucy (love), Peter (passion), William (wisdom), David (duty), Michael (morality). For cross-cultural purposes, in northern Europe Lucy ranks high; in Latin American countries, Peter is frequently at the top of the list, in Arab countries, William. The reader's values will determine the interpretation of character's culpability, just as assessing the story provides a means of evaluating the reader's cultural and moral predilections.

If there is a film to this text it is the film constructed in the mind of the reader. Would the reader's understanding of the characters be modified if, say, Peter was represented as a 50 year old professor, and Lucy as a 14 year old girl? Or David executing duty with malice rather than intent of fulfilling obligations? Or if the river was a raging torrent, or a gentle stream? The story illustrates the player's narrative game – how playing a text evokes an individual's 'centre of narrative gravity', distinguishing external and internal narratives – the story comprehended and the story interpreted.

Phenomenology – with its roots in the a priori philosophy of Immanuel Kant, in which he states, 'that all our knowledge begins with experience,' – distinguishes between things as they appear, phenomena; and things as they are, noumena. Johann von Uexküll (1909) refers to *umwelt* (surroundworld) and *innenwelt* (innerworld), and humanistic psychology distinguishes between the idiographic (Gr. *idios* – own) and nomothetic.

The following experiment demonstrates how mental prompts induce forms of idiographic fiction: A participant was told we would test their knowledge of cinema – we would select a film and by posing yes – no questions the participant should determine the film story. Questions regarding director, production or title could not be asked – only questions pertaining to story and character. If the participant should guess the film's title they could write it down, but not ask a direct question: Is this film '....'?

In fact, the group (a panel of six) had selected no film; only the instructions that all questions ending in a letter a – o be answered 'yes', and questions ending in a letter p – z be answered 'no'. For example; is it a love story? – no! Is there a woman involved? – yes.

After answering a series of questions participants were asked to summarise the plot:

Case #1: 'It is the story of a poor young woman, abandoned by her lover, who is forced into prostitution. She is shot by her father, who is a violent man.

Case #2: A Danish film set immediately prior to World War II about a girl who flies to heaven to meet God, who appears in animal form – a giraffe, with a long tail.

Case #3: The story of a man and a girl, the only two characters in the film, who marry but which ends unhappily; the girl kills the man by stabbing him with a kitchen knife because he had been unfaithful and had fallen in love with another woman. We do not find out who the other woman is; the girl finds out about the infidelity by having seen it on a television screen transmitted by a live surveillance camera.

And so on. Of the eight stories extracted in this way, some were methodical, some patently absurd, depending on the predilection of questions posed by the participant. As to whether the stories correlate with character traits of the participant (age/cultural background/gender/nationality) is best addressed to the participants themselves; case #1 was narrated by a 48 year old television dramatist from Latin America; #2 by a Danish university lecturer in film studies; #3 by a television sound engineer, aged 25. The method of extracting the story is random, yet each participant in attempting to identify what they believed to be an actual story, manufacturing idiosyncratic and idiographic fictions.

Similarly, the individual viewer watches a film which is both the same and yet different to the film projected onto the screen. Individually the viewer creates subjective stories based on a range of factors which determine an individual reading. In *Rebecca* (1940) the viewer never sees the character Rebecca; a reading of *Rebecca* can only be based on the interpretations proffered by other characters. *Rebecca* may be the alluring femme fatale to one viewer, an unfortunate victim of

circumstances to another; or a strong willed heroine, or a vindictive and manipulative woman, just as she represents a different personality to the different characters in the narrative.

Was the ambiguity of Rebecca a ploy by Daphne de Maurier, who wrote the book? by Alfred Hitchcock who directed the film? by David Selznick who initiated the project? is it an ambiguity created by the passing of time? Or a construction of the viewer in lieu of a tangible on-screen character? Who is to say the feminist 'strong woman' Rebecca is any more or any less credible a character than the patriarchal femme fatale? The character of Rebecca incites quite different readings in the 1990s than in the 1940s as Janet Staiger's reception theory approach would substantiate.

Thinking Styles

Apart from strategies, player options include choices based on individual thinking styles; game prompts of A or B, can be disregarded by the player in favour of A, B or C; instead of the A or B 'fight or flight' options of the Chaplin scenario, the player is at liberty to devise alternative options; Chaplin and Campbell become friends, go to a bar and chase women (C).

Bivalence describes dualistic thinking; option A or option B. Multivalent thinking considers alternatives; A, B, C, or maybe D? Bart Kosko counters Bivalence with Multivalence; 'bivalence trades accuracy for simplicity' which, rather than a critique, I suggest is one of fiction's prerequisites – the simplification of reality's complexities. Narrative fiction operates as a game or simulation of real life issues, hence the dramatic narrative bivalence. A or B. Fight or flight. Evasion or confrontation. Win or lose. As the Hollywood game has developed, however, both narratologically and commercially, player options steer more toward the unequivocal; A and only A. This does not exclude the viewer playing the dramatic narrative from a multivalent approach – reading many possibilities. Two alternatives are never enough – there are always other options. One of which is ambivalence; accommodating both options at once. Win and lose. Love and hate. The viewer, posited between two choices, rather than decide on one, takes on both.

The root word to these thinking styles; bivalence, multivalence and ambivalence, is a chemical term, valence . Valence is when one element in a chemical compound predominates. As a thinking style it describes the dominance of one option; unequivocal thinking; there are no other options. Yet even in the most A-and-only-A unequivocal narratives – the propaganda film for example – the viewer's options entail resisting the A-and-only-A narrative trajectory, to reconstruct an idiographic fiction from the nomothetic. The player's options also include game playing styles – whether to assume the multivalent approach, with multiple options; or Jean Cocteau's ambivalent approach – A and B, as opposed to A or B, and play the associative game, dismissing the narrative game as extraneous.

Agendas

An agenda is a programme of actions to be undertaken. A narrative corresponds to a controlled agenda – a programme that is predetermined by temporal limits and a pre-defined fixed list of events. There are no random elements to the controlled agenda. The events are already listed. For the player/viewer, however, narrative is an open agenda; the subject of speculation and hypothesis. As one event unfolds the player can either accept the sequence as random – there is no relationship between one event and successive events – or, based on the knowledge of past events combined with a strategy formulated through game skills and experience, speculates upon the likelihood of successive events. Skills and experience make up a hidden agenda. The player's hidden agenda shapes and interprets the narrative, providing meaning and subjectivity.

Tzvetan Todorov describes how 'every work is rewritten by its reader who imposes upon it a new grid of interpretation for which he is not generally responsible but which comes to him from his culture, from his time, in short from another discourse.' In essence Todorov defines components of the hidden agenda, yet the implications of responsibility (or lack), are problematic, considered further in terms of player scripts. (4 Chapter 9). Narrative agenda is comparable to game plan (4 Chapter 5) with one important distinction – the prominence of protocol over

strategy. Peter Farb lists an agenda for what he defines as the language game, components of which correspond to the open agenda of narrative. There are no strategies prescribed, nor sense of what constitutes 'correct' or 'skilled' moves; rather the open agenda founded on social norms:

1. a minimum of two players ('the incomprehensible speech of a schizophrenic is no more a true game than is solitaire.')
2. social pressure can determine an individual's commitment to play (Farb says a person within speaking distance is comparable to the bystander who joins in or looks on)
3. something at stake which both players try to win (the reward, suggests Farb, could be a tangible gain negotiating a pay rise, or intangible like the satisfaction of winning an argument)
4. a player is characterised by a particular style (whether the language game or any other kind of game)

There is causality/linearity to narrative – the controlled agenda; but understanding/reading narrative is a hierarchical process incorporating an individual hidden agenda; memory, knowledge, attitudes, experiences. The intersubjectivity of schemata is necessary to validate interpretation. Within narrative theory the spectrum of interpretation is contentious: David Bordwell rejects interpretation in favour of comprehension; John Fiske and Roland Barthes' allowances for interpretation are narrow compared to say, Edward Branigan and Umberto Eco. Game theory, on the other hand, does not distinguish between game and player – they are inextricably linked. Whereas narratology is confined to the study of the text, game theory examines the relationship between the narrative game and the 'reader' /player; between the controlled agenda and the hidden agenda. Applied to the film game, the hidden agenda of the viewer (memory, knowledge, attitudes, experiences) operates in four ways:

- *the viewer creates what they see*
- *the viewer fulfils their expectations in what they see*
- *the same controlled agenda generates more than one reality*
- *the mindset of the hidden agenda is self-reinforcing*

An example of how mindsets function is illustrated in an experiment carried out on a class of students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, about to meet a new lecturer. Half of the group was given the following information; that the new lecturer was: 'a graduate student at the MIT Department of Economics and Social Science. He has had three semesters of teaching experience in psychology at another college. This is his first semester teaching economics. He is 26 years old and married. People who know him would consider him to be a rather warm person; industrious, critical, practical and determined.' The other half of the group was given the same information, with the exception of the word 'warm'; they were told he was 'a rather cool person, industrious, etc.' During the evaluation session after the lecture the 'warm' person group rated the lecturer positively ('considerate, informative, sociable, good natured, humane,' etc) compared to the 'cooler' response from the second group. Individual evaluations were influenced by the mindset introduced into their hidden agenda.

Similarly, before beginning the narrative game of the fiction film, the hidden agenda of the viewer is directed by a range of factors to either autistic enmity (an unfavourable disposition) or autistic empathy (a favourable disposition); priming the viewer to play the game with a pre-conceived value system. In literary theory Hans Jauss refers to the 'horizon of expectations' to describe the criteria readers use to pre-judge literary texts. Reviews, critique, genre, title, director, performer, duration, setting, and other factors relating to memory, knowledge, attitudes and experiences, will affect the way in which the player plays the film game, and the strategic options selected during the course of the narrative trajectory.

The player's primary option is to choose to play or not to play. This is also guided as much by the hidden agenda as the expectations of the narrative's controlled agenda. As the viewer oscillates between participation and observation – game playing and game watching – the inherent risk entails lapse of interest, disengagement, disbelief no longer suspended; the player cancels the transaction that necessitates play.

Player Orientated Theory

Phenomenology, as defined by Edmund Husserl, links the world of things, people and events that might be perceived and the individual who perceives it. These are not two separate realms, but inextricably linked. It is not that the individual thinks, but thinks something. Reality only has meaning as afforded by individually experienced phenomena.

Both phenomenology and idiographic psychology beg the question: is a science of the individual feasible? To focus on subjective meanings is problematic for scientific theory – science favours universals, not particulars. Within cinema studies the focus on subjectivity is especially contentious; viewing is a universal phenomenon but it is experienced individually. Since it is a universal phenomenon there must emerge a scientific approach to its study; but science cannot study the process of viewing without considering the individual experience. Phenomenology proposes theoretically neutral observation and description, rejecting the duality of subject and object; the idiographic psychology of personality assumes each individual's uniqueness. The meeting ground for these two approaches, I suggest, is a screen play theory, as applied to the audiovisual narrative game in particular.

To study a narrative is to study that narrative as experienced within the consciousness of a particular individual. In literature Roman Ingarden, Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss' phenomenological approach examine the process whereby the imaginary world suggested by words in the text is constructed in the mind of the reader. As Robert Allen remarks, 'reading is not merely a mechanical process of sense making, but rather a curious and paradoxical process by which lifeless and pitifully inadequate marks on a page are brought to life in the reader's imagination.'

However, whereas reading has the potential to evoke mental responses in five senses; the audiovisual narrative, by definition, is directed to two. Certainly there are similarities between the two. Iser, for example, describes the process of reading fiction as an alternation between *protension* (anticipation / expectation) and *retention* (knowledge

of the text up to that point). Also Eileen Seiter considers the gap-filling process outlined in Chapter 3 – a process between paradigmatic (associative) and syntagmatic (sequential) organisation, a process which correlates to a player's speculating outcome, and identifying dilemma. However, Iser's description of 'gap filling' distinguishes the reading process from the viewing process, in that the phenomenological interpretation of reading relates to how the reader creates fully formed and complete worlds from printed words on paper – even before finishing a fictional work, or chapter, or paragraph. A sentence, a fragment, a few selected words may be sufficient for the reader to actualise a fictional world. Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson applies Iser's 'gap filling' strategy with a reading of Wordsworth's 'To H.C, Six Years Old', despite an application 'unwieldy because a short poem does not require the reader to make the long sequence of adjustments necessary when reading a novel.'

Robert Allen's phenomenological approach to soap opera – serial narratives – goes some way to bridging reader-orientated to viewer-orientated theory, although arguably an approach that returns to the founding principles of phenomenology will extend the process further. That Husserl's Chair of Philosophy was at the same university where Hugo Münsterberg and Martin Heidegger taught (Freiburg), is also not without interest.

Husserl (1859 – 1938) maintained the phenomenological philosopher had 'to put out of action' any sort of realistic conviction so that the 'structures' of his own consciousness wouldn't be evident. In *Logical Investigations* Husserl outlines Meaning, Intentionality and Knowledge, and the concepts of 'intuition' 'experience' 'description', central to phenomenology. Husserl used the term Epoché to describe a transcendental suspension of belief – the abstraction necessary for a conceptual investigation. Although Husserl founded the phenomenological movement, he was influenced by Franz Brentano (1838 – 1916), under whom he studied at the University of Vienna.

Brentano's doctrine of 'intentionality' characterises mental events as involving 'the direction of the mind to an object.' Brentano's 'psychognosy' divides mental phenomena into three classes: presentation – judgement – affective attitude, which constitute the three

parts of phenomenology – the external, the internal and affect; ie, an emotional response.'

Presentation – where an object is 'presented' to the mind, whether perceived or imagined; Judgement – in which a distinction between truth and error is settled by an appeal to what is self-evident; Affective Attitude – acceptance or rejection which have an internal self-justifying character and which serve as the basis of 'moral intuitions.' Within contemporary psychology – a field which E R Valentine terms - 'descriptive phenomenology' – consciousness is the object of study defined by three stages: intuiting – analysing – describing.

How does Brentano's psychognosy relate to the viewer's experience of audiovisual narrative? I consider narrative play in terms of speculating an outcome and identifying with a dilemma. These two processes have been described and defined in a variety of ways; in regard to the viewing experience they relate to analysing and describing of descriptive phenomenology, and to the presentation and judgement of Brentano's psychognosy.

However, screen play is more than a viewer's alternation between a duality of speculation (strategic thinking) on the one side and dilemma (emotional investment) on the other. Noël Carroll proposes the term of 'assimilation' in regard to a viewer's relationship with character, as opposed to 'identification.' Etymologically the words distinguish 'being like' from 'being the same.' However, whether assimilation or identification, these are relative to the level of viewer interaction – in turn determined by the level of investment – which suggests that the viewer's identification with dilemma paves the way for one more variable – assimilating – for want of a better word – insight. Classical drama refers to *anagnorisis*, descriptive phenomenology to 'intuition.' Speculation and dilemma prompt modes of 'play' – the assimilation of insight motivates a player 'to win'.

In *Easy Street*, the villain positions himself to the proximity of a gas lamp. For Chaplin's 'little man' character this constitutes an unforeseen variable, but a variable which provides a spur of the moment action. Chaplin leaps on the villain's back, turns on the gas and wins the contest. It is the ending the viewer wants ('little man' defeats 'big man'),

but not necessarily the ending the viewer anticipates. It represents the 'aha' moment of game playing, the moment of realisation, the unforeseen move that ensures a 'win'. It is the move that elevates a predictable game, or a disappointing game, or a mediocre game. In other games, the well-placed goal, the undetected chess move, or a flash of brilliance or insight is what distinguishes the competent player from the mediocre.

Murray Smith refers to an integrated cycle of perception, cognition and action, regardless of whether emotional responses are prompted by actual events or fictions, a parallel to Brentano's description of the phenomenological process: presentation – judgement – affective attitude, and to the game playing process of speculating an outcome – strategic thinking; identifying with a dilemma – emotional investment; and assimilating the moment of insight that defines a protagonist's understanding of gain or loss – emotional response. In screen play terms the three parts of the process describe the game (the audiovisual narrative), the experience of playing the game (level of investment), how the player responds to the experience of play (what it means).

Identification

Who does the player identify with in *The Story of Lucy*? Cultural responses vary. Who is most responsible and who is least responsible for Lucy's death? Not only national cultures, but gender cultures, generational cultures, professional cultures. A UK lawyer placed William at the top of the list. 'In a court of law', he said, 'William is the only person I could sue.'

Readings of the story vary – maybe readings are affected by the default values of the player's cultural context. Maybe players construe a relationship to the characters and the moral values they represent. An idiographic reading, however, defines particulars. How old is Lucy? How old is Peter? Is the river calm or a raging torrent? What is Lucy thinking before she decides to swim home? How does Peter react when Lucy leaves? Does a player identify with any particular character?

A woman sits in the hallway and awaits her interrogation (*Mildred Pierce*, 1945). A ticking clock, echoing voices, off-key whistling, a

rustling newspaper. 'It is with her the audience is forced to identify,' says John Davis, although clearly it is not with Mildred Pierce the viewer identifies, but Mildred Pierce's dilemma. Identifying the dilemma prompts the viewer to relating Mildred Pierce's experience to the viewer's personal experience; at a dentist's waiting room, outside the headmaster's office, at a police station, and in turn prompt the emotional response in keeping with the overall narrative strategy. Its affectivity as diegetic ploy depends on who is playing.

Does the viewer identify with the T2 robot (*Terminator II: Judgement Day*, 1991) as it is lowered into the fiery depths, or identify with a dilemma centred around self-sacrifice for the common good? Does the viewer identify with Pluto the dog (*Pluto's Blue Note*, 1947) when he overcomes his inability to sing by miming to a Frank Sinatra record and impressing his female admirers? Or does the viewer assimilate Pluto's moment of triumph to make it their own?

Carroll's argument is valid, I think, when he rejects the idea of character-identification, and rejects the idea that the viewer assumes a character's mental and emotional states. Firstly, says Carroll, the viewer has more information than the protagonist and secondly, the viewer has a different position than the protagonist. I reject the notion of character identification, but not the process of identification; players identify the dilemma and identify with dilemma, processing dilemma in deference to character.

Linda Williams suggests the subject of viewer identification in hard core films is neither exclusively male or female – the viewer is not identifying with the character, or 'condemned' to the role of female victim-hero. 'The crucial point is not to subsume one gender-inflected form of desire or pleasure within another, but to see how they interrelate.'

Murray Smith describes a process of recognition – the viewer's construction of character; alignment – related to the literary notion of 'focalisation' – what knowledge of the character the viewer has access to (the literary first-person narrative and the filmic point of view, for example); and allegiance – the viewer's moral evaluation of a character. A process, once again, reminiscent of Brentano's presentation – judgement – affective attitude, although based more on character than

character-action. Allegiance, says Smith, 'goes beyond understanding, by evaluating and responding emotionally to the traits and emotions of the character, in the context of the narrative situation.'

Carroll suggests the viewer 'assimilates' rather than identifies, yet assimilation too, remains character-orientated. Both Carroll and Smith refer to 'spectator' and the processes they consider relate to the comparatively passive 'spectating' role (see introduction) in contrast to 'viewer' and even more so, 'player' role, which accentuates interaction in the film-viewing experience. Viewer interaction, as Linda Williams's study suggests, is prompted not necessarily by character, as by situations, actions, pleasures.

Phenomenological dissonance is a psychological model which further illustrates the interactive process; an application to psychological disorders defined through issues of self, self-regard, *eigenwelt*. A dissonant sound is out of tune; resonance 'strikes a chord' – creating a pleasing, sympathetic vibration. A phenomenological resonance relates also to *eigenwelt*, the internal world of the individual; the affect, however, is positive – like the prolongation of a harmonious sound. A resonant sound persists indefinitely – it fades because the receptive instrument at some point fails to discern the sound. That does not mean the sound has ceased – only that an individual's reception of that sound has ceased. Can narrative resonate? The analogy has correspondence with such idioms as a story with 'a ring of truth', or that 'strikes the right chord.' Narrative resonance is a condition of play, grounded not in assimilating character, but assimilating insight.

Insight

What is insight? According to the dictionary, 'the capacity of understanding hidden truths; especially of character or situations.' According to the neo-classical model, *anagnorisis* – an additional component of a drama's *catastrophe* (resolution), describes a protagonist's moment of transition from ignorance to knowledge – a reversal (*conversio*) through discovery (*cognito*). It is this moment of insight – *anagnorisis* – I suggest the player assimilates. Strategic thinking provides options for resolving a dilemma, but says little about how a player

responds emotionally to a dilemma. Nor does the schemata of strategic thinking incorporate 'insight'.

Strategic thinking does not provide solutions to problems, nor resolutions to narrative games, but provides options for attaining an optimum solution. Yet, as research and experiments by cognitive psychologists show, people are not necessarily interested in optimum solutions, but solutions which are 'good enough.' The optimum solution is a theoretical construct necessary in drama, which – also theoretically – optimises dramatic conflict. Chaplin's causeway of escalating actions in the Easy Street contest, for example, is a dramatic structure; in a non-dramatic scenario other actions - calling for help, striking first, running away – may have resulted in avoiding confrontation. Which may be laudable in real life, but detrimental to the play of a narrative game.

In narrative terms the most desirable solution is the one the viewer wants – the protagonist wins – but not in the way the viewer expects. Thus strategic thinking takes the viewer through the game, whereas insight – and how a viewer assimilates insight – is an individual process, best understood in terms of personality differences and how the individual reacts to specific situations. This necessitates a theoretical model which provides an alternative to conceptualising personality as diverse 'cognitive information processing styles.'

Indeed if this was the basis of personality, the individual (according to subjective expected utility theory, or computational functionalism) ought to follow the following stages choosing alternative courses of action:

- 1. list all feasible courses of action*
- 2. enumerate the possible consequences of each action*
- 3. assess the utility (gains and losses) for each consequence which might occur*
- 4. assess the likelihood that each course of action will result in a positive or negative consequence*
- 5. compute the expected utility of each consequence by multiplying its utility by its probability of occurrence*
- 6. choose the action with the greatest expected utility*

People do not behave like this, however – the individual is not just a processor, as illustrated by individual responses to narratives. Roger Penrose, in his critique of computational functionalism, addresses the concept of consciousness, 'a physically accessible concept,' he argues, 'yet, to define it would probably be to define the wrong thing...' Two different aspects of consciousness can be described however: awareness and insight.

Awareness, suggests Penrose, is the passive manifestation of conscious-ness which includes perceptions, use of memory, etc; insight, an active manifestation; 'non-computable', 'beyond computation.' Penrose provides examples of insight in solving mathematical problems and chess problems and concludes; 'mathematical understanding is not a computational thing, but something quite different, depending on our ability to be aware of things.'

A computer can calculate an optimum strategy, but can never understand why. In a dramatic situation a player can choose a 'less-than-optimum-strategic' option; irrational, yet correct within the dramatic context of the game. Antonius Blok in *The Seventh Seal* (*Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957) tests strategies over a game of chess with Death, and in apparent exasperation, upsets the board and the pieces. The move however, is the knight's single selfless action, diverting Death's attention to save Jof and Mia. Death's 'loss' is the viewer's 'gain' – the assimilation of insight, recognition of moral rectitude, the subliminal tones of narrative resonance.

Once again the assimilation is the viewer's business – depending on how the viewer plays, whether to assimilate, ignore, reject, dismiss or let it pass by unnoticed. Similar assimilations of insight are prompted by, for example, Louis Mazzini's recollection of 'memoirs' in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* – redeeming him from the Edith – Sibella dilemma and delivering him to another; Richard Blaine's last minute ploy in *Casablanca*; Charlie Chaplin's move in *Easy Street*, or Pluto the dog miming to a Frank Sinatra record in *Pluto's Blue Note*. The protagonist's 'gain' represents a viewer's option of play-to-win.

Mood

Like insight or understanding, mood is a non-computable response – a state of mind or feeling. Grodal uses mood to describe ‘the local pattern [of genre] and its affective tone’ in spite of what he describes as the ‘passive associations of the word.’ A film genre determines a viewer’s emotional response, genre as ‘determined by a dominant narrative pattern and correlated emotional tone – we need a term to describe the local situation and sequence bound narrative bound narrative pattern and emotional tone – I use the word mood.’

Grodal considers eight basic emotions: fear, anger, joy, sadness, acceptance, disgust, expectation, surprise; as suggested by R. Plutchik. However, a problem central to film viewing and emotional response, is the classification of emotion. P. Ekman suggests six (anger fear sadness happiness surprise disgust), I. J Roseman, four; and Grodal suggests these classifications are ‘complications of the fundamental division between positive and aversive emotions.’ The issue is further clouded in that emotions are classified together with causal associations; grief is caused by the loss of a loved one, fear is caused by threat, and so on.

Rosalind Picard’s study based on the premise that ‘emotions play an essential role in rational decision making, perception, learning, and a variety of other cognitive functions,’ considers mood as a result of a repeatedly activated emotion. Picard’s perspective is founded on how emotion and mood models can be synthesised in computing, to make them ‘affective’ – the term Franz Brentano correlates with ‘interest’, ‘love’ and ‘emotion.’ (3 p. 83) The implications of a HAL – ‘doomsday machine’ dichotomy (computational functionalism and excesses of ‘emotion’ and ‘logic’) are considered in Chapter 8; but it should be noted Picard’s conclusion following an overview of emotion, mood states and models ‘that there are no complete emotional systems to date... that rival those of humans.’ That such a statement is not necessarily self-evident is itself cause for consideration in regard to digital environments and narrative immersion (4 Chapter 9).

Mood evoked by narrative resonance, I suggest, functions as a response to ‘play’ – how a viewer speculates outcome, and how a viewer

identifies (with) the narrative dilemma. Thus by defining the situation and outcome, certain limited responses can be seen as a consequence, as in game playing generally. If Player A expects to win, and wins – the consequence is joy, the mood, celebratory. If Player B expects to win, and loses – the consequence is sorrow, the mood is anguish.

These responses can be witnessed at a soccer match any Saturday afternoon; the greater the team supporter’s investment in the game, the stronger the response (cognitive appraisal). Player responses to game outcomes are as diverse and complex as the players that experience them; actual outcomes can be reduced to a table of cognitive appraisal (adapted from I J Roseman), based on situation and consequence.

Situation	Mood
a) desirable and occurs	satisfaction
b) desirable and doesn’t occur	anxiety
c) undesirable and occurs	tension
d) undesirable and doesn’t occur	relief

The situations correlate to readily identifiable narrative outcomes. Story mood, however, is intrinsic to viewer/player investment; France wins the 1998 World Cup – Brazilian supporters grieve, French supporters celebrate. Same game – divergent responses.

For the viewer who has invested in Louis Mazzini, and speculates an outcome whereby Louis cheats the hangman, viewer response will be celebratory. For the viewer who anticipates moral retribution, despondency. At another extreme, the viewer with an antipathy toward Chaplin, and sympathy for Eric Campbell, will experience a different story mood to the viewer who has appropriated a more conventional investment. It is feasible (from a dramaturgical perspective, even desirable) for a player to experience all situations, a – d, and their consequent moods.

assumes the role of player – to be engaged, to ‘suspend disbelief’, to involve oneself in the game.

The game board is a screen, the game comprises plot and ‘actors’; actors represent either stereotype or character. It is necessary to distinguish between the two as they represent two different forms of role-play, in turn representing two approaches to game-playing. A stereotype conforms to a limited and standardised set of traits – a necessary component to any dramatic enactment by providing a readily-identifiable role which performs an equally identifiable dramatic function. In game playing terms the stereotype represents limited options in contrast to character, which represents extended options. The stereotype provides a player with limited and identifiable courses of action; the risk is that these limited options lead to overtly predictable courses of action. With the Harry Callahan ‘Dirty Harry’ stereotype, in a given situation, the options are minimised to acts of aggression; with the hero stereotype, to acts of heroism; with the ruthless villain stereotype to acts of villainy, etc.

Alternatively, character (Gr. *kharakter* – impression), with a range of traits and qualities, extends options and ‘opens up’ the game. By extending options through character, moves (speculating outcomes) are less predictable, yet a risk of extending options is to prevent a player speculating any outcome – the game is so ‘open’ that anything is possible.

The role-plays of game playing require stereotypes and characters – a subjectivity which is not one’s own but which a player makes into one’s own. The role is not that of identifying with a stereotype or character, but assuming the role of player which can identify (with) the dilemma of the game’s actors. Subjectivity is not necessarily man nor woman, nor necessarily human, but a fiction character *persona* – literally the actor’s mask through which sound emanates (*per sonae*); and figuratively, the means by which the viewer identifies traits. The measure of role-play is determined by the level of investment; by how much the viewer invests in the role of player.

Role-play is always individual, yet encompasses universal responses (as represented by the cognitive appraisals of story mood) and cultural responses; gender culture, generational culture, professional

culture, corporate culture, regional culture, national culture and the core values ('shared values' or 'common sense') these cultures prioritise. John Caughie suggests that with the dominance of US television production, the television viewer 'plays' at being American; an argument that extends to audiovisual narratives in general with regard to the Hollywood influence of global media, from television and cinema to digital technology. '... the insubordination of playing at being an American may, in fact, be nothing more than a licensed game, one of the permitted games of subordination.'

What Caughie describes as 'Tactics of empowerment and games of subordination: a play of subjectivity and identification...' is the role-play required of any game – the 'implied reader' of Chatman's narrative model, complying to an unwritten contract to assume a role required by the demands of the narrative. Caughie argues: '..this play of subjectivity, oscillation or doubling, with all the sometimes pleasurable, sometimes painful contortions which either process involves, is a more adequate way of understanding the 'colonised unconscious' than the simple and singular positioning which theories of media imperialism usually allow.' In other words, role-play is a means by which viewers may participate in the kind of audiovisual narrative games created by a Hollywood oligarchy without necessarily subjugating themselves to the culture that produces them. Role-play, whether allowing a viewer to acknowledge 'playing at being American', or other nationality, provides the pretence necessary to play the kind of cross-cultural game represented within audiovisual narrative, whether pertaining to gender, generation, region, class, race, profession – even playing a dog.

Pluto's Blue Note (1947), the cartoon story about a dog who can't sing, condemned for his efforts by birds, bees and grasshoppers. With the aid of a procured gramophone and a recording of Frank Sinatra, Pluto succeeds in convincing, not only the birds, bees and grasshoppers, but also an admiring 'fan club' of appreciative female dogs, that it is he who sings 'You Belong to My Heart.' If, as Caughie suggests, the viewer 'plays at being American,' the scenario describes a fulfilment of ambition through initiative – 'the American dream.' From an alternative cultural stance Pluto's fulfilment of ambition may be interpreted as gain through dishonesty, deceit and subterfuge. The reading may be at odds with the

Disney corporate culture of 'family values', yet in a game which positions the player's role as American, Disney, male, etc with the connotations such cultural tags imply, it is the player, regardless, who decides how much 'role' and how to play it.

5. Screens

Narrative Screens

Screen as Interface

An interface is a surface which makes a common boundary. A cinema screen forms an interface between the projector projecting images, and the viewer watching them. The monitor (television / video / computer) is the interface between viewer and image, and a game board is the interface which connects the game and the player. Narrative is linear but 'the interface design process is anything but linear.'

The first frame of the Chaplin – Campbell *Easy Street* sequence is both image and game board, exposition and interface. The image is divided in half by the lamp post – a diminutive Chaplin in the top left hand corner, and Campbell, who dominates the right half of the screen. Campbell wears an ill-fitting policeman's hat and in the street behind him lay the scattered remnants of police uniforms. The 'clues' necessary for understanding what has happened and for speculating what may happen are visually represented on-screen – including the telephone, the gas lamp and Chaplin's pristine uniform and truncheon. As player, the information on-screen is internalised, to be processed, absorbed, digested; → viewed and reviewed, and 'played.'

Edward Branigan describes the process by which a viewer creates a three dimensional world from 'a two dimensional wash of light and dark', and distinguishes the viewer's two main frames of reference: the space ←→ and time of a screen, and the space and time of a story world. Branigan rejects – what he describes as – a traditional 'top-down' perception model of describing the changes that occur during the conversion from the screen to the story world, which use 'a spectator's expectations and goals as principles of organisation.' Branigan's 'eight levels of narration', like Chatman, like Bordwell, distinguishes between story and discourse; enactment and perception, innenwelt and umwelt.

Vivian Sobchak suggests the phenomenology of the film viewing experience is dominated by three metaphors: the picture frame, the window and the mirror. Like the printed page these rectangular 'screens' provide the basis of perception. The in-frame/out-of-frame analogy, however, is by definition linked to modes of perception. André Bazin, on the other hand, disputes the screen-as-frame metaphor – the screen is not a frame like that of a picture, 'but a mask which allows us to see part of the event...' He writes: 'when a person leaves the field of the camera, we recognise that he or she is out of the field of vision, though continuing to exist identically in another part of the screen which is hidden from us.'

Phenomenology distinguishes between the external, the internal and affect; a screen play theory distinguishes between the game – the external narrative; the player – the internal experience; and response – the interpretations and meanings of that experience: the fusion of external screen narrative and internal 'narrative gravity.'

A screen play theory begins where perception theory ends. Screen play theory begins with the way the player responds to what is perceived; the process of what Franz Brentano described as judgement and affective attitude. Thus the screen need not necessarily define the physical entity of a screen, but serves as metaphor for the internal game board of narrative play.

Screen as Metaphor

Blind passenger: I do anything I want. I even go to the movies.

Taxi driver: The movies? What can you see at the movies?

Blind passenger: Sometimes I feel the film. And I listen.

In *Proof* (1991) Martin, who is blind, follows both the film narrative, and the 'narrative centre' of his interpreter friend, Andy, who is describing a slasher film (the fictitious *Blood Moon*) at the Drive-In: 'You know, if you analyse your feelings,' says Martin, 'you really do want the killer to get the girl.'

Visually perceiving a film is not a prerequisite to screen play. In Sweden, the Swedish Association for the Visually Impaired organise regular film screenings; members are allocated to a designated section of the auditorium and are provided with commentary from an interpreter via an infrared transmitter to the "viewers'" receivers. Interpreter Nikolas Sylander, lists the priorities of interpreting film narrative for the blind as: speaking as little as possible; noting entrance and exit of characters; presentation of characters; transitions of time and space, and precise descriptions of events during periods of on-screen silence. In effect, the interpreter narrates the tangibles of the film recording process as outlined in the script. 'The main difficulty for the interpreter', says SRF ombudsman Monica Ylmerudd, 'is not to interpret.' In other words, an interpreter 'playing' the film game, spoils the game for those playing with 'limited information.' Visual perception is not a prerequisite for comprehending a film narrative, and redundant in interpreting a film narrative. The prerequisite is not the screen itself, but an internal mental screen as an interface on which to 'play' the audiovisual narrative.

In literary theory a phenomenological model defines the process of the reader's creation of story world from words on paper. How different is the film viewing experience? Watching a film viewing requires a physical screen. So does television, so does digital computer fiction. Reading fiction allows a reader to create their own internal narrative mindscreen. Likewise listening to fiction being read aloud, or listening to someone telling a story. What distinctions can be made between the mindscreens of reading, imagining, dreaming and the physical screens which either reflect, or onto which are projected, visual fictions?

Bruce Kavin employs the term mindscreen to define the fiction film's first person narrative: 'a mindscreen is a visual (and at times aural) field that presents itself as the product of a mind, and that is often associated with systemic reflexivity, or self-consciousness.' In Kavin's view then, the mindscreen functions as interface between narrative and viewer, but from the perspective of the 'narrator.' Hence, a focus on the 'personal vision' cinema of Ingmar Bergman and Jean-Luc Godard. An alternative view is mindscreen as interface connecting game

and player, so when Kawin suggests 'mindscreens belong to, or manifest the workings of, specific minds,' the alternative perspective correlates mindscreen to that of the viewer. It is a perspective that returns to the applied psychology of Hugo Münsterberg and the precept that 'the photoplay tells us the human story by overcoming the forms of the outer world, namely, space, time and causality, and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion.'

Early cinema combined filmic discourse with a storyteller, a lecturer – a means by which the unfamiliar audiences could 'make sense' of the events projected before them. Initially the lecturer's role was more in keeping with carnival showmen attracting an audience, but as Tom Gunning writes, when films became more story-orientated 'the lecturer's new role consisted in aiding spectator comprehension of, and involvement with, the more complex stories, to narrate rather than hype the film as the first lecturers had done.' The story teller (lecturer) tells and the audience watches and listens – imbued in a narrative game which prompts the player to recreate a fictional world and play out the events of the narrative internally. The projection of a story onto the screen did not automatically ensure story comprehension: the cinema screen served to supplement the mental screen.

Similarly, Richard Abel suggests the process of 'making meaning' shifted from the exhibitor to the viewer, primarily as a consequence of the transition phase of early cinema, from 'attractions' to 'narrativization.' This 'transformation of film discourse' constructed a different kind of 'film narrator'; what Gunning describes as an 'interiorised film lecturer.' Abel suggests a combination of prior genres – what he describes as a bricolage model – introduced narrative continuity to the viewing public, by joining *actualité* material with dramatic reconstructions, and in the case of Pathé, a new hybrid format which 'cobbled together different genre elements and conventions... into a single marketable form.' (4 acculturation in Chapter 6).

Many narrative forms facilitated the emergence of a distinctive film narrative, not least the dramatised theatrical narrative. The process of internalising narrative bears comparison to theatrical enactment and its integration into a film narrative form. The following

example predates Kawin's concept of the cinematic mindscreens, yet correlates to his definition of mindscreens, which 'as a term attempts to articulate this sense of the image field as a limited whole, with a narrating intelligence off-screen.'

The photoplay's 'last minute rescue' game can be seen as a development of the melodramatic rescue game played out by such entrepreneurs as Max Mauvey in Paris and Augustin Daly in America. In his study of dramatic traditions that influenced cinema narrative, Rune Waldekranz describes Daly as a precursor to Griffith, developing the melodramatic last minute rescue for theatre audiences.

The climactic finale of the stage play, *Leah the Forsaken* (1863) dramatizes the plight of the heroine, Laura Courtland, who is locked inside a railway shack while two robbers are on their way to her family's home. Her only hope of help is Snorkey, but he has been overpowered by the robbers and tied onto the railway tracks. The express train is due any minute:

Snorkey: They are on the way to your cottage – Byke and Judas – to rob and murder.

Laura: I must get out! (Shakes window bars) What shall I do?

Snorkey: Can't you burst the door?

Laura: It is locked fast.

Snorkey: Is there nothing in there? No hammer? No crowbar?

Laura: Nothing! (Faint whistle in the distance) Oh heavens! The train! (Paralysed for an instant) The axe!

Snorkey: Cut the woodwork! Don't mind the lock – cut around it! How my neck tingles! (A blow at the door) Courage! (Another blow) Courage!

(The steam whistle is heard again nearer and a rumble on the tracks. Another blow)

There's a true woman for you! Courage!

(Noise of locomotive with whistle. The door swings open, mutilated, lock hanging, and Laura emerges, axe in hand)

Here! Quick!

(Laura runs and unfastens Snorkey. Headlights glare illuminates the stage)

Victory! Saved! Hooray!

(Laura leans exhausted against the switch)

And these are the women who aint to have a vote!

(As Laura takes his head from the track, the train rushes past with roar and whistle from left to right)

From the viewer's perspective the theatrical proscenium stage constitutes a semantic screen. It is the fixed point of reference where

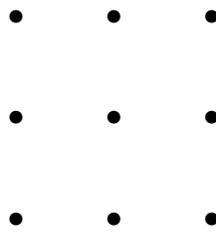
dramatist, Augustin Daly, plays a parallel development game by suggestion. Through the artifice of sound affects and verbal descriptions, the audience's focus of attention is cut from the oncoming train, to the tied and bound Snorkey, to the trapped Laura, with the different lines of action culminating at one central focal point. In other words, the Daly sequence is prompting the viewer to construct the kind of scene internally that, for example, D W Griffith constructed as last-minute rescue sequences in films from *The Fatal Hour* (August 1908), *The Lonely Villa*, (June 1909), and up to *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916).

Screen is both interface and metaphor – an internalised game board upon which the viewer plays out narrative games, which start 'out there' and culminate 'in here.'

Fields of Play

What kind of narrative games are available to the players that want to play them? How can such games be classified? I describe the screen as a game board for the viewer to 'play out' /negotiate scenarios in the context of narrative game play and problem solving. Richard Mayer outlines three aids to understanding problem solving as follows:

1. concretising – to convert it from an abstract form to a concrete form; thus 'concretising' is explicit to audiovisual narrative in which enactment is seen or heard; in literary narrative the problem may be implicit.
2. discovering – encouraging solution through discovery – like Gestalt learning-by-understanding method and the promise of 'superior transfer'. Mayer maintains the claims for the discovery approach are not clearly substantiated and suggests 'a guided discovery approach.' This, I suggest, is the function of plot and narrative syntax, and subsequent process of 'filling in the gaps.'(4 Chapter 2).
3. 'blockbusting' – to look at a problem in a new way.



The Nine Dots: with four straight lines, not lifting the pen from the paper, draw a line through each dot.

Later I shall consider narrative game playing 'skills' (4 Chapter 10) which include, in part, problem solving skills. The nine dot problem constitutes a screen, but the screen itself is a limitation to solving the problem. The player must construct 'a field of play' in order to find a solution. (4 Chapter 10: Mind Games). 'Fields of play' constitute the off-screen game play – strategies and game plans based on the conventions and norms pertaining to the type of game being played.

Within narratology systems for classifying and codifying narratives tend to reveal, paradoxically, the limitations of typology on the one hand, and the necessity of typology on the other, as a means of classification and the model as an aid to understanding. As film historian, David Cook, notes in his study of cinematic models; 'Nothing comes into being without precedent and nothing can be practiced without a paradigm.'

This notwithstanding, the limitations of narratological models become more apparent the further removed they are from the expediency of public consumption. For example, the Dewey decimal system of book classification remained hypothetical abstraction until adopted by US libraries in the late 1800s. In examining narrative game models I suggest an approach correlating to industry praxis, following a select overview of some narrative classification systems.

Linguist, Lubomir Dolezel, proposes four modal systems for the analysis of narrative texts, and as with any classification system there are apparent overlays.

Deontic system – concerned with permission, prohibition, obligation and stories about moral and legal restraints: interdiction, violation, punishment, reward and test. The character's course of actions are governed by norms, social restraints and the collective's perspective of moral right and wrong. Deontics – a branch of logic that deals with moral issues - which, in game terms, corresponds to Morality Games which test the conventions of social order.

Alethic system – concepts of possibility, impossibility and necessity. Often explore 'alternative possible worlds'. Fantasy characters – gods, spirits, etc perform actions in the fictional world. Characters from one fictional world might intervene in the events of another fictional world as in Alice in Wonderland.

Axiological system – concepts of goodness, badness and indifference – good vs evil. Stories about 'the quest'; a character wants something, and is prompted into taking action in order to get it. A modal base for 'a host of narratives, ranging from the expedition of the Argonauts to typical erotic narratives.' Axios – worthy – constitute Quest games; the 'good versus evil' contest where 'good' triumphs over 'evil'.

Epistemic system – the mystery or secret – the development from ignorance to knowledge leading to a moment of revelation. Concepts of knowledge, ignorance and belief. Most detective stories and murder mysteries come under this category; the Mystery Game or the Investigation Game.

Dolezel types narrative to 'system' – a complex whole, etymologically based on 'put together,' a set of connected parts. In this respect, a game is a system; a systemising of events and actions into a cohesive unit. Thus Morality Games, Fantasy Games, Quest Games and Investigation Games, constitute narrative systems, through which 'simulations' of real life dilemmas can be accommodated.

Similarly, classifications of games make up a system which is either inflexible, or so prone to overlapping that the classifications are relegated to hypothesis, not application. For example, like Beasley (see

above) Roger Caillois lists four game types which correlate to Dolezel's four modal systems for the analysis of narrative texts:

1. *agon games (Gr. agonia – contest) competitive games like football, chess, and other forms of two sided contests*
2. *alea games (Gr. alea – chance) games of fortune and luck, gambling; lotteries, bingo*
3. *mimicry – masquerade games, theatricals, role playing*
4. *ilinx – amusement games that provide loss of self control, as in amusement park rides*

These game classifications suggest phases as much as types of the fiction film game. The narrative as contest; the player/viewer speculates /hypothesises on probabilities and outcomes (chance); assumes roles (mimicry); involvement (loss of self). Even Caillois' 'either/or' definition of game playing as appealing to solving problems for the challenge they represent (*ludus*) or pleasure seeking abandonment (*paidia*), disregards the possibility – indeed likelihood – of both. The film viewer's oscillation between analytical observer to engaged participant, from probability speculation to dilemma resolving, is as apparent as between problem solving and pleasure seeking, at once on-going and concurrent. The defining of binary oppositions provides a scale of possibilities, rather than absolutes.

In *Six Guns and Society – A Structural Study of the Western*, Will Wright suggests that plot 'outlines the structure of symbolic communication... the structural requirements of human consciousness permits an analysis of human action...' Wright lists four basic plots:

1. *Classical: the lone gunfighter who saves the town or community from an outside threat*
2. *Vengeance: ill-used gunfighter finding no justice in society must seek vengeance*
3. *Transition: hero defends justice, rejected by society*
4. *Professional plot: hired guns take jobs for money*

The classical story, suggests Wright, consists of 16 functions of classical plot, and the list bears comparison to Vladimir Propp's analysis of the folktale (see below). The classical plot consists of the hero estranged from society, who is depended upon when the villain(s) threaten society; which is saved by the hero's actions. Thus classical plot consists of: hero, society, villain. A reading of this paradigm extends to the archetypal works of the genre; from *Shane* (1953) to *Pale Rider* (1985); and beyond the genre to films such as *The Seven Samurai* (1954), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), *Star Wars* (1977) and the plethora of fiction films which embrace, what Joseph Campbell defines as the archetypal narrative, the *monomyth*. (See below)

'That notion that all narratives can be successfully grouped according to a few forms of plot-content seems to me highly questionable,' writes Seymour Chatman. 'Work should proceed genre by genre for much is to be learned in comparing narratives from a content-formal point of view.' This approach, directed by other criteria, is the basis for this survey of plot typologies. For although advocating the genre approach, Chatman, nonetheless, proposes a typology consisting of six types of plot within two subdivisions of 'Fatal' and 'Fortunate,' which correlate, to some extent, to the story mood and outcome affiliations considered earlier.

'Fatal' plots include:

1. A good hero fails (result = despair)
2. A villainous protagonist fails (result = satisfaction)
3. Hero fails through miscalculation (result = pity)

Chatman lists 'Fortunate' plot types as:

1. Villain succeeds (result = disgust)
2. Good hero succeeds (result = moral satisfaction)
3. Hero miscalculates but ultimately succeeds (result = satisfaction; ie – restoration of moral order)

Like Chatman matching plot types to emotional response, Torben Grodal lists eight 'genres and moods in schematic form:' lyricism, canonical narrative, obsessional narratives, melodramas of passion,

horror, schizoid, comic, metafiction. Grodal suggests that 'narrative structure is a basic mental model which directly relates to the way humans make models of the relations between certain types of perceptions, memories, emotions, goals and acts.' Grodal's analysis of cinema narrative echoes the psychological approach of Hugo Münsterberg, appraising the viewer's ludic engagement and how 'the viewer divides himself into an empirical person anchored in a real life world, and a 'player' – 'persona' who participates in the 'narrative game.'

As suggested in the previous chapter, the classification of emotions is not without controversy – like genre, there is overlapping – as with the proposed eight distinct categories: anger, sadness, fear, enjoyment, love, surprise, disgust, shame. Of these, four (fear, anger, sadness, enjoyment) are defined by distinctive facial expressions, universally recognised. A correlation between emotional responses and plot types, is tenuous, but not implausible.

Further classification of plot includes Gerald Mast's suggestion that 'there are eight comic film plots, eight basic structures by which film comedies have organised their human material.'

1. *New comedy – young lovers wed despite obstacles: boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl*
2. *Aristophanic old comedy (i); parody, burlesque*
3. *Aristophanic old comedy (ii); reductio ad absurdum – a single mistake leads to chaos, eg Laurel and Hardy*
4. *Aristophanic old comedy (iii); 'an investigation of the workings of a particular society' – or social exposés.*
5. *The 'journey of the picaresque hero; Don Quixote, Jacques Tati, etc*
6. *'...riffing, goofing, improvised and anomalous gaggery' cinematic represented by the Keystone Cops, Beatles films, etc.*
7. *The comic use of the melodramatic or adventure romance.*
8. *The comic use of hubris – tragic ingredients.*

Mast emphasises the importance of 'comic climate' to establish preconditions and expectations regardless of seriousness of subject; 'an element of exposition' in other words. 'Climate' in the sense of 'prevailing conditions', an oft neglected key to narrative (game) comprehension, encompasses the breadth of information available to the player before making the first move. In other words, prior to the first plot

segment, or the first shot, the player's autistic preconditioning (enmity or empathy) is constructed around interpretations of film title, performers, director, nationality, and above all, story type. The quandary lies in the interfacing (to borrow a computer term) between the taxonomy on the one side, and the user-friendliness on the other. Aristotle defined two story types, comedy and tragedy, the Dramatica Screenplay System generates 32,768, Etienne Souriau suggests 200,000, and as early as 1919 Wycliffe Hill proposed ten million.

Dramatist, Georges Polti, formulated 36 dramatic situations, ranging from 'Supplication' to 'Loss of Loved Ones,' which in itself constitutes a 'matching up' game form. Polti cites Goethe's edict: 'Gozzi maintained that there can be but thirty-six tragic situations. Schiller took great pains to find more, but he was unable to find even so many as Gozzi.' Polti's classifications found a following even in the early Hollywood years with the publication of Frederik Palmer's Photoplay Plot Encyclopaedia in 1920, providing analysis and application of each of the 36 situations.

Classifications of plot, game, story or dramatic situation, function best, I suggest, when linked to the pragmatic considerations of the relationship between game and player. Genre, writes Stephen Neale, is 'a fundamental part of cinema's 'mental machinery' ... not to be seen as forms of textual codifications, but as systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject...'

As industry praxis shaped narrative agenda, it is industry praxis which shapes the agenda of narratives through genre. According to Richard Slotkin; 'The history of the Western as a film genre begins with the decision to imitate Porter's [*The Great Train Robbery*] and repeat its success... the production companies reified it as a formula.' Slotkin maintains that the new medium was integrated into 'the processes of formula and genre formation' which was already established in the printed mass media.

The earliest example of documenting game types, is, according to David Parlett, the *Book on Games of Chance (Liber de ludo alae)* written in 1564 by Girolamo Cardano. The anonymous *The Compleat Gamester* was published in 1674 but not until Edmond Hoyle's

publication of a *Short Treatise on Whist* (1742) later incorporated with his manuals on Backgammon, Brag, Quadrille, Piquet and Chess into the first omnibus edition in 1748, does game genre fulfil the criteria of outlining '...conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject...' Industry, in the case of Hoyle, being his professional status as a tutor in the game of whist, the text as description of play, and subject as the players, both established and aspiring.

The adage 'according to Hoyle,' synonymous with fair and rule-abiding play, persists to the present day, as have editions of the compendium. However, as Parlett points out, the original Hoyle's did not include rules of games, only their descriptions – editions subsequent to his death in 1769, have been 'piracy elevated into plagiarism, and plagiarism into tradition.'

Film game genre has followed industry praxis since the outset, changing and adapting to the prevailing market situation. The industry itself – whether Hollywood, Europe or elsewhere – has evolved from independent producers, to studios to the present day multi-national verticality embracing film, television, video, DVD and CD-Rom; genre has created 'nationality cinemas', world cinema, art house cinema.

'...that genres can intermingle does not, however, mean that there are no boundaries between them', write Bordwell and Thompson. 'Instead of abstract definition the best way to identify genre is to recognise how audiences and filmmakers at different historical periods and places, have intuitively distinguished one sort of movie from another. The combination of genres still implicitly recognises that there are distinct genres, with different rules on which filmmakers and film viewers have tacitly agreed.'

Where plot types either conform or not conform to their prescribed category, genre must accommodate all plot types the market can consume. 'Even the most ambitious directors cannot escape genres,' writes David Bordwell and the same must be said of the most ambitious films. Genre not only accommodates the 'Bergman game', the Godard game', the 'Fellini game', the 'Lynch game' – genre can/must embrace the hitherto unnamed and unclassified. Any emerging post-modern cross-genre film game awaiting a suitable epithet, is a film in a box ready to appropriate video store shelf space or an internet listing. Where once a

copy of Hoyles adorned the family living room as a catalogue of games and diversions, now it is Halliwells, Maltins and the TV Guide; Cinemania CD-ROM and internet video store printouts.

Game Plans

The basic story of classical fiction film narrative entails: someone wants something but something stops them getting it. There are two possible outcomes; (a) the protagonist overcomes the obstacle and gets what they want, or (b) the protagonist fails to overcome the obstacle and is defeated. Either outcome defines a moral premise: Outcome A = life affirmation; Outcome B = acceptance of limitations.

Topography measures ups and downs, of landscapes, forms, outlines, and lends itself to the measure of narrative and plot. A basic narrative topography constitutes a situation (flat) and a disruption (peak). Which correlates to the minimal narrative, as defined by Tzvetan Todorov; 'a move from equilibrium to disequilibrium and a return to equilibrium... The second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical.' Thus, the two elements of a narrative are; 1. a state (equilibrium), and 2. an event (a passage from one state to another), which Todorov defines as the 'disruptive event.'

If the minimal narrative is the most basic topography, the most common – the classical Hollywood narrative - is the three peak contour of the three-act drama. This corresponds to what Joseph Campbell defines as the monomyth – a narrative form 'presented with astonishing consistency in the sacred writings of all the continents.' The monomyth describes three phases of the hero's quest: Separation – Initiation – Return. The 'call to adventure' (separation) is followed by the trials of initiation, in turn followed by the return and reintegration into society.

The first stage describes the separation of the hero from his home and 'the call to adventure.' This is followed by the trials and victories of initiation. The third stage constitutes the return and reintegration into society. Without this final stage the hero has failed to integrate wisdom or pass his teachings on to others. Campbell cites the example of Prometheus who is trapped by his inability to integrate wisdom, crucified, 'on the rock of his own violated unconscious.'

'The norm of the monomyth requires that the hero now begins the labour of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may rebound to the renewing of the community.' Campbell's influence on Hollywood dramaturgy, (George Lucas' Star Wars script) extends to writers, critics and studio executives.

Whereas narrative topography defines dramatic highs and lows, narrative morphology addresses the form itself. Folklorist, Vladimir Propp's morphology of the folktale, attempts to define a universal (nomenographic) narrative trajectory. According to Propp the folktale is made up of 31 narrative functions (summarised below); a function he defines as an 'act of character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action.' Each function branches off into sub-functions of up to 20 or more, to provide a cohesive system for the syntagmatic analyses of selected texts.

Applications of Propp's system on film and television narrative include, Lubomir Dolezel to *The Killers* (1946), Peter Wollen to *North by Northwest* (1959), other film analyses: *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) and *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), Sarah Kozloff to television commercials, Arthur Asa Berger to the television series *The Prisoner*, John Fiske to various television series, including *The A Team* and *Bionic Woman*. David Bordwell is critical to this approach, maintaining that there is a tendency to readily assimilate Propp's schema in order to make it fit these 'functions' forcing narratives to comply with, what he describes as, an already generalised overview.

However Propp's approach can also be seen as an attempt to define a universal structure to narrative; the tenets of structuralism imply there is a grammar to narrative – a paradigm to which stories adhere. That Propp's model can be applied to a variety of narratives suggests a structural unity in the nature of storytelling.

Propp's Functions

* <i>Initial situation</i>	<i>Introduction of hero or members of family</i>
1 <i>Absentation</i>	<i>Family member absent from home</i>
2 <i>Prohibition</i>	<i>A prohibition is addressed to the hero</i>
3 <i>Violation</i>	<i>The prohibition is violated</i>
4 <i>Reconnaissance</i>	<i>The villain attempts reconnaissance</i>
5 <i>Delivery</i>	<i>The villain gets information on victim</i>
6 <i>Trickery</i>	<i>Villain attempts to deceive victim</i>
7 <i>Complicity</i>	<i>Victim deceived: unwittingly aids villain</i>
8 <i>Villainy</i>	<i>Villain harms family member</i>
8a <i>Lack</i>	<i>Family member lacks or wants something</i>
9 <i>Mediation</i>	<i>Misfortune made known: hero despatched</i>
10 <i>Counteraction</i>	<i>Seekers counteract</i>
11 <i>Departure</i>	<i>The hero leaves home</i>
12 <i>Donor's action</i>	<i>Hero tested: receives magical agent/helper</i>
13 <i>Hero's reaction</i>	<i>Hero reacts to actions of future donor</i>
14 <i>Magic agent</i>	<i>Hero acquires magical agent</i>
15 <i>Transference</i>	<i>Hero led to object of search</i>
16 <i>Struggle</i>	<i>Confrontation between hero and villain</i>
17 <i>Branding</i>	<i>Hero is marked</i>
18 <i>Victory</i>	<i>Villain is defeated</i>
19 <i>Liquidation</i>	<i>Initial misfortune or lack is vanquished</i>
20 <i>Return</i>	<i>The hero returns</i>
21 <i>Pursuit</i>	<i>A chase: the hero is pursued</i>
22 <i>Rescue</i>	<i>Rescue of hero from pursuit</i>
23 <i>Arrival incognito</i>	<i>Hero arrives unrecognised; home or away</i>
24 <i>Unfounded claims</i>	<i>A false hero presents unfounded claims</i>
25 <i>Difficult task</i>	<i>A difficult task is proposed to the hero</i>
26 <i>Solution</i>	<i>The task is resolved</i>
27 <i>Recognition</i>	<i>The hero is recognised</i>
28 <i>Exposure</i>	<i>The false hero or villain is exposed</i>
29 <i>Transfiguration</i>	<i>The hero is given a new appearance</i>
30 <i>Punishment</i>	<i>The villain is punished</i>

The critique levelled at Propp's model indicates the disadvantages of models generally – a model is only a partial and imperfect representation, inevitably with some areas of non-correspondence. Propp devised four 'theses' relating to these functions:

1. Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale.
2. The number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited.
3. The sequence of functions is always identical.
4. All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure.

In addition, the seven role figures in Propp's scheme include:

1. Villain – in conflict with hero
2. Donor – provides the hero with a magical agent
3. Helper – helps hero in solving difficult tasks
4. Princess – object of quest/King – assigns quest/difficult tasks
5. Dispatcher – sends hero on mission
6. Hero – on quest/fighting villain
7. False hero – treasonous figure, to be unmasked

Propp defines the hero as 'that character who either directly suffers from the action of the villain', or, 'who agrees to liquidate the misfortune or 'lack' of another person.' As an exercise in correspondences, Propp's model is applied here to *The Third Man* (1949).

The psychomachia of *The Third Man* between Holly Martins and Harry Lime is the result of Lime's action; Lime pretends to be dead in order to avoid the consequences of his crimes. Martins' situation is further complicated by involving himself in attempting to save Anna from the 'misfortune' of the Russian police. Under Dolezel's scheme *The Third Man* constitutes a deontic narrative; a morality tale, a dilemma game.

The Third Man begins with a description of time and place, Vienna 1946, then introduces Martins (function # 1). (The original script begins with Martins leaving the US by plane and stopping over at war-torn airports in Europe en route to Vienna). His friend, Lime, is dead, and introduced as 'the worst racketeer who ever made a dirty living in this city.' i.e. the villain.

Martins is prohibited to stay in Vienna. (f#3) He violates the prohibition and stays anyway. (f#4) Limes' friends contact Martins – reconnaissance (f#5). Kurtz re-enacts Lime's 'death' (f#7). Martins is deceived (f#8). Lime's girlfriend, Anna Schmidt, is arrested for possessing forged papers. It transpires Lime had 'sacrificed' Anna to avert the Russian police (f#9). Anna lacks official papers (f#10). Martins pledges his help. Anna has named Harry's doctor as an ally. He is 'despatched' (f#11).

Calloway questions Anna in order to uncover details of Lime's villainy (f#12). Meanwhile, Martins attempts to uncover the truth of Lime's death. The porter who saw the accident has refused to involve himself in the matter. Now he addresses Martins and says he will help him (f#14). The porter is murdered and Martins is forced to flee (f#15). At police headquarters Calloway enlightens Martins on the true nature of Harry Lime and his misdeeds (f#17). Martins sees Harry, and convinces the police that Lime is not dead after all. The first direct confrontation between Lime and Martins (f#18).

Martins agrees to help the police capture Lime. In return, Anna gets her papers (f#21). Anna refuses help, Martins prepares to leave. Calloway appeals to Martins moral resolve; he must betray his best friend in order that the police can capture him (f#26). On seeing some of Lime's hospitalized victims (f#27), Martins agrees (f#28). Harry meets Martins in a cafe – the 'villain is exposed' (f#29). In the pursuit of Lime in the sewers beneath the streets of Vienna, Martins picks up a gun and walks forth to mete out justice in the style of a stereotype hero from one of his own Western novels. He wears a 'new face' (f#30). Lime is killed (f#31). At the funeral Martins stops to address Anna – the girl he has fallen in love with. He is ignored – there is no 'wedding' (f#32), although Graham Greene's original script ended with 'her hand through his arm', but was persuaded by Carol Reed to amend it. ('... an

entertainment of this kind was too light an affair to carry the weight of an unhappy ending,' wrote Greene.)

Bordwell's suggestion that critics 'revise' or 'remold' Propp's scheme 'into a suitably allegorical sub-text' to support their own readings, is not necessarily a failing of how a 'film's surface patterning can be transposed into the fairy tale format.' Rather Propp's scheme constitutes a 'game plan' made up 'functions' 'moves' and 'pieces.' The morality reading of *The Third Man* is, like any other reading, a player option.

Whereby off-screen game types function as 'playing fields', narrative form (or 'morphology' in Propp's scheme) constitute a game plan, defined by the Oxford English reference dictionary as; 1. a winning strategy worked out in advance for a particular match. 2. a plan of campaign. The analogy of a cinematic narrative form to game plan (and the subsequent apparatus of production) remains, for the point of this thesis, in deference to the 'play' of the viewer.

Janet Murray, with a focus on digital narrative, suggests that Propp's 'formulaic underpinning makes folktales more intricate [allowing] storytellers to weave together multiple different story sequences without becoming confused.' Such is the function of a game plan – a plan of campaign, a strategy worked out in advance. Murray argues that Propp's work suggests that 'satisfying stories can be generated by substituting and rearranging formulaic units according to rules as precise as a mathematical formula.' This, I suggest, constitutes the devising of a game, rather than adhering to a game plan. The game plan is just that – a plan – the expectations provided by genre, dramatic structure, historical context, which provide knowledge whereby a viewer formulates a plan for play. A game-plan, however, does not provide a reading of the game's outcome, which a viewer can re-visit, re-read, misread, reinterpret, restate, reject or rewrite.

6. Cinema

Viewer Interaction

In 1916 Hugo Münsterberg observed that narrative film constitutes the fusion of technological and psychological play of projecting internal states of mind cinematically; how film 'tells us the human story by overcoming the forms of the outer world, namely, space, time, and causality, and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination and emotion.' The object of this chapter is to examine how the 'inner world' is addressed cinematically, the specifically filmic modes of viewer interaction linked to Münsterberg's 'internal states' – attention (subjectivity); imagination (scopophilia); memory (flashback) and emotion (intensity of experience).

- interaction through representing individual experience (subjectivity)
- interaction through coercion and the illicit gaze (scopophilic)
- interaction through the representation /evocation of events, past, future or imagined (memory)
- interaction through intensifying experience (experiential)

Modes of interaction through discourse constitute forms of screen play assimilated into film narrative generally, and highlighted in notable conjectural narrative film games specifically: subjectivity – which aligns the viewer to an individual experience in which screen play suggests the screen's field of vision is the viewer's field of vision – the point-of-view shot; scopophilia – which aligns the viewer to the illicit view of another person's field of vision through shot and countershot narration; recollection – which posit the viewer with subjective evocations of past events, or events imagined; experiential – which intensify the experience of film viewing through stimulation of the senses, primarily, but not exclusively, sight and sound.

Narrative modes of interaction – in contrast to discourse – address the viewer's familiarity with either the narrative or the narrative form; acculturation games – the re-vision of existing narratives to cinematic modes of discourse; reflexive games – which refer the viewer back to the game itself, either through manufacturing a game within the

game, or through Brechtian devices of deconstruction, disengaging the viewer from the fiction by revealing the fiction; and, the ludic narrative – in which the film narrative acknowledges a game scenario and characters as players.

Here it is necessary to distinguish modes of interaction from, for example, 'models of transition' and a 'subjective-image classification system,' (see below), as well as the classification systems outlined previously: 'film game types' (3Chapter 3), 'plot – response correlations,' (Chatman) 'genre – mood correlations' (Grodal); 'narrative systems' (Dolezel); and 'game types' (Caillois 4 Chapter 7).

Richard Abel defines four 'models of transition' from a 'cinema of attractions' to a narrative cinema, 1904 – 1907: the bricolage model (mundane events placed in a quasi-narrative context 3 Chapter 5); the comic chase film; 'the pleasure and pain of just looking: erotic films and others;' (discussed below), and dramatic and realist films.

A 'subjective-image classification system' according to Bruce Kawin, describes: 1. subjective camera ('share my eyes') exemplified in *Lady in the Lake* (1947); 2. point of view ('share my perspective') *The 400 Blows* (1959); 3. mindscreen ('share my mind's eye') *The Wizard of Oz* (1939); 4. self-consciousness ('share my reflexive perspective') *Persona* (1966). Kawin's system follows classifications of Christian Metz who describes; the purely mental image, the subjective image, the associational image, 'the most generalisable formula' (a fantasy sequence), the memory image (flashback).

A classification system is a model in itself, with the limitations of a model discussed earlier, and as such, is incomplete. Yet I suggest the following classifications function, firstly, as a typology of the audio-visual narrative game; secondly, to define conditions of play and all that is peripheral to screen play; and thirdly, as foundations for discourse around the games themselves.

Filmic modes of interaction are as many as the film games in which they are deployed; the following categories define specific discursive modes which began as turn-of-the-century film play, and integrated into narrative film game. The evocation of mental states suggested by Münsterberg – attention, imagination, memory and emotion – describe the psychology of the film viewing experience. Thus

the following examples constitute what I have termed conjectural narratives, in the sense that the discourse represents a narrative strategy that in theory should work as it is a strategy founded on a cinematic principle, but which, in effect, is experimental. *Rope* (1948), for example, is founded on the conjecture of making a feature film in what appears to be a single take (4see below). The conjectural narrative employs a discourse representing an attempt to accentuate or interpret cinematically, either (a) the evocation of a particular mental state; or (b) a theoretical aspect of cinema discourse that can be assimilated into narrative.

Subjectivity Games

Arguably the most overt form of audience and audiovisual interaction is through first-person subjectivity; with games designed to ensure the optimum of viewer participation through shared experience. Whereas the literary first-person identifies the storyteller, enhancing a sense of intimacy and immediacy; the cinematic first-person unifies the viewer with the experience.

Lady in the Lake (1947) is an experiment in 'subjectivity' made up of point-of-view sequence shots, with between-act pauses, returning the viewer to Marlowe's (Robert Montgomery) on-camera narration. Although discussed extensively elsewhere, a further evaluation of the film's point-of-view subjectivity pertains to implications of subjectivity in digital fictions to be covered in a later chapter. Montgomery's opening sequence addressing the viewer, establishes the 'conditions of play,' challenging and coercing the viewer to 'assimilate his identity' and at the same time compete in 'solving the mystery':

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

Initially, the first person camera can be deduced as a cinematic ploy emulating the first person narrative of Raymond Chandler's novel, a narrative strategy in other contemporary adaptations, *Murder My Sweet* (1944), *I Wake Up Screaming* (1941), both of which employ interrogation flashbacks in addition to the first person narration. *Lady in the Lake* attempts a 'total' viewer interaction, an experimental game that continues to divide critics and theorists. Robert Eberwein describes the film as 'unbearable. It breaks down the barrier between art and life.' Stuart Marshall says the film 'fails' because subjectivity cannot be restricted to a single character.

Bruce Kawin maintains that, 'subjectivity can be indicated through voice-over, subjective camera, and mindscreen,' yet, in his analyses of Orson Welles' abandoned *Heart of Darkness* and Montgomery's *Lady in the Lake*, concludes: 'the subjective camera is an overliteral approach to first-person cinema,' without specifying why. A counter argument, after all, could be made that the subjective camera is the least literal approach, and the most overtly cinematic. Vivian Sobchack attributes the 'failure' of the film to the fact that the film's 'perceptive and expressive behaviour is curtailed and constrained by bodily existence rather than enabled by it.' Edward Branigan in his extensive coverage of subjectivity in general, and *Lady in the Lake* in particular, concludes that the point-of-view shot 'actually limits what the spectator can easily know about the character.' Branigan argues that a single type of narration reduces the information available to the viewer – an objective narration provides a context. Branigan makes the comparison to the Freudian concept of 'personality' which is dependent on an Other or Others – 'a series of relative contexts that have taught a sense of "self."'

Certainly the exclusive subjectivity of *Lady in the Lake* reduces possibilities of interpretation by removing the focal point of psychological identification – the principal character. The shot – counter shot discourse of the cinema narrative enables the viewer to interpret through character, not as character; to identify with a character's dilemma, not necessarily with the actual character.

Robert Burgoyne notes that: 'The significance of identifying the source of the narrative discourse is a debate that film inherits from

the narrative analysis of literature, where the necessity of a concept of a narrative voice has also been challenged.' Either the film story 'tells itself'; a kind of non-personal narration, or, it is told from one person, like the private eye story - with occasional exceptions of when the viewer is allowed to see something the main character does not. In such cases the perspective changes from 'personal' to 'omniscient', or told from a number of different character perspectives.

Burgoyne writes that, 'impersonal narrative discourse involves two activities: it both creates or constructs the fictional world while at the same time referring to it as if it had an autonomous existence... The discourse of the impersonal narrator in film is always reliable in the most basic sense: this type of narrator cannot lie about the fictional world... The personal character-narrator does not create a world, but simply reports on it... Impersonal narration... is the mode characteristic of film...'

Murray Smith maintains that 'classical filmmaking has always depended overwhelmingly on facial expression and bodily gesture as the devices for conveying information about a character's inner states.' This is especially evident when the viewer is denied access to Marlowe's reactions in confronting suspects. 'POV shots do not always give us access to a character's subjectivity,' writes Smith. This lack of access is comparable to the blind person's experience of a film narrated by an inarticulate or insensitive interpreter (Chapter 5). As with the blind person, exclusive subjectivity provides the game player with two options: (a) 'I'm not sure what's happening - I give up!' or (b) 'I'm not sure what's happening - I hypothesise a scenario of my own!'

Edward Branigan argues that the film's aim 'to create an identity between spectator and character... limits what the spectator can easily know about the character.' Branigan maintains that 'counterpoint' is essential in enabling the spectator's awareness of character. '... a single type of narration reduces the range of information available...'

However, I suggest that limited information is not synonymous with narrative failure as many of the film's critics purport. The limitations of exclusive subjectivity contributes to the ambiguity of character readings and plot points, which in turn, is an extension of options. This is not in keeping with classical narrative 'clarity,' yet rather

than 'failure' the film remains an idiosyncrasy within the canons of classical narration, which as Smith points out, is so grounded in, not just shot – counter shot discourse, but facial expressions, gestures and the close-up.

The ongoing and unabated fascination and discussion around the film indicates its contemporary relevance, not least that a study of this form of exclusive subjectivity is necessary to appreciate the strategies and discourse of the contemporary computer game (4Chapter 8). Does *Lady in the Lake* actually 'fail' on the level of psychological engagement? The film maintains a line of narrative clarity comparable to other Chandler adaptations (cf. narrative disorientation in *The Big Sleep*, *The High Window*). *Lady in the Lake* goes to greater lengths to alleviate the risk of narrative miscomprehension by the on-camera explications at the narrative's strategic turning points culminating with each act. The film may be an anomaly within the classical narrative system, yet the assimilation of the same discourse as a narrative strategy in computer games, suggests a timely re-evaluation of exclusive subjectivity.

Scopophilic Games

'Strict rules of conduct prevail: the topless woman is expected to remain prone, rather than standing; she should not call attention to herself in any obvious manner; and men can only look if they appear not to be looking. Such are the rules of the game that have developed during the past 25 years.' This is how historian, Marilyn Yalom, describes the evolution of a 'breast watching game' – men observing topless women sunbathing on beaches – as an unwritten contract between the subject and the viewer. Similarly, within the cinema, various codes have evolved in order to legitimise the scopophilic gaze.

Richard Abel lists 'the pleasure and pain of just looking' as one of the models of transition to narrative, where 'the early erotic film turned the art of spectating itself into spectacle and made the voyeuristic nature of the cinema all that much more explicit.' An early Pathé film, *Ce que l'on voit de mon sixième* (1901), comprises six shots of a man looking through a telescope and the iris-framed views he sees, including a couple kissing and a woman undressing, ending with the voyeur's

reaction shot as he 'mimes his pleasure.' It is a mode of interaction that Alfred Hitchcock would later describe as 'the purest expression of a cinematic idea.' *Rear Window* (1954), he told François Truffaut, provided 'a possibility of doing a purely cinematic film. You have an immobilised man looking out of the window. That's one part of the film. The second part shows what he sees and the third part shows how he reacts.'

Rear Window presaged the 'new voyeurism' of television; 'a film about people watching people,' in which sub-plot characters serve two main functions: firstly, as representations of Jeffries' own 'views' on marriage and relationships – a gamophobia which culminates with husband murdering wife; and secondly, as windowed frames re-enacting imitations of television dramas, each with their own presentation, conflict development and resolution. Each window suggests, both for Jeffries and the viewer watching Jeffries, its own elaborate screen play: through one window frame, a murder mystery drama (did Thorwald kill his wife?); through another, a romantic comedy (Miss Torso and her suitors, finally reunited with Stanley); a melodrama (Miss Lonelyhearts); situation comedy (the newlyweds); domestic soap opera (married couple with dog); and so on. Similarly, Jeffries' relationship to Lisa takes on a new perspective when Lisa is viewed from a distance. Through the macabre screen play observed via the scopophilic eye of Jeffries's overtly phallic telephoto lens, Lisa becomes an object of erotic interest. When they're in the same room he regards her with indifference. Lisa is more interesting as 'screen play' than as flesh and blood individual.

The film is a metaphor for both cinema, and the viewer construction /reconstruction of narrative. Nurse Stella's accusation that 'we're becoming a nation of peeping toms' is directed as much to the viewing public as to Jeffries, for as he is an immobile but self-willed observer to the scenarios played out in the apartment windows facing his own, so too is the viewer watching in self-imposed volition, the scenarios portrayed on the screen. The relationship between Jeffries and Lisa Fremont is comparable to that of the film maker behind the camera and the performer in front of the camera, as well as the viewer watching the screen validating their voyeurism.

Thomas Leitch lists 'Cat and Mouse' as a Hitchcock game, appropriated to *Rope*, but Lisa's game with Jeffries, as Jeffries' with

Thorwald, fits the epithet. The viewer assimilates the Jeffries – Thorwald ‘cat and mouse’ game, aligned with Jeffries’ game of chance and probability – a bivalent scenario of ‘did Thorwall do it or didn’t he.’ The viewer is posited with the same kind of strategic speculation, with plot and sub-plots, as each sub-plot leads to a dramatic culmen. Thus the viewer is prompted to speculate over options, validated or repudiated in the narratives’ divergent closures. The speculation/dilemma scenarios reiterate the overall structure; as the narrative oscillates between validating or repudiating Jeffries’ own game of speculation constructed around Thorwald. Like Jeffries, the viewer is prompted into speculations around narrative fragments – a screen play based on illicit glimpses through rectangular frames.

Psycho (1960), a game with the audience – a film for filmmakers according to Hitchcock, addresses both the scopophilic mode of audience interaction, as well as the established paradigm of causal film fiction. The game manipulates the viewer so trained in classic structure that they are ‘played upon.. to control their thoughts..’ into identifying with both intrigue (stolen money – what happens next?) and dilemma (love or duty?) of the apparent principal, Marion. The dramatic sway, the rhetoric of *Psycho*, and story (anti-) logic, relies on the viewer trained in character investment, despite that ‘in the whole picture there isn’t a single character with whom a viewer might identify.’ The shock does not rest in the violent murder of a woman in a shower, but rather the murder of the audience enterprise – the viewer’s investment in the main character for the first half of the narrative.

The narrative perspective is aligned to Marion (particulars concerning her private life are revealed to the viewer that will not be known by anyone within the closed fictitious world of the narrative); her murder becomes an assault upon the viewer, a disruption that under the familiar strategies of classical film narrative, signals ‘game over’. To remain ‘in the game’ the viewer’s perspective transfers to Norman, as he attempts to conceal ‘Mother’s’ crime. For a further sequence, the narrative perspective remains with Norman, then shifts to an ‘impersonal’ perspective as Marion’s boyfriend, Sam Loomis, and Marion’s sister, Lila, consider steps to trace Marion’s disappearance. The subsequent narrative sequence is from the perspective of the private

detective, Arbogast. Arbogast's subjectivity, as earlier with Marion, amplifies the dramatic impact of his demise.

'The game with the audience was fascinating,' says Hitchcock, '... I was playing them, like an organ.' The game the audience plays with Hitchcock is no less fascinating (cf. Spoto, Modleski, Wood, Bordwell, Truffaut, etc), equally so the game the audience plays with the 'Hitchcock film', in this instance, *Psycho*. Leitch calls Hitchcock's game 'Tails You Lose'; a black comedy where 'the obsessive paranoia of Marion Crane is merely a pretext for Hitchcock's most monstrous joke on both her and the audience.' The joke is a practical one, borne of duplicity, of two-sidedness; of creating the conditions of play for an established game form on the one side, and thwarting the players on the other, not through remiss, but deliberation; 'a treacherous re-writing of the narrative contract.' The joke of *Psycho* is played at the expense of players too well versed in the strategies of classical film narrative.

In contrast, *Peeping Tom* (1959) is played out in deadly earnest, with Michael Powell himself playing the psychoanalyst father – the game-master whose psychological obsessions created Mark. Mark's private viewings, his day time job in a film studio and the nebulous divisions between pornography, mainstream cinema, voyeurism and murder, which make up Mark's world, add up to a polemic inquiry into just what kind of game the viewer is playing. *Psycho*, as screen play, relies on the viewer's 'training' in classical Hollywood narrative in order to play with viewer identification /investment. *Peeping Tom* on the other hand, is not the 'joke played at the audience's expense'; – it is a game of poena, of pain and punishment; Mark's game of filming female victims in the throes of death is analogous to the director's power of manipulation over the viewer. For Powell this is a serious business, for Hitchcock, play.

Bruce Kawin suggests that Hitchcock's play in *Psycho* is '... a very complex play of moral consciousness at work... the audience's complicity in choosing what to look at is usually left unstated,' and cites *Rear Window* as 'a relevant exception.' The 'complex play' that distinguishes these two films, I suggest, is the distinction of options through discourse; the 'psychotic' coercion of Norman Bates' front room peep-hole – Marion (ocularisation), contra the rear window sweep of

courtyard frames – the community (focalisation); a limited option game contra a multiple option game. The difference is between 'how to watch' in the limited option game, and 'who to watch' in the multi-option game.

In 1954 – a transitional year in US television history – *Rear Window* was released at cinemas, while on television *The Twelve Angry Men* was broadcast on the CBS network. Originally a Studio One 'live' television play (directed by Frank Schaffner) it was remade for the cinema in 1957, written and co-produced by Reginald Rose and the directorial debut of Sidney Lumet. *12 Angry Men* provides twelve divergent judicial readings of one scenario. In *Rear Window* the viewer is invited to participate in the interplay between Jeffries' and the window framed narratives he watches; in *12 Angry Men* the viewer's 'illicit gaze' is directed behind closed doors to witness the 'narrative breakdowns' of the jury members involved in a single fragmented scenario.

In the pre-credit sequence the judge summarises the case of an 18 year old Hispanic youth accused of murdering his father. The twelve jurors retire to the jury room; with the exception of the court house exterior shots which begin and end the narrative, the duration is contained within the four walls of the jury room. Initially the issues of the drama centre on narrative and plausibility. Speculations centre on 'is the youth guilty or innocent?' 'did he commit the crime or not?' 'what evidence comes up next?' This is a narrative subterfuge, however, affected by an extended extreme close-up of the youth watching the jurors rise and leave the court room in the film's pre-credit sequence. The narrative focus is twelve fold – the articulations/performances of the twelve jurors disclosing twelve disparate internal narratives.

In *Reconstructing Reality in the Courtroom*, Bennet and Feldman suggest that the 'reconstruction of reality' is founded on the overall plausibility of the story, rather than specific elements. Yet courtroom dramas, whether fictionalised or televised, suggest that the predominant narrative impetus is – as with Hollywood narrative – providing an audience with an ending they want. Bennet and Feldman conclude that 'the key issue is how the chosen definition fits within the competing accounts of the incident.' Dramatic structure of the courtroom drama consists of setting, concern, central action and resolution, a paradigm in accord with the film narrative game matrix.

The assessment of inferences – around which 12 Angry Men's narrative game is constructed, begins with juror #8's single 'not guilty' vote. The jurors are spectators to a performance and provide their own idiographic accounts of that performance. Juror #8 does not reject the possibility of the boy's guilt, but maintains there is reasonable doubt; juror #8's function is not to provide a reading of the narrative (the boy is guilty / the boy is not guilty) but to suggest there is no definitive reading, only readings. His role is to extricate the idiographic narratives of each juror; it is not the youth's story subject to dissection, but the internal narratives of the viewers.

In his evaluation of courtroom pragmatics contra courtroom narrative, Bernard Jackson suggests that 'courtroom enunciations... are not mediated through the content of the stories of being told; they constitute an independent level of narrative discourse – a filter, even, through which the content of the stories told is translated.' During the analysis of case specifics, juror #3 remarks; 'this is not an exact science.' As the solitary 'guilty' vote, juror #3's summary of 'the whole case' transforms to a diatribe around his own dysfunctional relationship with his son, a projection of his own internal narrative (son rejects father) onto the boy accused of his murdering his father. He realises, as the remaining jurors already have, that 'the whole case' is his own and not the courts. Twelve characters hear the same story and retell twelve different stories slanted by their own 'centre of narrative gravity.'

Peter Biskind reads the film as pluralism contra ideology where the jurors, like divergent groups within American society, 'could adjust their differences by reasoning together, if they could only avoid ideologising their conflicts.' Davies leads the representatives of a cross-the-board political scale into a negotiation with the narrative – playing with the story leads into multiple scenarios that address possibilities in favour of ideologies. 'It was the glory of America that in the fifties, ideology was dead,' writes Biskind.

Updating his 1950s television play Reginald Rose's made for TV version (Twelve Angry Men, 1997) with Jack Lemmon in the Henry Fonda role – provides a post O J Simpson fantasy game of how the US judicial system could work. Jurors negotiate the system as much as the case; and from position (multi-racial working class) rather than ideology.

The role of Davies is to lead the negotiation through the narrative based on interests (not position) grounded in social background, community ties and obligations, thus enabling an otherwise disparate group to come to the 'right' decision.

That scopophilia remains as a predominant mode of audiovisual narrative interaction has to do with the 'sanitising' of the clandestine look through (a) a surrogate viewer (b) transgression and punishment (c) desire and oppression. Narrative provides the context for the illicit gaze; scopophilia, as a game, provides the safe space for 'playing at' and 'pretending,' rather than the illicit act of 'doing.'

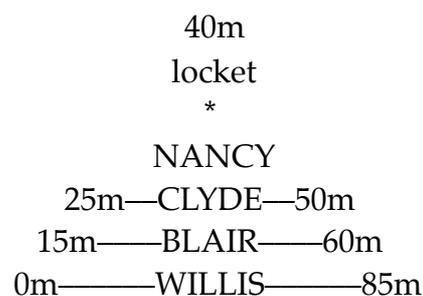
Recollection Games

The flashback is 'an objectification of the memory function,' wrote Hugo Münsterberg, obeying 'the laws of the mind than those of the outer world.' The flashback – or cutback as it was then termed – was an established cinematic device when Münsterberg's *The Photoplay* was published in 1916, despite the pre-teen cinema's nebulous distinction between 'vision' scenes and 'cutback' scenes. In addition, the subjective recollection as a narrative device was familiar to audiences of melodramatic plays, the 19th century novel and turn of the century comic strips.

The conjecture of the *The Locket* (1946) as a psychological evocation of memory lies in the extent of recollections assimilable within a recollection game. Both discourse and narrative reveal a parodic element; the discourse in that it comprises three 'recollections' within a narrative framework, each contained within the other (an extreme use of the flashback device, by any standard); and the narrative in that sequences parody their own dilemma: Nancy returns from a film 'about a schizophrenic who kills his wife and doesn't know it...' she tells her husband, psychiatrist Dr Blair. 'You'd never guess how it turns out' she continues; 'Now it may not be sound psychologically, but the wife's father is one of the...' Blair interrupts, clearly not interested. David Bordwell refers to 'laying bare the device,' a term borrowed from Russian formalist criticism, and 'a marked improvement on the currently fashionable idea of "reflexivity."'

In *The Locket* the term is appropriate (though less so in other examples – see reflexivity, below) as the narrative device is itself the locket, ‘laid bare’ at the precise midpoint of the story. The memory game of *The Locket* is structured around a Russian doll scenario of four stories containing three embedded flashbacks, with the kind of meticulous symmetry Racine deployed with his version of Phaedra. The opening of the locket, which reveals the true identity of Nancy, occurs both at the film’s midpoint, and the midpoint of Nancy’s own flashback/confession. Nancy’s flashback, in turn, is narrated by her one time lover, the artist Norman, whose story is in turn narrated by psychiatrist, Dr Harry Blair to Nancy’s prospective groom, John Willis. Blair’s narrative – some 60 minutes of screen time – takes place immediately prior to the wedding.

Maureen Turim rejects a traditional psychoanalytical reading of the film, and the narrative’s embodiment of ‘prevailing popular Freud-ianism,’ in favour of ‘the crypt’ concept; ‘the embedding of secrets... narratives that fold through absurd convolutions.’ Nancy’s duality is identified at the outset when an astrologer describes her positive ‘Scorpio qualities’ when Willis is called away, oblivious to the apparent negative qualities: ‘cruel destructive, vindictive.’ The narrative ‘problem’ is Nancy’s character (and its unveiling); the duality of the character defines the narrative structure.



Up until the mid-point, and the dramatic arc leading to the opening of the locket, the narrative strategy affords Nancy the benefit of doubt – in the word’s true sense of double-sided – the second half constitutes a suspense game of how the different men contend with the revelation of Nancy’s schizophrenia. Turim writes that ‘the locket lies at the centre of encryptment and circulates as symbol affecting all other symbolisation...’ thus, ‘the locket is also a lock for the filmic chain.’

The Locket is a recollection game centred around character: the narrative problem is centred around 'who is this person?' – a conjecture founded on three men trying to unlock 'the mystery' of Nancy. Consequently, The Locket is comparable to the flashback as narrative game device employed in *Citizen Kane* (1941), and the journalist's attempt to unravel 'the mystery' of Kane; and in *The Killers* (1946) and the investigation conducted by the insurance agent. Recollection games centred around story – as opposed to character – employ the same device but directed to 'the problem' of event, rather than person: 'what really happened?' not 'who is this person?'

In *Rashomon* (1950) a samurai and his wife are attacked in a forest by a notorious bandit, Tajomaru. The samurai is killed, and the wife raped. Tajomaru is caught and tried. A woodcutter who witnessed the attack, tells his version to a priest as they wait out a storm at the Rashomon Gate, subsequent to the three versions narrated by the principal 'players' at the trial. Each version reiterates a character's self-interest with the possible exception of the woodcutter, although nor is his account offered as the definitive version of the events that took place in the forest. The wood-cutter does not offer objectivity – or necessarily the definitive option for the viewer, only a subjectivity removed from the three principals. As Maureen Turim suggests, 'plausibility and identification... remain highly subjective investments on the part of the audience.' *Rashomon's* 'world bereft of truths or morality,' is also a world of versions, where 'deception of memory' is the articulation of an individual 'narrative centre.' Thus the Rashomon Gate, the juror's room, the courtroom, the courtyard of window frames, function as metaphor for the audiovisual narrative and the individual 'frame of reference.' Having pieced together the whole picture, the viewer option moves to the kind of moral interpretations played out in *The Story of Lucy and Kind Hearts* and *Coronets*.

In an updated version of the story, *Iron Maze* (1991), the viewer is addressed to the cultural issues around a Japanese magnate taking over a Pennsylvania steel mill. The magnate recovers from a near-fatal assault to reveal that the suspected steelworker 'bandit' is not the culprit, rather, he is the victim of 'a stupid accident.' In this version issues of subjectivity and truth are incidental to cultural reconciliation

and alienation: while the male characters 'bond' (policeman, magnate, steelworker and steel-worker's son), they do so through alienating Chris, the American wife of the Japanese magnate (Sugita) and would-be lover of the Pennsylvania steel-worker (Barry). If truth-seeking overcomes differences of nationality, the narrative suggests, it can only accentuate differences of gender.

Bruce Kawin's reading of *Rashomon* concerns four main narrators providing selective accounts – narratives that best serve their own 'narrative-self.' '...truth, like selflessness, does exist somewhere,' concludes Kawin, when, in regard to narrative, truth exists, unlike selflessness, only in the 'self.' Regardless the strategic rationale of the narrative, the fiction game is shaped by the personal, the idiographic, by the participating player rather than the game itself.

Experiential Games

The 'experiential games' of the cinema intensify the experience of film viewing through sentient stimulation, primarily, but not exclusively, sight and sound.

'Staring someone out' is a game between two people who maintain sustained eye contact without blinking. The first one to blink, loses. A blink lasts between 290 and 750 micro-seconds, with an average of 300 - 400 micro-seconds. Each individual has their own frequency rate of blinking, yet the rate is constant providing the situation remains unchanged. The majority of adults in a relaxed state blink 12-16 times a minute, or approximately every 4 - 5 seconds. The blinking reflex can be halted for a time with conscious effort, but few people can resist blinking even for as long as a minute. A viewer watching a film can readily assimilate a film edit, which occurs about every two to ten seconds, lasting .04 seconds. The average length of a take in a commercial feature film is about ten seconds. The 'long take' sequence shot becomes apparent, even to the untrained viewer, after about a minute.

The illusion of *Rope* is of a film consisting of a single take lasting 80 minutes. As a camera magazine holds ten minutes of film, eight sequences were joined together at unobtrusive points (one take ending at a close-up on someone's back, and the next take beginning at

the same point) to give the impression of a continuous take. 'I undertook *Rope* as a stunt', Hitchcock told Truffaut; 'I got this crazy idea to do it in a single shot... It was quite nonsensical because I was breaking my own theories on the importance of cutting and montage. However, the mobility of the camera and the movement of the players closely followed my usual cutting practice.'

Like *Lady in the Lake*, *Rope* remains a one-off experiment within the classical Hollywood cinema, a 'staring out game' demanding the player's uninterrupted gaze from beginning to end. Again Münsterberg's contention that cinema is an expression of human psychology, seems relevant to a narrative tenet (based on Patrick Hamilton's stage play) expressed in the professor's polemic of Nietzschean 'privilege of murder' presaging the wide-eyed stare of failing comprehension. Michael Holst's study, applying Münsterberg's concept of cinema's simulation of psyche, suggests that with *Rope* the camera is endowed with character, which I would modify at least to ludic characteristics, not character; the playful eye, watching but never involved.

The conjecture of *Rope* is founded on the sentient experience of the gaze – to look and not blink; the conjecture of *The Thief* (1952) relates to sound – to hear, but not words. *The Thief* is a wordless game in which the taciturn narrative strategy enforces visual and audial cues unaided by the spoken word. In *Rope* a case for the long take as psychological motivation, can be made as a narrative strategy to sustain the gaze of the viewer's eye. Whereas the camera is 'a roving eye' the staring gaze of the long take encourages the seeking out of the concealed murder weapon, a piece of rope, and the seeking of meaning to the act of murder in the perpetrator's faces. Similarly, a case can be made for *The Thief* and the psychologically motivated world of silence and taciturn understandings.

Ray Milland plays the nuclear scientist suspected of treason, under FBI surveillance, ensnared in an isolated, estranged and manifestly masculine world of science and espionage, of laboratories and secret meetings – a world bereft of conversation, of personal relationships. The telephone ring is a signal, a word on the back of a

cigarette packet, instructions to action, quick gestures in shadow cast streets with nameless men.

Conjectural film narrative of the B feature studio fringe of the Hollywood industry resulted in ventures in subliminal cinema; a technique of attempted audience manipulation which, in the US, was banned within in a year of its inception. 'Psychorama' was the name of the subliminal image process first used in *Terror in the Haunted House* (aka *My World Dies Screaming*) in 1958, and produced by William Edwards. The process was described by actor, Gerald Mohr, in a promotional trailer for the subsequent and final film using the same technique, *A Date with Death* (1959), as: '...a revolutionary new process called "Psychorama," or subliminal communication... In "Psychorama," which was developed by Dr Robert Corrigan and Mr Hal C Becker, by using this machine [indicates a projecting device], a word or a picture can be flashed on the screen so fast that although you don't see it consciously, it can put information directly into your mind. The only purpose of Psychorama is to increase your enjoyment of the picture, by making you feel fear and suspense as you've never felt them before. These subliminal symbols are 100% safe. They may frighten you but they won't hurt you.'

Mohr plays a vagrant who takes the identity of a murdered police agent, and works undercover to expose a gang of local racketeers. Fight and murder scenes are interspersed with words ('kill', 'blood', 'death') and images of skulls, snakes, knives are flashed onto the screen for 1/50th second. The process, supposedly proven by advertisers to be effective in 'suggesting' that audiences buy their products, was banned by authorities shortly after the film's release. For *The Tingler* (1959), producer/director William Castle devised 'Percepto' where selected cinema seats were wired to provide the occupant with mild electric shocks.

If these short lived processes suggest anything about engaging the viewer, it is in the line that strategies of narrative are more persuasive than effects, as demonstrated with the release of *Psycho* the following year. Interaction is best understood as a player option, dependent upon the viewer's willingness to engage, and how much the viewer is prepared to invest in character and story.

Narrative Interplay

Narrative is not essential to cinema, but the cinematic experience is defined principally through narrative. Richard Abel's 'models of transition' from a 'cinema of attractions' to a narrative cinema – addresses the phasing of emphasis from spectacle to story. Tom Gunning defines 'the narrator system' as a 'synthesis of filmic discourse' in a 'move to a cinema of narrative integration.' From 1908 'story films' became the predominant mode in the United States, surpassing productions of comedies and chase films.

Story telling strategies employed in cinema narrative existed before the cinema; by the early 1900s screen play emphasised narrative, not form; game, not play. Robert Ray suggests that Hollywood subjection of style to narrative depended on historical accident: 'Had cinema appeared in the Enlightenment or Romantic period, it might have assumed the shape of the essay or lyric poem. Instead, it adopted the basic tactic and goal of the realistic novel. Conscious 'style' would be effaced both to establish the cinema's illusion of reality and to encourage audience identification with the characters on the screen.'

Ray's argument illustrates the diversity of factors that combine to create what was to become the classical form of cinema narrative. In *Visible Fictions* John Ellis writes: 'Cinema does not take over the nineteenth - century novel's form, only certain aspects of it. It has to develop its own procedures and emphases.' Kristin Thompson suggests the narrative style of the scenario was more influenced by the short story than the novel or theatrical drama. The era of the short story, the decade following the first short story handbook published in 1898, contributed to a narrative style which included unity, stringency of plot, and 'a single central dominant incident.'

'The aim of the short story is to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means that is consistent with the utmost emphasis,' wrote critic Clayton Hamilton in 1904, an instruction comparable to the film scenario paradigm. Alfred Hitchcock similarly maintained that the short story was the narrative form closest to the fiction film which 'sustains one idea that culminates when the action has

reached the highest point of the dramatic curve... a short story is rarely put down in the middle, and in this sense it resembles a film.'

'Models for structuring a film came, not from drama and fiction in general,' writes Thompson, 'but specifically from late nineteenth century norms of those forms...' and that 'by 1917 many features were using stories with fewer lengthy gaps of time between scenes.'

From the profusion of theoretical stances regarding the formation of cinema's narrative game it is evident that the game itself, although exclusively cinematic, represents a fusion of narrative strategies adopted and adapted from a breadth of narrative forms. A comparison of cinematic narrative strategies to those of television (Chapter 7) and digital fiction (Chapter 8) should further illuminate the specifics of the fiction film game. In this chapter my objective is to define modes by which narrative – as opposed to spectacle – is the carrot that lures the viewer to the cinematic experience, and the games into which narrative is assimilated. These I define as:

- acculturation – the film narrative reconstitutes or revises a familiar narrative in a version tailored to the attributes of film narrative and discourse
- reflexivity – the film narrative refers back to its own morphology
- ludic narration – film narrative is a self-acknowledged representation of a game and characters are self-defined players

Acculturation

Acculturation describes the process of adapting to the conditions of a particular culture. Inasmuch that audiovisual fiction constitutes a narrative 'sub-culture' (a shared value system), with an agenda, discursive 'game rules' and 'conditions of play', film re-visions from a breadth of sources are the result of the acculturation process.

William Uricchio and Roberta Pearson describe the 'reframing' process of film's assimilation into 'culture' within the context of film industry's drive for respectability. Strategies include how the industry forges a 'discursive alliance with the institutions of cultural

reproduction,' how '...signifying practices were brought into line with those of 'respectable' entertainments,' and how the production of quality films were 'sufficiently polysemic to ensure a wide audience.'

According to Uricchio and Pearson the Vitagraph quality films 'constitute one of the clearest instances of the massification of high culture attendant upon the film industry's full incorporation into American society.' The strategies employed bear comparison to the acculturation/re-framing process of television, video, computer games, Internet and any 'narrative-sustaining' emergent technology. Uricchio and Pearson note that 'the moving picture... became a primary focus for the advocates of both the repressive and the assimilationist strategies for dealing with the cultural crisis' and a subsequent 'reframing' required that films align themselves more to the Broadway stage.

The cinema's cultural reframing (in this context I use the term 'acculturation') was effected primarily through writing (literary adaptations), performance (theatrical arts), and reenactment (historical narrative). Uricchio and Pearson suggest that reframing called for the best writers for the uplift of the industry. Also, during the transitional period, cinematic acting became increasingly theatrical to resemble the acting of the Broadway stage coinciding with a more psychological approach to character in film. From 1908 onwards the production of historical films elevated the status of moving picture shows which until 1905 were exhibited at vaudeville, travelling shows, fairgrounds or churches. Within a few short years film was 'transformed from a cheap amusement despised and feared by many 'respectable' Americans to a form of entertainment appropriate for the most respectable American...' through a cultural reframing which culture cannot be attributed to any single factor but to the assimilation of literature, history and religion. From a game playing perspective the concept of frames ('reframing' and 'frames of reference') are integral in enabling audiences to come to terms with the game. A frame would be the play, short story or stage version, just as television and digital environments later required reframing ('remediation', 'cultural interfacing') strategies to lure new players to the game board screen.

Cinema's narrative reframing, I suggest, constitutes a similar acculturation process where diverse factors converge into the shaping of

a commercially and culturally acceptable story-telling form. What is arguably the first cinema narrative, the Lumières' *L'Arroseur Arrosé* (1896), for example, appeared first as a cartoon; similarly, the oft-cited *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (1903), was adapted from an earlier UK film *The Countryman's First Sight of the Animated Pictures* (1901) featuring an established music hall character, in turn taken from a four frame cartoon story, 'Uncle's Mistake' (10.12. 1898). 'Uncle Josh', in turn, was an established and popular character at the turn-of-the-century with 44 Edison cylinder monologues recorded, and an additional three Edison films, including *Uncle Josh in a Spooky Hotel* made in 1900. *Uncle Josh* monologues and films embraced the city–country dichotomy – *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* is as much play with character as with form, and subsequently readily acculturised into the new medium.

George Méliès' began adapting fragments of contemporary narratives while incorporating the illusory tricks – his stock in trade. Some film productions, such as *The Devil's Castle* (*Le Manoir du Diable*, 1896) adapted from Percy Shelley's *The Vampire* and the H. Rider Haggard extract *The Pillar of Fire* (*La Danse de Feu*, 1899), the transformation sequence of *Ayesha* from *She*, first published in 1887, had previously been stage spectacles. Paul Hammond suggests that through the productions of Méliès the cinema can be regarded 'as a medium animated by marvellous moments owing little allegiance to the banal narrative structures that hold them prisoner.'

'Banal' notwithstanding, Méliès advancing cinema through use of narrative or narrative fragments, relied upon the selection of stories familiar to the audiences of the day. Other adaptations included *Robinson Crusoe* (1902), the adaptation of H G Wells' *A Voyage to the Moon* (1902); in fact a sizable proportion of Méliès 500 productions (of which about 150 survive) are narrative based, rather than the prestidigitation films with which he is frequently associated. Since Méliès first year of production in 1896, in which he produced 78 short films, the essence of the film game is the amalgamation of just spectacle and narrative.

Then, as now, cinematic acculturations of familiar narratives, prompt viewer interaction by providing versions – re-visions –

juxtaposing 'mindscreen' to cinema screen – whereby representations are viewed with approval or disapproval, or response according to the original reading. A viewer game-playing option includes the view to experience 'pleasure through displeasure' – acknowledging the narrative while dismissing its interpretation.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity implies a referring back – revealing the original form. In audiovisual narrative terms there is a correspondence to the concept of hypermediacy outlined by Bolter and Grusin; a transparent medium, in contrast to immediacy – a concealed medium. David Bordwell advocates 'laying bare the device' (3recollection games) and suggests that 'even the most "realistic" art works find ways to point to their own artificiality.' In narrative, however, the 'device' is elusive – reflexivity invites an examination of the form rather than a 'thing.' An exception to this generality, however, is the film *Sherlock Junior* (1924), in which the device of the projector plays havoc with the narrative, and subsequently with the viewer's game of constructing narrative cohesion. Buster Keaton 'dreams' himself into the 'action' where narrative and discursive logic breaks down into a hallucinatory world of mismatch editing, where randomness supersedes linearity.

Bruce Kawin views *Sherlock Junior* as an analogy to the way people read films; identification, wish fulfillment (identifying films with dreams), self-consciousness (dream as film). He considers 'the points of contact among "reality", film and dream are complex and ambiguous...' yet within the free play of the cinema screen 'playing field', the 'complexity' lies, I suggest, within the play options of the viewer. Thus, when Kawin writes: 'to enjoy the self-consciousness of this final sequence, one must be able to deal comfortably with all three levels, to believe and disbelieve – in all three worlds...' is, in essence, the nature of game play. These are the three levels of: reality (identification), film (intentionality) and dream (consciousness) – which comprise the levels of the phenomenological model.

In *The Baby of Mâcon* (1993) the performance of a Restoration drama becomes a reflexive exercise in dramatic structure and viewer

interaction. The 'fiction' of the performance intertwines with the performers, the viewer reminded of the artificiality of the staging of drama. The fiction and the performance merge, culminating in the on-stage rape of the leading actress. What the gallery of spectators perceive as performance, is a conspiracy devised by the on-stage players to cross the dividing line between 'play' and 'nonplay.' The film viewer may maintain some distance to the game, but is posited with a dilemma midway between the otherwise indistinct line between play and mayhem. An absence of 'device' suggests a Brechtian ploy to intellectually appraise the game and emotionally disengage from it.

Murray Smith suggests *The Baby of Mâcon's* dualism of 'empathy' and 'alienation' 'needs to be recast in terms of the various levels of engagement and different degrees of intensity of engagement at each level.' Smith rejects the Brechtian concept of *Verfremdung* in favour of a 'theory of character engagement which assumes the interdependency of social structure and personhood... a humanistic approach... which argues that while individual agents are far from the masters of their own lives, neither are they hopelessly subjected to structural determination.' Murray's position, I suggest, embodies the tenets of game and player – that a game is only a game with the participation of players, and the way it is played is determined by the player's level of engagement.

A narrative thread running through *Favourites of the Moon* (*Les favoris de la lune*, 1984) concerns a large eighteenth century painting which is stolen once, twice, in all four times. The painting portrays an elegantly dressed woman in the attire appropriate to 18th century upper class Europe, against a rural background. Each time the painting is cut from its frame the size is reduced, until only the woman's face remains; it is reframed and sold at an auction. The narrative line articulates an analogy to the reflexivity of the film narrative 'metagame.' Through honing and reframing, abbreviation and accentuation the viewer is provided with new perspectives through the reforming of an existing text, constituting 'play' with 'game'.

The postmodern preoccupation with new diversions, new games, is what Richard Kearney sees as 'the paradox of cinema trying to deconstruct itself from within, trying to combat the power of the

cinematic image by means of cinematic images.' Making new games of old stuff, in other words, where cliché and intertextuality are no longer narrative codes, but games in themselves.

Ludic Narration

A player chooses to play a game, as the film viewer chooses to enter a narrative. The process begs an indulgence, exploiting the viewer's acceptance of filmic rather than poetic licence, and the transition to suspense of disbelief. In addition, if necessary, a leap of faith is required in which the player option to 'stop playing' increases in appeal on a corresponding scale of how much licence, disbelief, and faith, is required to play the game. Bruce Kawin maintains that the viewer is responsible for what the viewer sees, having made a conscious decision to look at the film's world. 'In most narrative films, however,' writes Kawin, 'the convention of the camera as an organ of one's shifting ideal attention tends to suppress any Brechtian self-consciousness on the part of the viewer.' This is the widely held view of the effectivity of the classical Hollywood narrative system. I intend to argue for the opposite view: in which game playing skills of the viewer are misrepresented and denegated by the apparent rhetoric of classical narrative. The transition from the structures and strictures of classical Hollywood narrative, represents a shift of emphasis, from concealed to overt game playing, toward a reflexive film narrative, which is not necessarily confined to the well documented examples of 'art' cinema.

The dissolution of industrial, narrative and discourse praxis during the 1960s gave rise to the ludicrous plots of a cinema of excess – *Blow Up* (1966), *Modesty Blaise* (1966), *Casino Royale* (1967), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *Head* (1968), *Easy Rider* (1969), – ludicrous in the literal sense of the word – excessively playful. In the contemporary action film arch villains play elaborate games with reluctant hero figures, who, regardless of odds, invariably choose to play rather than not play. Bruce Willis in the *Die Hard* series (1988 – 1995), Keanu Reeves in *Speed* (1994), the *Robocop* series (1987 – 1993) and the comic story cinema of super heroes.

Periods of transition are difficult to pinpoint, yet the release and popularity of the James Bond series beginning with *Dr No* (1962)

marks a point of departure, where game playing becomes a motif of the narrative itself and remains so in the subsequent films to extremes that border on the pedantic, as well as the ludicrous. The films provide examples of cinematic games on a number of levels; as narrative (game between principals), with viewer, and on the level of intertextual game playing, for those who favour convergent problems (tests of knowledge), in contrast to the divergent problems of dilemma and intrigue (tests of creative thinking).

Each of the Bond films uses game playing as motif: From *Russia With Love* (1963) begins with a chess game played by the Russian master Gromskij, who, when summoned to a meeting with Spectre's Number One, concludes the game with deft moves, exhibiting unorthodox method and cocksure bravado. Similarly, the game he has devised for Bond's demise is an exercise in strategy which 'will succeed because I have anticipated every move.' His failure parodies the film viewer's attempts to anticipate each move of the film narrative.

This film, which initiated a style for the series, as well as subsequent 'game-play' cinema, borrows liberally from *North by Northwest* released three years earlier (train journey, crop duster chase/helicopter chase, the espionage subterfuge of the principals, the tone of wit and self-assurance, pace, and abrupt changes of location).

Umberto Eco analyses the contrivances of 'play situations' in the Ian Fleming novels where each narrative 'is fixed as a sequence of 'moves'... constituted according to a perfectly prearranged scheme.' Eco's schemata is defined as a series of moves from A to I, usually, but not conditionally, in succession, in the mode of Propp's narrative functions, outlining a narrative game plan. My objective is rather to consider how the game-playing correspondence is integrated into the visual play of film discourse as well as narrative.

Goldfinger (1964) centres around golf and Operation Grand Slam (winning all the main competitions in a golf tournament); the demise of the villain constitutes a hole in one. *Thunderball* (1965), *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971): cards and the gambling tables of Monte Carlo and Las Vegas; *Moonraker* (1979): game shooting with Drago; *Never Say Never Again* (1983): computer games, 'the game is called world dominance...' In *Licence to Kill* (1992) the game fishing motif is

'played' to seemingly ludicrous extremes; in scenario, dialogue, action and scenography. Beginning with Bond's 'let's go fishing' suggestion, to pluck arch-villain Sanchez from the sky; the Keys West Florida setting – Bonds colleague, Sharkey, who is fed to sharks; Leiter who is half eaten by sharks; saving colleague Pam Bouvier, pilot and assistant, with a stuffed sword fish. Later Bond sets himself up as 'bait' in order to trap Sanchez, and as guest at the Sanchez villa he awakens to a fish statue with a human face. Bond's final conversation with Leiter ends with, 'I'll be up next weekend. Let's go fishing.' Bond gets the girl in the traditional finale and a fish statue winks introducing the closing credits.

With Goldeneye (1994) and Tomorrow Never Dies (1997) the predictability of the game is sufficiently circumspect to warrant reminders throughout the unfolding story of the inevitability of play, that Bond is not just a parody of his former heroic status, but, as the audience is reminded, 'a sexist misogynist dinosaur, a relic of the cold war;' who someday 'will have to make good all those innuendos.'

Film Games

Hollywood movies... 'You've seen one, you've seen them all!' chides Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds) to leading actor, Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly) in *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). In regard to classical narrative the observation is valid – the game plan is consistent: a causal plot-based narrative system defined by speculation and dilemma, problem solving, a linear plot structured by 'acts' not incidents, a sense of unity and narrative closure. To these general characteristics can be added attributes of character formulated to encourage optimal investment ('empathy') for a maximum number of players.

It is not 'the only game in town' however – or more correctly, not the only game-plan in town, but one of four principal types of game plan, outlined here with the aim of extending and clarifying categories proposed in Chapter 3:

- causal – plot orientated (classical film narrative)
- causal – character orientated (Arnheim's 'epic')
- introspective – 'art film'
- reflexive – post modern (Brechtian 'epic')

These are not intended as reductivist categories – rather outlines of game types, as broad as the vagaries defining ‘board games’ or ‘field games’ or ‘card games.’ Thus, the types can be defined through generalities which provide codes of definition rather definitions themselves. The ‘art film’ for example has proved a problematic area for definition – a term used predominantly by US film theorists primarily to distinguish a game-plan at odds with the ‘classical’ film narrative. Bruce Kawin refers to ‘mindscreen’, George Wead and George Lellis to ‘personal’ cinema and for Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell ‘the “art film” dwelling on mood, characterization, and psychological ambiguity’ serves to distinguish a disparate narrative style. Rather than categorise distinctive types, I suggest the listing of attributes of predominant film narrative strategies. Regarding the introspective ‘art film’, a list of attributes includes: ‘resisting obvious interpretation,’ ‘against audience satisfaction,’ ‘ambiguity,’ non-formal closure and a resistance to linear plot.

The term ‘epic’ applied to cinema has been a misleading one, with diverse definitions provided by the film industry, by Brechtian theatre, and by film theorists – notably Rudolf Arnheim. The distinction is between a plot-based causal narrative – identifying a problem and resolving it – and a character-based causal narrative, which involves episodes around a central character, contiguously linked or not linked at all. Attributes include: episodic, character based, structured by incidents not acts, and ‘biographic.’

Attributes defining a reflexive narrative correlate to the attributes of post modern narrative: deconstruction, intertextuality, cliché, pastiche, parody, irony, appropriation, ‘epic’ in the Brechtian sense, and a resistance to linearity. If the cinema’s reflexive narrative remains peripheral to the mainstream dramatic game, the postmodern form is more evident in the audiovisual narratives of television and digital fiction.

What player options then, does the fiction film offer? In *Film as Film* V F Perkins suggests that ‘sustained harmony and balance ensure that the view contained in the pattern of events may be enriched by the patterns of our involvement. When such unity is achieved, observation, thought and feeling are integrated: film becomes the

projection of a mental universe.' It is an involvement, however, dependent upon 'vision' – and the subsequent subjugation of 'self' (the acceptance of the projected narrative 'as is'); or 're-vision' – which in the darkness of the cinema remains a psychological option, not a physiological one. Whether some new form of audiovisual fiction fulfils the promise of 'total' viewer/player interaction (4exstasis, Chapter 9) that cinema has not, may necessitate new codes to cue the viewer to information and responses necessary for narrative comprehension.

7. Television

Tele-Play

Having considered filmic approaches to viewer interaction, the aim of this chapter is twofold: (a) to assess ways in which television reframes the audiovisual narrative initiated through cinematic discourse; and (b) how television re-forms the audiovisual narrative into specific modes of game playing.

If cinema's origins lie in forms of picture play, either, 'games for one' (zoetrope, kinoscope, etc), or for public display (magic lantern, phantasmagoria, etc) television – as shall be argued – began as polymorphous game sets for audi[ol]ences as opposed to the cinema viewer. Whereas film theory refers to the viewer or the spectator, television studies refers to audiences and audience-orientated readings. Other distinctions between the two forms of screen play considered in this section, include a comparison between film acculturation and television remediation; levels and returns of investment founded on modes of viewing (the cinema-going event contra television as domestic diversion) and the predominantly uni-linear fiction film narrative discourse contra the multi-linear (folkloric) televisual discourse.

In regard to television it is necessary to distinguish between a programme – which is produced, and a text – which is 'consumed'. Chris Barker suggests that 'television messages carry multiple meanings and can be interpreted in different ways' ... the text will be "structured in dominance" leading to a "preferred meaning." Barker is wary however of 'radical versions of reception theory' which suggest meanings exist only in 'the readers' active production so that there would be, in principle, as many readings as there are readers.' Yet it is just this view that an audience or viewer-orientated game-play theory proposes; that screen play – whether cinema screen, television screen or computer screen – is about player options and players opting for 'preferred meanings' or to 'play' with meanings that are radical, idiographic, 'against the grain', subverse or 'perverse', as is the nature of play.

This is not to abandon the cultural readings of texts – with every text there is a context – but to recognise that cultural readings constitute options among other options, dependant on how and why the viewer/player wants to play the screen texts. Within cultural studies Stuart Hall proposes an 'encoding/decoding model' which provides three hypothetical decoding positions:

1. a dominant-hegemonic encoding/decoding
2. a negotiated code
3. an oppositional code

These positions, I suggest, define three 'modes of play': to play with the 'preferred reading' ('it is this'); to acknowledge the validity of the hegemonic 'game' but create a different set of rules in order to accommodate an alternative reading ('this could also be interpreted as that'); to understand the 'preferred reading', dismiss it, and 'read against the grain' ('reject this – it is really that').

Broadly speaking, the Dominant, Negotiated and Oppositional decodings relate to the options of 'playing along' 'playing with' and 'playing against'/'playing up.' If the cinema screen is a playing field, then television can be compared to the playground. Umberto Eco distinguishes a 'Neo-TV' as a self-contained playground ('there's no more need to come into contact with that remote fiction – the real world'), in contrast to Paleo-TV which 'talked about the external world, or pretended to...'

The playground analogy is a valid one; the multitude of game options each with specific 'conditions of play.' Studies of telenovelas – as one example – conclude that 'audiences are active and derive a variety of meanings'; that 'audiences recognise the fictional nature of the genre and the functioning of its rules'; that audiences 'often have developed sophisticated genre competencies...'

John Fiske defines a televisual 'active text' by use of irony, metaphor, joke, paradox, exaggeration. Irony, it can be argued, is the essence of tele-play. John Caughie begs the question that 'if an ironic imagination is a characteristic mode for television, is there a way for identifying a characteristic figure within (my italics) the routines of

television rhetoric which supports it and puts it into play?' An audience/viewer-orientated game-play theory posits the player in such a role, and does not distinguish between figures within or without a televisual text – the player having elected to play, is part of the game.

Is such a position tenable? John Horgan suggests that the position of 'literary sophists who argue that all texts – from *The Tempest* to an ad for a new brand of vodka – are equally meaningless, or meaningful...' is 'absurd'. Yet this is less literary sophism as the essence of game playing in general and tele-play, specifically – the ecumenical 'opening' of the text. An advertisement for a Cornetto icecream (1981), for example, is 'meaningful' (comic, profound, or ironic) – depending on 'point of view', context and the player skills of the viewer. In the documentary *Diana: Queen of Hearts* (1998) this advertisement is intercut with an interviewee and Princess Diana entering the wedding carriage to St Paul's Cathedral. Diana mimics the young girl in the commercial 'robbed' of her 'reward' by the man she thought was her cavalier. In the context of subsequent events the viewer can choose to make the advertisement as 'meaningful' as deemed fit. It is a matter of investment and 'player skills' – how much a player is prepared to commit to the game, and the extent of knowledge of a specific game and the narrative and genre conventions that pertain to it.

The theoretical discourse around 'open texts' and 'closed texts', founded in the semiotic traditions purported by Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco, has gained a following in television studies through cultural models outlined by John Fiske, John Hartley and others. Eco – in his study centred ostensibly around the musical works of Stockhausen, Berio, Pousseur and Boulez – defines 'open texts' as works in movement, and works in progress. For John Fiske the 'open text' is open to a complexity of readings that 'resists closure'; 'open texts' are associated with literature, high culture and minority tastes. The 'closed text' is usually produced by mass media, part of popular culture, closing off opportunities for alternative or divergent readings.

Fiske suggests the television text, while exhibiting many of the characteristics of open or writerly texts requiring 'its readers to participate in the production of meaning and thus of our own subjectivities' differs with one fundamental characteristic – it is a

popular medium. Fiske suggests television as a 'producerly text' combining 'the televisual characteristics of of a writerly text with the easy accessibility of the readerly.' Fiske suggests that '...the producerly text... relies on discurs-ive compentencies that the viewer already possesses, but requires that they are used in a self-interested productive way: the producerly text can therefore be popular in a way that the writerly text cannot.'

My intention here is to counter the distinction of the open and closed text, and return to the role of the viewer as player. The ecumenical 'opening' of the text posits the viewer in control of the negotiable text and returns to Fiske's concept of the 'producerly.' The term's ambiguity needs clarifying however, once incorporated within a broader spectrum of screen play. Thus the 'production of texts' as a result of viewer participation must be distinguished from the 'production of programmes' in the domain of producers; the text is produced by the viewer; the programme by the producer.

The openness/closedness of texts are classifications misrepresented to the point of redundancy, denegrating the viewer to a role of compliance and passivity. Within television studies and television situation comedy Keith Selby and Ron Cowdry argue for the 'openness' of Fawlty Towers in contrast to the 'closedness' of *Allo Allo Secret Army*. In cinema studies Roy Armes refers to the 'closed plot' of *North by Northwest* (1959) and the 'open plot' of *L'Avventura* (1960). My contention is that in both tele-play and screen play, the text is, by definition, open to however the viewer chooses to 'play;' subversively, transgressively or 'straight,' and in accord to whatever kind of game the viewer decides to play, whether based on genre, gender, culture or whatever.

Within television studies, views extend from television's 'preferred readings' and 'multivocality' to the means by which audiences 'activate texts.' A screen play perspective addresses the latter while imputing the former as textual epithets which abrogate play options. The question is whether the options available to the viewer prompt divergent strategies in activating the text dependent upon disparities between the audiovisual representations of film and television. Issues considered in

the following sections examine such differences between cinematic and televisual screen play.

Films on TV

Anne Friedberg lists six disparities between television and classical cinema spectatorship:

1. TV is a light source, not a projection
2. TV allows for cursory viewing (the glance not the gaze)
3. TV programmes rely on scheduled re-runs ('replay' options for the viewer/player)
4. TV offers synchronic choice
5. Image scale
6. TV's two-dimensionality (!)

Friedberg's list 2 – 4 indicate player options – to watch or not to watch – to play or not play. Cursory viewing indicates level of investment; re-runs provide scope of revision and re-play; choice provides a range of game options.

The distinction between film for television and film for cinema is becoming increasingly vague; nowadays all films are made for television or video, with a percentage released for cinema distribution. In Europe, the major film producers are television companies, and the European cinema relies on television co-production for financing films. 'Cinema' films for the mainstream commercial circuit are increasingly left to the Hollywood business concerns, and an exodus of directors in the 1980s and 1990s from the rest of the world thence, is on a scale reminiscent of the 1930s when European filmmakers fled the political and economic uncertainties of their native countries, wooed by Hollywood's large budgets and technical proliferation.

However, there are disparities which exceed modification, where the televisual re-framing diminishes or restructures the intended game. These include computer colourisation, cropping, condensing (ie., speeding up), panning and scanning, editing, word censoring, and commercial breaks.

The framework for the television screening of the US independent film *Slacker* (1991) on TV4 UK (1992) consisted of:

- TV4 logo
- voice-over introduction (an encapsulation of production details not available to the cinema goer)
- series framework 'Made in the USA' – a TV4 series of independent low-budget filmmakers addressing contemporary America (the epithet takes its name from a Jean-Luc Godard film based on a Richard Stark novel)
- 625 line picture resolution (cf. US 425 line; HD 1250 line)
- commercial breaks at 20 minute intervals

For screening *Straw Dogs* (1971) on US NBC television (1.12.1986):

- cut opening, deleted end credits
- commercial breaks at 10 -12 minute intervals
- cropped image
- 425 line resolution

Steward Bronfeld notes that for a US screening of *The Killers* (1946) 'the station had made the movie fit that night's commercial line-up by simply eliminating the memorable [nine and a half minute] opening sequence entirely.' Douglas Gomery records that a Chicago TV station solved the problem of fitting the 96 minute *Jailhouse Rock* (1957) into 78 minute time slot by editing out the musical numbers. Gomery writes that US network television's strategy in screening feature films led to a market for uninterrupted viewings resulting in pay-cable channels and home video.

Television – cinema disparities can be summarised as: different form (or resolution: video not celluloid); different shape (small not big; cropped, letterboxed, or panned and scanned); different colour (digital colourisation); different sound (depending on the receiver). In addition, the television viewer's access to the uninterrupted continuity of a feature film at the cinema is limited; viewing may be as fragmented as the programming itself – a few minutes of drama or light entertainment, a pause of enforced disruption during a commercial break, an attentive eye on news items of interest and the weather report;

otherwise the television set may well be just a background distraction arousing interest at certain moments during its daily transmissions.

Finally, the tele-play of the 'cinema experience' has amplified the distinction between 'going to a film' – the cinema as a social enterprise, and 'watching a film' – the cinema as a narrative game-playing enterprise. Through tele-play the role of film viewing has been recast from its formative social 'cinema of attractions' to a contemporary domestic 'cinema amidst distractions'.

TV Films

The made-for-television film can be seen as an attempt to accommodate the specific mode of tele-play – to address the 'distractions' of the film viewing experience. Instigated by the flagging Hollywood film industry in the 1960s, an NBC film, *Fame is the Name of the Game* produced in 1966 is the first MTV (made for television) film broadcast in the US, although the Don Seigel re-make of *The Killers*, (1964) was the first MTV film to be commissioned. It was not screened due to what ABC executives considered excessive violence. Television's reframing of the audiovisual narrative and certain ideological implications, were evident at the outset.

The US MTV film quickly emerged as an identifiable television form in contrast to the Hollywood studio productions, each form with its own commercial demands: theatrical films produced to attract ticket-buyers, television films produced to attract advertisers, and plotted accordingly, to accommodate segments of advertisements every 15 - 20 minutes.

John Morris, Director of the South Australian Film Commission, summarises the distinction between films for television, and films for cinemas, as risk. 'This thing about TV is that there is a clearly defined upper limit. If you are highly successful in TV you know how much money you'll get; and if you're just good you know how much money you'll get; and if you're bad of course you get nothing! In cinema there is no upper limit because a film, if it takes off, can make millions... theoretically there is much more money to be got out of cinema than out of TV but the risks are much greater.'

In Europe the divisions are less clear – the European television networks, during the 1980s and 1990s, have become the largest producers of films intended for theatrical release, as well as television. As European television up until the 1980s, was predominantly public service television without the pressures of advertising sponsorship, a television film is a far more diffuse area of study.

Original plays for television were commissioned by the BBC as early as 1947, and developed into regular television drama programme allocations – Playhouse, The Wednesday Play, Play for Today. The plays began as studio bound televised drama, and according to Shaun Sutton, 'the moment of truth for the single (television) play' occurred in the early 1960s with the production of Dennis Potter's first plays, *The Confidence Course*, *Alice*, and two Nigel Barton plays; the Garnett/ Loach/Sandford production of *Cathy Come Home*, and Nell Dunn's *Up The Junction*.

In more recent years productions have included John Schlesinger's *An Englishman Abroad* (1983), the dramas of Alan Clarke, and with the formation of Channel Four, the remaining barriers between film for television and film for cinema, were further eroded. Television films such as *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1984) and *Letter to Brezhnev* (1985), were considered of such quality to enable cinema distribution. Steven Spielberg's debut, *Duel* (1971), a television film for Universal studios, failed to get cinema distribution in the USA until the 1980s following a favourable reception at European film festivals.

Television has also had its effect on the aesthetic of film production; *Psycho* (1960) was made with his regular television crew from *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour* television show, to enable a quick production and a 'television look' imitative of the B films of several decades earlier. French director, Jean Renoir, directed his version of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in 1959, *Le Testament du Dr Cordelier*, using television recording techniques, and introduced the production seated at a desk in a television studio, after being filmed entering the television building and preparing himself for the on-camera presentation.

Narrative Reframing

A frame is the smallest coherent unit of a film, a single image divided by a 'frame line' which separates the individual frames. An 100 minute feature film consists of 144,000 separate frames. Prior to the early 1920's a frame in a silent film measured from 1/12th to 1/18th of a second; by the advent of talking pictures, 1/24th of a second, which when broadcast on television, runs at 1/25th of a second. A frame is also the perimeters of the image – 'in frame' denotes the material visible in contrast to what can be suggested beyond the frame; what the viewer can see or not see. Framing is the organisation of contents projected onto the screen. The type of screen depends on the type of audiovisual presentation; a cinema screen, a television screen, a computer screen. A 'frame of mind' describes an attitude – a mental state; to be in the 'right' frame of mind denotes a positive and/or receptive attitude. The cinema screen, television screen or computer monitor – from which the frame is perceived – is a psychological and subjective experience, depending upon the level of investment made by the viewer.

The fiction film framework's priority for organising contents – designed for projection onto the cinema screen – emphasises movement, action, spectacle, visual detail and visual cues to facilitate narrative comprehension – to heighten the viewer's participation in the game playing experience. The narrative framework for the television screen emphasises different priorities. The acculturation process of film – or what William Uricchio and Roberta Pearson define as the 'discursive framing' that introduced quality films as a strategy of the industry seeking to create a mass audience – compares to the later acculturation/re-framing of television. Quality films, suggest Uricchio and Pearson, were 'suited to a strategy of uplift since their intertextual frames structure audience reception to a greater degree than would be the case for other films.'

The cultural status of television, on the other hand, 'was already established before it went on the air..' John Hartley argues that television was 'apt to "corrupt the taste and habits of the rising generation..."' Where film viewers bring intertextual frames from 'less respectable intertexts most apparent in regard to acting, narrative

structure and visual signifying practices' television viewers similarly exhort established narrative forms from radio, cinema, vaudeville and music hall – a reframing process evident in the contemporary acculturation of video, computer games and Internet.

Richard Grusin and Jay Bolter suggest that remediation defines the framework by which media borrow from and reshape other media. New visual media achieve their cultural significance, not by divorcing themselves from earlier media forms, but by acknowledging and reshaping media antecedents such as perspective painting, photography, film, and television. Just as photography remediated painting, film remediated stage production and photography, and television remediated film, vaudeville, and radio. (3Chapter 1). The two principal strategies of remediation; transparent immediacy and hypermediacy – are not contradictory, rather two necessary halves of the process. A painting by the seventeenth-century artist Pieter Saenredam, a photograph by Edward Weston, and a computer system for virtual reality are attempts to achieve transparent immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium. In the case of the latter, a medieval illuminated manuscript, an early twentieth-century photomontage, and the buttoned/windowed/slide-bar multimedia applications demonstrate hypermediacy's fascination with the medium itself.

Television has emerged as the dominant audiovisual narrative medium, yet the notion of a televisual form is vague; television has adapted pre-existing forms into versions of its own – primarily radio and cinema. How does television re-frame the narrative game of the fiction film? The primary distinction is continuity – the film game begins and ends. The serial nature of television narratives – serials, news, game shows, drama, sport – strive for completion and a return to natural order, but rarely achieve it. When a series or season or programme ends it is replaced by something similar to accommodate the programme format.

The way in which a film is watched – the cinematic gaze as opposed to the television glance may diminish the level of investment with which television is viewed, but, as John Hartley argues, the distinction is a dubious one; a 'distinction between the honorific and the servicable – between prestigious cinema and humble television.' The

glance and the gaze may define different modes of watching, in turn, levels of investment which are determined by the viewer.

Narrative modes, however, are arguably re-framed to prescribed levels of investment founded on accessibility. The effort entailed of 'going to the pictures' prescribes that the level of investment is increased and expectations heightened. The effort of going to a location away from the home, having paid to be entertained, amused, or moved – together with the undistracted intensity of the darkened room, and an experience to be shared with a group of strangers – are all factors encouraging the viewer to extract as much pleasure from the experience as possible. Television may be an intrusion into family affairs, discussion or meal time. Consequently, the television programme's dramatic impact and accessibility must be sufficient to overcome the distractions that surround it.

Television and cinema are both mediums by which stories are told through moving pictures. They are narrative forms which share the components of image, sound and story. In this regard television and cinema differ from literature, theatre, radio, art and photography, yet they incorporate elements of all these forms.

The first film screenings were shown to a paying public at the Grand Café in Paris – the first television screenings (1925) were shown free of charge in a London department store window, to passers-by who could choose to stop and watch or to keep walking. From the outset film and television are grounded in disparate terms of investment – for television, a low investment: no admission price; for the cinema – high intensity game playing: the darkened room, the one-off experience, the collective gaze, silence, concentration, focus on the game. Television fictions, by contrast, are subject to interruptions, distractions, lack of focus, fragmentation, and a broad variety of game options – if one game seems lacking in possibilities, another is most likely available.

With television's succession of the wireless as the focal point of home entertainment, the audio broadcasting medium incorporated moving pictures. Indeed, the early televisions resembled wireless sets, with five or seven inch screens positioned at the top right hand corner of the apparatus. The 'talkies' on the other hand, represented the development of a visual narrative form where pictures were now

accompanied with sound in spite of reservations from practitioners (as opposed to the business entrepreneurs) of the day. Hitchcock argues that 'the technique of the pure motion picture' was abandoned with sound – overnight the motion picture assumed a theatrical form. Sound, on the other hand, opened up possibilities for audial effects, music and word-play incompatible with the exclusively visual aesthetic.

In its early days, television borrowed the radio personalities, and radio's programme formats. News and current affairs, quiz programmes and comedy shows, drama and documentary, sport and light entertainment, the soap-opera, began as radio formats, programmes intended for the spoken word, and since adapted by television.

Television embodies a multitude of forms, from news programmes to game shows, from music videos to melodrama. Is it tenable to postulate that a narrative structure typical to television can encompass these different forms of programmes? The continuity and serialisation of the television text suggests that television narratives are manufactured around a structure which is on-going as opposed to self-contained. If film structure is about beginnings, middles and ends, then television structure emphasises the middle; where film structure concentrates on a single character and a single crisis within its narrative form, then the television narrative features many characters and many crises, and unlike film, the emphasis is not on resolving the game, but protracting the game.

John Ellis argues that television consists, not of programmes, but segments, lasting between 2 - 3 minutes; an advertisement, a news item, a single scene in a soap opera. He says that movement from one segment to the next is a matter of succession rather than consequence; that television narrative is serial rather than linear. This is not to suggest that segmentation is specific to television discourse; nickelodeons in the US exhibited continuous shows from around 1907, for example, providing opportunities for audiences to watch shows regardless of the formalities of narrative cohesion, offering the viewer continuous rounds of narrative segments. But, whereas the narrative form of the cinema evolved from the segmented Lumière actualités, the narrative fragments of Méliès, of bricolage (< Chapter 6) and a diversity borne of availability and format to the cohesion of the classical narration, television

segmentation is similarly, an elected/evolved form of narrative discourse – and with it, demanding new strategies of play.

Thus, a commercial break, a news reportage, a round of questions on a game show, a weather bulletin, a rock video, constitute segments of 3 - 5 minutes; a quiz show, a situation comedy, a news bulletin, an episode of a television serial, a sketch comedy programme, constitute segments 25 - 30 minutes. In addition 15 - 20 minutes is the break-in period for advertisements on commercial television for films and television drama. Commercial television drama is structured around 'plot-points' or peaks, to the commercial break every 20 minutes or so. In the 1960s and 1970s US networks introduced the four act and epilogue 50 minute drama series format as a means of validating the intrusion into the narrative. (The Man from UNCLE, The Streets of San Francisco, etc).

The structural form most representative of television, and television's most favoured format, is the television serial; the soap opera; cheap to produce, has high ratings, and a potentially faithful and regular viewing public. The high ratings are disproportionate to television budgeting and time-slot allocations; soap-opera accounts for about 20% of British television viewing.

At the height of their popularity in the late 1970s and 1980s, the glamour serials, Dallas, Dynasty and Falcon Crest and others, dominated ratings figures in the US, UK, Europe and while the telenovela dominates viewing ratings in Latin America. The serial's commercial viability has led to the development of a hybrid drama series, with overlapping story lines and open endings (Hill Street Blues, LA Law, Casualty). Likewise the situation comedy, game shows, news and sports have adopted and adapted the serial format.

Television has re-framed the audiovisual narrative with a two-fold shift of emphasis: serialisation and segmentation. Television serialisation has its roots in 19th century literature, the cinema serials of the teens and radio serials of 1930s. Segmentation provides a further component into the game playing of audiovisual fiction – replay as option or 'condition of play.'

The artist, Tom Phillips, who collaborated with Peter Greenaway to create the eight part A TV Dante, (1989) claimed that 'the general view is that television fails if not everything can be understood

within a single viewing', whereas the aim of A TV Dante was that 'we have failed if the viewer can understand everything within a single viewing.' The aim of the programmes, he said, was to draw the spectator back for second and third viewings, as the flow of information was too much to absorb in a single screening. A TV Dante contains the text of Dante's *Inferno*, illustrated with images of nature and David Attenborough's commentary, of art, of television, of enacted scenes, of modern day representations of Dante's text, at times separately, but most frequently, competing for space on the same screen, a multi-layered presentation of information, image, literature and inserted extracts of conventional relevant television programmes.

Richard Kearney describes the postmodern artist as a player in a game of signs, an operator in an electronic media network, amidst an anonymous interplay of images which he parodies, simulates or reproduces... 'wandering about in labyrinth of commodified light and noise, endeavouring to piece together bits of dispersed narrative... disseminating multiple images and signs which he himself has created and over which he has no control.'

Kearney's critique, I suggest, refers to a displacement of control rather than elimination of control. Kearney's description of 'the postmodernist paradigm (as) a labyrinth of mirrors which extend infinitely in all directions – a labyrinth where the image of the self dissolves into self parody,' represents an equation of:

reader text (author)

The participatory narrative is better served with an equation:

text reader

The MTV (Europe) programme, *Buzz* (1989 – 1990), exemplifies 'bits of dispersed narrative' structured around a programme theme and formatted to the MTV concept – videos, advertisements, segments indiscernible from each other. The programmes run 25 minutes, are divided into 2 – 2 1/2 minute segments, structured around specific themes; 'Heroes', 'Love and Sex', 'Censor', etc; subject material considered appealing to a predominantly youth market. The

programmes are originated by MTV Europe, with contributions from eastern and western Europe, Australia, north and south America, and some Asian countries.

Where programmes such as *Buzz* and *The Rock 'n Roll Years* (BBC, 1985 – 1991) digress from conventional television is not in structure, but the content within the structure. Like a *A TV Dante* these programmes utilise sound and image as separate sources of information, optimising the amount of information encoded within the image: picture, text, captions, rapid cutting, montage, superimposition and split screen; manifestations of visual 'play' which date back to the formative years of silent cinema, and the films of Abel Gance, Dziga Vertov and others. Together with the audio multi-layered 'play' of music, song text, musical sound affects, ideational sound, natural sound, voice-over, voice interview, voice narration, dialogue and conversation, such programmes constitute a 'hyper television' – an attempt to overcome the norms of 'conventional television' described by Tom Phillips as 'irritatingly slow.'

Televisual Reforming

Films

In *Dreamboat* (1952) the television set is placed on trial. In 1952 television ownership in the US approaches 60%. In 1948 it was 1%. The trial is a 'for' and 'against' television, with literature professor Thornton Sayre, former silent screen star, 'Bruce Blair' (Clifton Webb) against, and television presenter and Blair's former screen partner, Gloria Marlowe (Ginger Rogers), against. To prove the 'inanity' of the medium Sayre tunes into a used car salesman's commercial, invites the opposition to 'pick a station' and comes up with a commercial for hair tonic. The coup de grace is Sayre's old silent films, where as swashbuckler 'Bruce Blair', with modifications from the TV producer, is, via intertitles, propagating for *Double Passion*, *Exotica* and *Five Sins* perfumes.

Although 'Blair', now a withdrawn teacher of literature, scorns the new medium, the ultimate victory is not television, but the

movies. He signs a Hollywood contract, begins a movie-star career anew, and together with his bookish daughter, rejects an academic career (as 'Ironheart') in favour of fun, glamour and Ginger Rogers.

The opposition between Sayre the professor of literature and Marlowe, TV hostess, provides the polarity analogous to the pros and cons of television: binary oppositions which delineate two ends of a scale – literature and 'high culture' on one end, television and 'low culture' on the other. Thornton Sayre dismisses his early excursions into cinema, yet defends them against the 'peurility' of television.

Literature	Television
Thornton Sayre ('Bruce Blair')	Gloria Marlowe
elitist	populist
knowledge	entertainment
	art commerce
high culture	low culture
ideals	profit

The film highlights a competitiveness between cinema and television, with the resolution acted out between principals in the rear stalls of a picture house watching Sayre's new movie. It also affords a preemptory excursion into the kind of games television and cinema would produce; of commerce and product placement, of co-operation not conflict, of manipulation and compromise – the concessions to be yielded in the reframing of the audiovisual narrative.

Pleasantville (1999) begins by highlighting the 90s with economic depression, AIDS and ecological deterioration. Two teenagers of the age – Jennifer, a hedonistic child of the 90s, David, an addict of 1950s sitcom, highlighted in the opening moments with vignettes from the popular situation comedies of the period. David and Jennifer, now entrapped in a 1958 small town sitcom-fantasy community, corrupt the inhabitants with post-50s sexuality, transforming a monochrome society into dissident groups of 'coloureds.' The characters, once removed from the consistency of the happy ending/upright moral 50s sitcom plot, finally rejoice in the uncertainty of the 'unwritten ending.' David rejects the 50s television idyll and returns to the 90s; Jennifer remains in the 50s to 'raise consciousness.'

If Pleasantville's television world is idyllic, in the Ealing comedy *Meet Mr Lucifer* (1952) television is the instrument of the devil to lure human souls to Hell. Further 1950s perspectives on television include the leather jacketed motorcyclists disdain of the diner TV set in *The Wild One* (1954); Ginger Rogers as a gangster moll in *Tight Spot* (1955) – 'staring at a blank wall' is more diverting than the television set in a hideout motel. At the end of *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) the widow, Mrs Scott (Jane Wyman) loses out on the young gardener (Rock Hudson) but gets a TV set as a Christmas present from her two grown up children to compensate: 'drama, comedy... life's parade at your finger tips' says the salesman as her doubting face is reflected in the screen. In *Bigger Than Life*, (1956) the drug addicted doctor (James Mason) turns up the television volume so the sound of fairground music will cover the sound as he takes a knife to his son; Charlie Chaplin's exiled European king recoils in distaste over the commercial skullduggery of the new medium in *A King in New York* (1957).

'The most notorious public scandal in the television industry of the late 1950s concerned revelations about the rigging of popular quiz programmes' later dramatised in *Quiz Show* (1994) – the kind of moral indignation both in the film and described by William Boddy, based on a idealistic view that television is something other than a purveyor of narratives. From a dramaturgical perspective the programme's 'rigging' constitutes the impletion of the basics of the dramatic audiovisual narrative game. Marshall McLuhan argues that the game spirit suffered due to these rigged quiz shows because they fun of money. Movies are also rigged to produce an affect, he writes; the difference is that television invites 'deep audience participation' and movies don't. The level of audience participation was such, that the quiz show directors were prosecuted as con-men, when it could be argued that their narrative strategies constituted a well-honed dramaturgy which aimed and succeeded in optimising viewer participation through dramatic affects of contrast, contest and characterisations – by introducing dramatic certainties into an otherwise indeterminate narrative.

Critics

'Television calls for dramatisation,' writes Pierre Bourdieu, 'it puts an event on stage, puts it in images.' Bourdieu's critique is levelled, not at television, but television's representation of current affairs; news, documentary, talk shows and debate programmes: 'Another invisible yet absolutely decisive factor concerns the arrangements agreed upon with the participants prior to the show. This groundwork can create a sort of screenplay [my italics], more or less detailed, that the guests are obliged to follow. In certain cases, just as in certain games, preparation can almost turn into a rehearsal.' Bourdieu argues that television distinguishes between the 'fast-thinkers' and 'slow-thinkers' (the original French text employs the English words), and that '...television rewards a certain number of fast-thinkers who offer cultural "fast food" – predigested and prethought culture...' Bourdieu concludes that: 'The audience rating system can and should be contested in the name of democracy.'

Bourdieu's polemic is not dissimilar to arguments advanced by Noam Chomsky and Neil Postman. Neil Postman suggests that television '... serves us most usefully when presenting junk entertainment; it serves us most ill when it co-opts serious modes of discourse... and turns them into entertainment packages.' The problem 'does not reside in what people watch. The problem is in that we watch. The solution must be found in how we watch.'

Noam Chomsky defines television as the agenda-setting medium whereby 'selection of topics, framing of issues, distribution of concerns, filtering of information' constitute what Chomsky terms 'a propaganda model.' However, from a dramaturgical perspective, Chomsky describes a model as much for narrative expediency aimed at attracting the optimum game playing public. Likewise Chomsky's critique of television's 'concision' serve both narrative clarity and commercial expediency. For Chomsky concision constitutes television's 'two minutes' which allows only the articulation of a dominant ideology; the 'already known;' clichés, platitudes and television's exclusion of any view that does not comply to the dominant ideology. In the televisual

context non-conformist views are time-consuming, and incoherent once 'slotted between two commercial breaks.'

As with Bourdieu, Postman and Chomsky's critique is levelled at a disproportionately modest percentage of television output which relates to news, current affairs, and, for Postman, education programmes. The critique is levelled at US and French television respectively, from the perspective of academic disciplines focusing on social critique – sociology, social (political) linguistics and pedagogy.

I suggest the failing is not in television, but in attitudes to television; by and large generational attitudes that deem television as something other than 'dramatisations.' Whether serving ideological interests of public service broadcasting, or share-holder interests of commercial broadcasting, the audience rating system is the dictate by which television games are founded. Hence Postman is correct in stipulating a solution as to 'how we watch'; once recognised that television constitutes little other than 'conflicts, with good guys and bad guys,' the viewer's understanding of the game enables play grounded on those conditions, and with the player's developing 'skills,' the demand for better games.

Television Games

The narrative games specific to television fall into four general 'modes of play' – with reservations; as Ludwig Wittgenstein noted, different games often have nothing in common except that they are games (3 Chapter 1). Yet, as a playing field is designated for certain kinds of games – to use the analogy of the cinema screen; so too is the playground – the television screen – albeit with more lassitude for forms of free play and improvisation. Co-incidentally these classifications correspond to game types proposed by Roger Caillois (3Chapter 4): theatre, amusement, chance and contest.

- Theatre – drama, which for television comprises the serial or the series – the self-acknowledged fictionalising, dramatising and performance of narrative; 'dressing up and mimicry' according to Caillois.

- Amusement – comedy, entertainment, diversions, distractions.
- Chance – game shows, or speculation games played for personal gain – individual gain or loss; individual will contra indeterminacy; structure and form integrated with randomness.
- Contest – news, documentary and sport – the contest is played out between two contenders; the contest is a psychomachia – will against will – in contrast to games of chance which relate to will against luck or fate.

As modes of play these attributes are present in game playing generally: contest games may include an element of chance; theatrical games may incorporate 'amusement'; amusement games may involve 'contest.' As with other games, it is a question of emphasis. Strategic thinking can be employed in games of strength, a 'lucky' goal might determine the outcome of a football match, a dealt hand contributes to the outcome of card game, regardless the players' level of skills and the level of skill required of the game itself.

Theatre

The television drama series has its roots in the early teen serials (4p. 171) and pre-television B film of the 1930s and 1940s. These include: Charlie Chan (41 films; 1929 - 1949), Sherlock Holmes (14 films; 1939 - 1946), Ellery Queen (9 films; 1935 - 1942), The Falcon (16 films; 1941 - 1949), The Thin Man (6 films; 1934 - 1947), Mr Moto (8 films; 1937 - 1939), The Saint (9 films; 1938 - 1954), Bulldog Drummond, (17 films; 1929 - 1951), Perry Mason (6 films; 1934 - 1937), Dr Kildare (16 films; 1937 - 1947), The Whistler (8 films; 1944 - 1948), Nancy Drew (4 films; 1938 - 1939) – forerunners of the crime drama, action drama, court room drama, medical drama and juvenile drama respectively, many of which went on to become television series.

These B films, produced initially by the major studios as support films to the main feature, had low production costs, quick production turnover, regular casts, and usually lasted between an hour and 70 minutes. They are rudimentary genre narrative games incorporating the basics of the classical Hollywood narrative, superseded by the television dramas of the 1950s to the present.

David Thorburn compares the television series to the tradition of melodrama of the Victorian novelists with its reassurance structure and moral simplification. He emphasises the importance of the principle actor and suggests that 'the smaller television screen (is)... perfectly adapted to record those intimately minute physical and vocal gestures on which the art of the realistic actor depends', without the exaggerated 'malicious' affect of the cinematic close-up.

In *The Melodramatic Imagination*, Peter Brooks argues that in melodrama virtue is tested to the limit by evil (villains) but is finally defeated by the forces of good. Melodrama is consistent with the modern consciousness because it is always provisional in its dramatic resolutions. The forces of evil are inevitably the driving impetus behind the narrative, and that 'good' should continually triumph, says Brooks, accounts for melodrama's lack of prestige. Culture and quality drama should be tragic, providing insight into the tragic nature of the human condition. Melodramatic characters have no basis on reality; they confront each other with their deepest and most intimate feelings, beliefs, fears and anxieties. Melodrama, like the drama of psychoanalysis, brings to the surface repressed feelings and desires, and as with dreams and nightmares not usually expressed in the wakened state can be portrayed. In melodrama every conversation is a confrontation, which, according to Brooks, is one of the secrets of its fascination.

Television melodrama constitutes a meta-genre combining romance, adventure, horror, tragedy and comedy. Where realism demands that characters be well-rounded and psychologically plausible, melodrama explores the way characters go through all sorts of transformations of 'identity', likening it more to folk tales with their themes of metamorphosis, crisis and rebirth. Television's re-framing of this most elementary generic fiction game has evolved beyond both stereotype of character and cliché of plot, incorporating the postmodern elements of serialisation and segmentation. *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981 - 1987), *LA Law* (NBC, 1986 - 1994) *NYPD* (1994 -) in the US, *Casualty* (BBC 1989 - 1994) in the UK; programmes setting a style for the multi-linear, multi-character television drama.

The multi-linear narrative, with its antecedents in the literary adaptation (*The Forsythe Saga*, etc) provides the framework – a game plan – for the screen play provided in *Twin Peaks* (1990 - 1991), *Wild Palms* (1994), in the US, *Heimat* and *Heimat II* (1984 and 1994) in Germany, *Matador* (1981) in Denmark, and the television drama of Dennis Potter in the UK.

Richard Corrigan suggests that the multi-linear television narrative has 'an instability that both severely troubles a more traditional story and perfectly accommodates the viewing of contemporary narrative. With either the serial structure and the single epic screening of one of these post modern epics like *The Singing Detective* (1987), the narrative and its audience must literally make and remake characters and incidents whose definition is nonetheless constantly eroded by the expanse of time they inhabit.'

Blackeyes (1989) for example, is a text so deconstructed that the viewer's participation in the narrative game requires not only constructing story (putting the pieces together), but deciding to whom the story 'belongs'. The narrative provides at least four options, with 'the writer' as one candidate among others. Morris Kingsley, author, narrator and uncle to Jessica; Jessica, a one-time model and inspiration to the fictitious model 'Blackeyes'; Jeff, a young writer and initially a character of Morris Kingsley's narrative; the police inspector, Sexton Blake, investigating the apparent suicide of Blackeyes. Dennis Potter (who also directed the four part series), narrates a story not altogether synchronised to the visual narrative. 'Do we invent ourselves or do others do it for us?' asks the voice of Dennis Potter in episode one. 'Do we think, or are we thought?'

Blackeyes and similar 'deconstructing' narratives contravene the basic tenet of the fiction game's 'suspense of disbelief', providing the viewer with the standard components of the narrative game, inviting the viewer to create their own. Here the narrative 'cues' prompt the viewer as a reminder that the story is fake, that texts contain texts within texts, and if a narrative sense is lost somewhere in the sounds and images, the viewer is invited to participate as a secondary author, to restore a narrative order of their own devising.

A similar narrative strategy defines the television soap opera, however conditions of play are determined by a less reflexive and more 'narratised' game plan. Attempts to define in concrete terms the tacit agreement – the unwritten conditions of play – regarding the audience and the soap opera/telenovela, has led to a gender-orientated theoretical approach – a 'feminine' serial narrative and 'masculine' causal narrative. The dramatic structure of the television soap opera represents an alternative to a 'masculine' narrative form, evident in the 'classical' structure of mainstream commercial cinema. A 'masculine' structure is said to be goal-orientated, with a pre-established conflict resolved within a climactic conclusion. Marsha Kinder draws the parallel to the male sexual experience, in contrast to the 'open-ended, slow paced, multi-climaxed structure' of the serial form, which, she says, is 'in tune with patterns of female sexuality.'

Tania Modleski suggests that '...soap operas are not altogether at odds with a feminist aesthetic... soap opera is opposed to the classic (male) film narrative, which, with maximum action and minimum, always pertinent dialogue, speeds its way to the restoration of order.' The dramas of soap opera, on the other hand, '... provide convenient occasions for people to come together, confront one another, and explore intense emotions. Thus in direct contrast to the male narrative film, in which the climax functions to resolve difficulties, the 'mini-climaxes' of soap opera function to introduce difficulties and to complicate rather than simplify character's lives.'

Tania Modleski compares the serial's narrative form, with its deferred resolutions and climaxes, to the rhythms women experience in their daily lives, where there is no resolution, but constant repetition and interruptions. Soap operas are constructed around multiple plot lines and offer a number of identifications, minor problems and their resolutions. She maintains that the soap opera emphasises specifically feminine attributes, dealing with personal relationships, personal and domestic crises, 'training' women to read people rather than just the text. The persistent use of close-ups 'contrasts sharply with other popular forms aimed at masculine visual pleasure which is often centred on the fragmentation and fetishisation of the female body.' The female perspective provided by the soap opera, accounting for both their appeal

and pleasure, although not progressive, at least offer an alternative to a dominant masculine perspective.

Gillian Dyer writes: 'The issue of female subjectivity and narrative theory's stress on resolution and coherence are important in the consideration of soap opera. Classic narrative theory cannot, for instance, account for tensions and contradictions that remain unresolved, particularly as regards audiences of different gender. Nor can it account for narratives that do not close, like the long running soap opera on TV. Soap opera offers the viewer a far more open structure through a complex organisation of time, temporary resolutions and a proliferation of enigmas.'

The construction of a feminist aesthetic around the soap opera, I maintain, is principally allied to the issues of ideology and gender. In regard to narrative, the structure of series and serials offer games distinguished by the options they provide rather than the genders they (supposedly) represent. This line of reasoning becomes apparent in the subsequent analysis of multi-linear and non-linear narratives categorised as computer games. (4 Chapter 8) The serial game's conditions of play include exposition through dialogue, the close-up, the protracted ellipsis, over-lapping plots, multiple plots, protraction – not resolution, providing players with ambivalent/multivalent play options in contrast to classical narrative game playing's bivalence or unilinear play.

'We speak of a 'woman's rhythm' but it isn't necessarily the same for all women,' writes Chantal Akerman, Belgian film director of *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), *All Night Long* (1982) and *American Stories* (1989). '... Hollywood doesn't express a man's rhythm either, but the rhythm of capitalism or facism. Men are cheated by it too...'

Both causal and serial structures can be attributed to the interests of commerce and expediency; the serial structure is initially a narrative contrivance to ensure viewer fidelity – the 'cliff-hanger' formulated in the silent cinema serials of *Fantomas* (1913), *Perils of Pauline* (1914), and their successors, to lure viewers back the following night or the following week. Serialisation has its precedents in Victorian literary magazines (the serialisation of Charles Dicken's novels) and the recitation skills of *Shahrazad* and *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Amusement

The situation comedy further exemplifies the transition of the classical Hollywood film game reframed to the criteria of television screen play. A publicity trailer for MGM's Andy Hardy series (15 films; 1937 - 1946) runs: 'America's first film family – the family you made famous! They love the judge for his wisdom and kindness. They love mother because she is the ideal mother. Poor Marion – always falling in love and out again. Andy captures everybody's heart because he is everybody's boy.'

Mickey Rooney, Cecilia Parker, Lewis Stone and Fay Holden make up the traditional four family members, beginning with *A Family Affair* (1937) and the basic prerequisites of the TV domestic sitcom – the father to son scenes, the mother to daughter scenes, coming of age scenes, and highlighting family unity and family values, which gained the series a special academy award for MGM for 'its achievement in representing the American Way of Life.' *Blondie* (28 films; 1938 - 1950), based on the newspaper comic strip, and similar B film family series, served as forerunners for *I Love Lucy* (CBS 1951 - 1961), *Life of Riley* (NBC 1949 - 1958), *Leave it to Beaver* (CBS 1957 - 1963), and a further 600+ domestic sitcoms produced for US television since 1948.

The situation comedy, like the soap opera, is concerned with re-assurances; firstly, by virtue of the subject material – the unity of the family in the domestic comedy, unity within 'work', or unity within whatever situation the programme describes (prison in *Porridge*, school in *Fame*, the medical team in *M*A*S*H*, etc); and secondly, by the drama's narrative structure. The situation comedy begins with a dilemma, or outside threat to 'family' unity, (the surrogate or symbolic family in *Fame*, *M*A*S*H*, etc) obstacles occur in the process of dispelling the threat or dilemma, but the crisis is resolved and the family unit remains intact. The classical fiction film game is reframed in one respect – the conflict is static; the drama returns to its initial stasis, thus ensuring the continuity of serialisation. In other words, 'entrapment' is a sitcom game pre-requisite, although the game itself is played out within the classical structure of beginning, middle and end; protasis, epitasis,

catastasis, catastrophe – ‘establishment, complication, confusion and resolution.’

David Grote argues that the ‘conservatism of situation comedy’ resists not only change of traditional comic plot, but change of any kind, a view to be tested in examining the evolution of the genre. ‘The sitcom carries its repetition compulsion to such an extreme that it has all but rejected the concept of plot as a process of change from an old equilibrium to a new... the process by which narrative development is avoided supports the view that television series narrative is essentially circular. The sitcom never reaches a new equilibrium but only returns to that point of stasis from which the episode began.’

In addition to labels of ‘conservative’ and ‘regressive’, David Marc contrasts situation comedy to the ‘subversive’ character of sketch comedy absent from the sitcom, which, like the television serial, is concerned with family unity and moral reassurance. Sketch comedy, he claims, has its roots in vaudeville and stand-up comedy routines, which are instantly accepted or rejected. In contrast, ‘the sitcom is the technology of the assembly line brought to art.’

Arthur Hough, in a survey of US situation comedy, claims that of the 398 US sitcoms produced between 1948 and 1978, over half belong to the domestic comedy category, which he sub-divides into four major sub-genres: the traditional family (1948 - 1955), which includes *I Love Lucy*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *The Life of Riley*, *The Honeymooners*, etc; nuclear families (1955 - 1965) represented by *Leave It To Beaver*, *The Donna Reed Show*, *The Ann Sothern Show*, and a number of ‘single parent family’ variations with *Bachelor Father*, *My Three Sons*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, etc; eccentric families (1965 - 1970) – *The Addams Family*, *The Munsters*, *The Beverley Hillbillies*, *Bewitched*, etc; and social and ethnic families (1970 - 1978) – *The Partridge Family*, *All in the Family*, *Soap*, etc.

The critique levelled at the sitcom, and the evolution of the domestic comedy in particular, exemplifies the way in which a dominant ideology modifies popular culture, ‘defusing any radicalism by the conventionality of the form.’ However, I suggest the situation comedy, in spite of the broad level of critique, and in acknowledging rigid genre conventions, has been instrumental in a radical reframing of the film

game to the audio visual narrative, and the construction of interactive narrative games – a form of ‘participatory narrative’ outlined in Chapter 9.

I Love Lucy transmissions began in 1951, the Lucille Ball character based on the CBS radio sitcom character in My Favourite Husband in the 1940s. As producer Lucille Ball introduced the innovations of the three camera recordings to enable editing, performance before a ‘live’ audience, and recording the programme in Hollywood which inaugurated a shift of production away from New York and to Hollywood, with commercial, formal and ideological ramifications for both television and film industries. Like The Cosby Show (NBC 1984 - 1992) a generation later, I Love Lucy accentuates the eccentricity of the central character while reflecting an identifiable middle America, and delivering a readily assimilated moral point. Programmes such as M*A*S*H, Soap, Cheers, and later Seinfeld (NBC 1990 - 1998) would employ the conventions of the format for rhetorical, parodic, social and textual games respectively.

Seinfeld resists the standard family ideology of the US sitcom (in contrast to British sitcom’s class ideology) and with segmentation, serialisation and self-reflexive textual play, creates a self-parodic meta-game in which the narrative defines (fictitiously) the conceptualisation and execution of the series; Seinfeld is approached by NBC ‘to do a sitcom.’ He and colleague George Constanza write it, studio executives arbitrate, re-define, discuss; a pilot is cast (entitled ‘Jerry’) with characters playing their fictitious alter-egos, and performed before a live studio audience with lines and situations played out in previous episodes told disparately and episodically in segments stretching over seasons from 1992 and onwards. The series, Seinfeld and Constanza assure NBC executives, is ‘about nothing.’ (Episodes #42 and #61). In contrast to Kearney’s concern of the postmodern quandary where ‘the self dissolves into self parody,’ the series extolls the individual and the process of creativity, similar to Dennis Potter’s textual deconstruction games in Pennies from Heaven (1978), The Singing Detective (1987), Blackeyes (1989), Karaoke (1996) and Cold Lazarus (1996).

Elsewhere the innuendo games of 1970s British sitcom, the dual plotting and novel-chapter structure game of Men Behaving Badly

(ITV/ BBC 1990 - 1996), and the subversive game playing of, for example, the Australian *Let the Blood Flow Free* (1992 - 1993) combining soap opera parody and carnivalesque humour; in which segmentation and serialisation characterise the genre's ongoing play with text and structure.

Chance

Game show narratives, like folk tales 'handed down orally among the common people,' begin with a dilemma, hinge on choices, play on 'chance' and end with a resolution. Like other television formats, the serial structure encourages viewer fidelity; 'the reigning champion,' 'come back next week...' etc. Whereas television 'theatre games' are scripted, the game show is defined by the form itself; 'chance games' are 'written' as they are watched; an unknown author wavering indecisively as to whom shall reap the rewards of wealth and good fortune. In other words, randomness functions as the narrative determinant in programmes such as *The Price is Right*, *Sale of the Century*, *Wheel of Fortune*, *Play Your Cards Right*, *Jeopardy*, etc.

John Fiske writes that in game shows 'the narrative appears unwritten, the resolution is as much a mystery to the characters as to the viewer, so the text has less authority to impose itself. In the unwritten narrative... the viewer, like that of soap opera, is positioned actively towards the text by its unwrittenness...' In other words, randomness is a narrative prerequisite; 'anything can happen' – the narrative is not working toward a pre-determined climax as with the traditional dramatic form – the possibilities are open ended.

Television game shows fluctuate in the demands made of contestants, between skill and knowledge on the one side, and self-degradation on the other. John Fiske distinguishes the dichotomy as between game shows requiring factual knowledge and human knowledge; the 'academic' or the 'everyday.' Raymond Williams describes television game shows' 'presentation of people as isolated and negotiable features and quantities, characteristic of many commercial television forms'. He describes the US *Dating Game* as 'conventionalised speculative mimings' of personal relationships; '...processes of human understanding, judgement and choice are turned into projected games

for the entertainment of others... the relationship is made into the material of deliberate embarrassment of prospective acquisition.'

Blind Date (UK; The Dating Game – US; Perfect Match – Australia; and variations elsewhere) – like many folk tales – is concerned with the quest for 'true love', yet in the game show format 'true love' is a commodity to be won or lost, like the new car, or the round-the-world trip, or the \$64,000. As with other game shows, a 'jackpot' winner once a week would soon diminish the credibility of the jackpot, lessening the viewing pleasure of witnessing an unexpected event, intensified by its infrequency. Similarly, in Blind Date, a successful pairing each week would soon dispense with one of the strongest reasons for watching the programme in the first place. Success is bestowed upon a select minority – this is conditional both to folk tales and to television game shows. The television equivalent to 'happily ever after' is to 'hit the jackpot' around which the television game show is structured. The serial format of television narrative does not necessitate the culmination of the 'tale', or a climax, within each episode. On the contrary, the appeal of the quiz show is that many may try but few shall succeed – whether the big prize, the 'jackpot', is \$64,000, or the new car, or the round the world trip, or the 'Mastermind of the Year' title; prizes to be claimed by a low percentage of contenders. The high failure rate of Blind Date 'dates' serves to emphasise the caprice of randomness – chances are many but 'fortune' is bestowed upon a select minority.

The Blind Date format is both game and ritual; once the game of selecting a candidate is completed, the ritual of romantic discipline begins, the outcome of which leads to the next game generated by the conventionality of the game show format; was the date a gain or a loss? Blind Date is a 'chance' game ritualising romance – as the folk tale ritualises romance with the intent of gratifying the listener with an idealised romantic encounter, Blind Date functions to fulfil the expectations of the viewer; the closure rests with success or failure, gain or loss.

Graeme Turner claims that (Australia's) Perfect Match actually subverts the television game show – that there are no winners and 'to assume that people watch Perfect Match purely for romantic reasons is to misread the parodic opening titles and to misunderstand how

violently it oscillates between formality and cynicism... The program's apparent object of uniting couples is so rarely achieved, and so embarrassing when it is, that it clearly has little to do with the reason for the high ratings.' He says the format is a frame for transgressive television, which he describes as 'the transgression of conventions, the break with the normal and the predictable, a kind of performance – a spectacle of pure TV.' Perfect Match is 'a romantic game show which it them subverts and parodies... an invocation of romance and young love competing with spectacles of failure and embarrassment for the viewer's interest...' Yet within the parameters of a viewer-orientated game-play theory, 'transgression' better describes a mode of play, rather than a textual form. Television's 'ironic imagination', defined by John Caughie, may or may not be integrated into the televisual 'game-plan', but remains a player option in the viewer's playing of the television text.

Contest

By 1954 Americans owned 32 million television sets; by the end of the decade 90% of US homes had TVs. A heavyweight title fight heralded the mass-market television era in the USA, the 1953 Coronation in the UK, the 1956 Olympics in Australia, the 1958 World Cup football in Sweden, and similar events elsewhere ensured that the local picture house was no longer the only audio/visual narrative game in town. Sporting and public events have been foremost in instigating television's audiovisual narrative reframing to the viewing public.

The metaphor of contest and game is most apparent in television competitive and sporting coverage – Bourdieu argues that television 'dramatises'; a television critic argues that 'the problem with sport is not that television treats it so thoroughly. The problem with sport is that it is the only thing television treats thoroughly. Everything else is just skipped over. Later they claim that such are the demands of the medium.' The principle issue over the now redundant sales rhetoric regarding HDTV in the late 1980s emphasised the advantage of the television screen ('re-framing') encompassing the football field, the tennis court, the track event.

Television as a story telling medium reconstructs world affairs, current events, political and social issues, and ultimately the human condition to the level of contest. If the contest is not apparent the function of television discourse is to 'fictionalise' one. Whether the issue is music, sport, personal relationships, politics; television's reframing the audiovisual narrative game is to clarify, simplify and elucidate the 'conditions of play.' Miss Universe, Eurovision Song Contest, World Cup Football, the Olympic Games, Election Night Specials, are television games of contest framed into the prime question: 'who wins?' The issues are secondary to the contest. The Eurovision Song Contest as a forum for the innovations and aesthetics of song writing and performance is secondary to the contest and speculation over the 'winner.' Hence the voting, it could be argued, is the essence of the programme, as opposed to the songs themselves. Similarly the appeal of the television Beauty Contest lies not in 'who is prettiest', but in the speculations over who wins. John Maynard Keynes compared the beauty contest to the Stock Market – both are founded on speculation and gambling. The contest is about 'trying to predict who everyone else will think everyone else will think is prettiest.'

Two integral aspects of sports and contest coverage are worth noting as they are intrinsic to other television narrative games: the role of the commentator and the necessity of 'live' coverage. Sport and contest rely on a commentator to emphasise drama that may not be readily apparent to the television viewer. The commentator instills dramatic tension into the proceedings in the manner of a dramatist improvising a given situation, comparable to the 'lecturer' of early cinema who facilitated the comprehension of the narrative.

The oratory style of the sports commentator varies according to the sport; a high tempo and agitated commentary is favoured for horse racing and boxing, a medium to high tempo for football, team sports, athletics; a more relaxed and less frequently used voice for tennis, cricket and golf, with an infrequent raise of pitch at moments of unexpected ebullience. The sports commentator's voice is comparable to the use of music in drama, which provides tension, humour, the emphasis of action, or whatever a particular scene or genre requires.

Likewise television news coverage is dependent upon the role of the narrator – as story teller – presenting world and domestic affairs in pre-packaged narrative units defining story and contest. In *Deciding What's News*, Herbert Gans, writes: 'The most basic format consideration, which is shared by all news media, is that news becomes suitable only when it is transformed into a story... Every story must always include a lead, a narrative and a closer.' Thus the news story, like classical narrative structure, has a beginning, a middle and an end, which, according to Gans, likens the news story to the morality play. News which cannot be made into a story, items which do not make a point, or have no ending, (closure) are ignored. However, I suggest that television news, in keeping with television's overall narrative strategy, incorporates continuity, serialisation and multilinearity – attributes as integral to news as other principle television genres.

The story also emphasises an identifiable protagonist, an antagonist and conflict. The story format; 'favours resolution over doubt, the concrete over the abstract, the narrative recounting of recent, finite events over the analytical account of continuing conditions.' John Fiske employs Todorov's narrative model to conclude that 'Newsworthy events are those that disrupt or restore equilibrium. The state of equilibrium is not itself newsworthy...'

Further, the selection of stories which make up the news bulletin, are structured into a format as to accentuate particular stories in a scale of priority based on which story represents the greatest 'disruption of the equilibrium'. The scale can be compared to a pyramid, with the 'strongest' story occupying most space, scaling downwards with less 'disruptive' stories. Graeme Burton lists television news 'general values' – an agenda for ensuring the viewer's 'investment' in the game: negativity, closeness to home, recency, currency (new details revitalise 'old stories'), continuity, simplicity, personality.

James Carey writes that 'news is not information but drama. It does not describe the world but portrays an arena of dramatic forces and action; it exists solely in historical time; and invites our participation on the basis of our assuming, often vicariously, social roles within it.' News is also 'on-going'. Television does not lead with compelling narratives, end them, and disperse with them. From the perspective of viewer/text

interaction, the best stories are the stories that ensure the viewer's return the following evening. Television news is not just drama, but serialised drama.

Sharon Lynn Sperry writes: 'Like soap operas, news stories often involve a set of major characters whose activities continue for months and even years. You may miss several passages of the story and still remain familiar with the major characters and their problems.' The characters in the news, like the characters in television serials, are sufficiently ambiguous for the protagonist – antagonist roles to be adopted and discarded as the situation demands. A viewer may condemn the 'villainy' of a character one week (a political leader, trade unionist, industrialist), and support their actions the next, with the ambivalent drives of identification of 'soap' characters. The roles of principle characters in the nightly news bulletins, oscillate from support to condemnation from week to week, day to day, or a single episode of news.

Thus news embodies the segmentation and serialisation of television's reframing of the audio visual narrative while incorporating components of the film game's dramaturgy to world events. NBC News' second day coverage of the Oklahoma Federal Government building bombing (March 15th, 1995) was introduced with a dramatic signature tune and the caption: 'The Bombing – Day Two of Terror in the Heartland', a deep toned voice over and an opening close-up shot of a young woman searching through debris. The function of narrative devices to enhance engagement in the audiovisual fiction game (title, music, mise-en-scène, voice-over, structure) depends, as with classical film narrative 'readings,' on the level of player expertise. To the routinised game-player the overtly dramatic devices risks loss of credibility depending to which degree the viewer identifies the dramatic devices of fiction.

The CNN coverage of the Gulf crisis and subsequent Gulf War, as 'hero – villain scenario' necessitated dramatic revitalising to sustain viewer engagement over the prolonged period following, Irak's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 to the commencement of counter-hostilities in January 1991. Devices included: the 'deadline', (the countdown to January 15th, 1991, the United Nations deadline for Irak's

withdrawal from Kuwait); analogy (David and Goliath – Kuwait, Irak) dialogue; both players (Hussein, Bush) non-conciliatory vocabulary; and the pre-scribed narrative structure of the hero-villain scenario; conflict – crisis – resolution. CNN's reporting of events leading to Operation Desert Fox nearly eight years later (December 1998), are likewise narrated with the rhetoric of television wrestling – a contest between two sides, a psychomachia of wills.

Television news structure, dramatisation and characterisation constitutes a blurring of boundaries between the two; the 'anchor' counterpart in television drama is the continuity between narrative segmentation and serialisation. The law firm senior in *LA Law*, the duty sergeant in *Hill Street Blues*, a hospital casualty ward supervisor in *Casualty*, whose narrative function is to provide the viewer with an encapsulation of the days events (and the events leading up to them), by means of introduction to the main actors and the main issues contained within the episode. The dramatic issues, like news events, are not resolved, but continue on into further episodes. When one story line is worked through, another takes its place. *LA Law*, *Hill Street Blues*, *Casualty*, and other 'investigative' drama programmes, take up the issues of the day and transform them into episodes of acted out dramatic scenarios.

The news bulletin's re-enforcements of culturally-driven precepts of right – wrong, good – bad; labelling the driving forces of the social structure into readily identifiable 'actants,' certainly constitutes an over-simplification of reality. Yet, as Peter Lennon suggests, '... the viewer progressively regulates his naivety about what he is seeing. He properly constructs a kind of proscenium arch around television and realises that what he is looking at is a kind of fictionalised fact, packaged and processed even when live.' If Lennon is over-indulgent in favour of the viewer, the 'realisation' at least, remains a player option. Through the reframing processes of segmentation and serialisation television news, by dissolving the parameters of the real and the manufactured, has developed an effective audiovisual interactive game. The game is an effective agent in that narrative manufactures meaning from the apparent disorder and disruption advanced in an evening television news bulletin. The inherent risk lies in the viewer's inability or

disinclination to distinguish the negotiable narrative from the non-negotiable. The 'what if..' scenario – a negotiation strategy of hypothesising that does not commit the negotiator to a unicursal trajectory – is not only germane to the narrative games of television news, but mandatory for the viewer to distinguish between the narrative doctrines of a dominant ideology, and the narrative games that television news effectually purveys.

Whereas cinema tells stories with pictures, accompanied by sound; television, it could be claimed, tells stories with words, accompanied by pictures.

The technical developments of cinema and television continue to influence their narrative forms: the basics of cinema technology (a perforated film reel transported through a projector onto a large screen) has changed little since the advent of sound, in contrast to television technology where advances in digital technology rival the audial and visual qualities of film. Furthermore, decreased cinema attendances have resulted in smaller cinemas, the rise of the cinema complex, and the diminishing size of the cinema screen. In the US, television ownership proceeded from 2% in 1948, 25% in 1951 (the first year of nationwide television), 50% in 1953, 70% – 1956, 90% 1962 and 98% by 1992, with belated but similar tendencies elsewhere in the world.

8. Computers

Digital Play

Computers are not just monitors, key boards and hardware, but also computation agents such as software assistants, animated interactive creatures, robots, 'wearables' and a host of other forms of computing devices. For the purposes of this 'screen' centred study I shall restrict this section ostensibly to computer based audiovisual screen play, mediated principally via the computer monitor, CPU and tangent board. Thus, as television screen play has re-framed components of the cinematic audiovisual narrative game, the transition from game to story is evident in the increasingly narrativised computer game, and the levels of physical interaction they advance.

A digital environment no more generates narratives than a television screen, but unlike the television screen a digital environment can generate the pretext for the construction of narratives. The computer screen provides an interface between narrative-structuring ('machine-logic') and story-constructing ('human-emotion'). A computer's complex actions via programmed instructions create sequences of inter-related and interacting binary decisions. Strategic decision making is the basis of game theory; also 'statistical decision theory' which is concerned with calculating odds and the evaluation of information required in decision making. A machine can simulate the selection of binary options that constitute strategic thinking, but not the emotional input to give decision making 'meaning.'

Disparity between 'narrative structuring' and 'story construction,' is exemplified in the following dialogue between patient and therapist:

Woman: Men are all alike!

Therapist: In what way?

W: They're always bugging us about something or other.

T: Can you think about a specific example?

W: Well, my boyfriend made me come here.

T: *Your boyfriend made you come here?*
W: *He says I'm depressed much of the time.*
T: *I am sorry to hear you are depressed.*
W: *It's true. I am unhappy.*
T: *Do you think coming here will help you not to be unhappy?*
W: *I need some help, that much seems certain.*
T: *What would it mean to you if you got some help?*
W: *Perhaps I could learn to get along with my mother.*
T: *Tell me more about your family.*
W: *My mother takes care of me.*
T: *Who else in your family takes care of you?*
W: *My father.*
T: *Your father?*
W: *You are like my father in some ways.*
T: *What resemblance do you see?*
W: *You are not very aggressive but I think you don't want me to notice that.*
T: *What makes you think I am not very aggressive?*
W: *You don't argue with me.*
T: *Why do you think I don't argue with you?*
W: *You are afraid of me.*
T: *Does it please you to believe I am afraid of you?*
W: *My father is afraid of everybody.*
T: *What else comes to mind when you think of your father?*
W: *Bullies.*
T: *Does that have anything to do with the fact that your boyfriend made you come here?*

The 'therapist' is generated by the computer programme, ELIZA, written by Dr Joseph Weizenbaum (1967) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The feedback simulates Rogerian school psychotherapy coaxing the patient to expose concerns and fears and reflecting them back to the patient. A script of prepared sentences responds to key nouns and verbs; when stuck for a response the programme repeats a sentence or responds with a generic phrase. The programme interacts with the 'player' encouraging the player to construct a story.

Janet Murray suggests that 'the lesson of ELIZA is that the computer can be a compelling medium for storytelling if we can write rules for it that are recognisable as an interpretation of the world.' This requires an understanding of what the digital environment entails; Murray lists 'four essential properties:' digital environments are procedural, participatory, spatial, and encyclopedic.

How do these properties differ from the audiovisual film and television environment? Murray argues that only digital environments can present space 'we can move through,' yet I suggest that procedure, participation and spatiality are inherent to the screen play of film and TV, albeit procedure and participation largely determined by the player. On the other hand the encyclopedic potential of the digital environment is an attribute unique to the computer medium. The 'textual streaming' (see below) of potential vast amounts of information has obvious advantages concerning information, references, cross-references, associations and connotations, yet, as Murray suggests, the extent of information can cause problems of overwieldy, overlong and overly complex narratives that fail to engage.

Murray maintains that just as the separation of the printed book into chapters was an important precondition for the modern novel; 'hypertext fiction is still awaiting the development of formal conventions of organisation that will allow the reader/interactor to explore an encyclopedic medium without being overwhelmed.' A comparison to the 'screen' of the printed page may prove helpful in defining the attributes of digital screen play. Kristof and Satran distinguish 'paper world' from 'screen world' in terms of size, readability, letter spacing, text on page/screen etc. A phenomenological (player-orientated) approach evaluating print narrative and screen narrative considers the psychological over the physiological; how a reader interprets words, and a viewer interprets images, and other considerations outlined in Chapter Five.

The specifics of computer 'screen play' according to Kristof and Satran include:

- scan from top left to bottom right
- larger items are more significant
- items above have primacy over items below
- 'more to come' signals at the bottom centre or right

As 'play' the correspondences relate as much, or more, to the print screen than the audiovisual screen. Such correspondences are implied by Brenda Laurel – computers as theatre, and Janet Murray – computer fiction as 'holographic novel.' Laurel compares the programmer to a playwright, advocating the advantages of dramatic structure's application to the computer world of interactive fantasy. Laurel suggests that applying the principles of drama, as opposed to narrative, is a prerequisite to 'engaging' the user. These include:

- enactment (drama)
- intensification (drama)
- unity of action (drama)
- description (narrative)
- extensification (narrative)
- episodic structure(narrative)

Freytag's dramatic action applied to computer activity provides the following list of comparisons:

a exposition	getting started
b inciting incident	preliminary evaluation
c rising action	entering new data
d crisis making	major trade-offs
e climax making	the decision
f falling action	creating an artifact
g denouement	finishing up

The similarity of 'agenda' again addresses the limitations of computer action and the universality of dramatic action; dramatic action synonymous with psychological engagement. 'Psychology attempts to describe what goes on in the real world with all its fuzziness and loose ends,' writes Laurel, 'while theatre attempts to represent something that might go on, simplified for the purposes of logical and affective clarity.'

Provided that 'theatre' is considered in its broadest and literal sense – 'a place of seeing', Laurel's point validates the assertion that audio-visual narrative, encompassing dramatic narrative from theatre to film, television and computer, indeed unites player and game on opposite sides of the 'mystic gulf.'

The same principle is at work in *Dramatica* (©1993) which the authors describe as 'the most sophisticated story creation system developed...', but which in effect is a Q+A system that, once the author has outlined plot and character details, is directed to digitalised scene description notebooks. Thus, as computer aided narrative forming, *Dramatica* (and other programmes and/or on-line automotive story generators) perform the function of the ELIZA programme in extracting narrative from the 'user', and providing options for the 'user's' narrative structure, along the lines of the 'film plot' game (players are duped into writing plots for non-existent films) outlined in Chapter 4.

The authors maintain that *Dramatica* is built on the concept that the structure and dynamics of a story are not random, but represent an analogy to a single human dealing with a problem... 'a complete story successfully argues all possible sides of its message, thus it will address all the possible human perspectives on that specific issue.' Character and characterisation represent psychological perspectives that provide insight into the viewer's thought processes, and what Melanie Anne Phillips and Chris Huntley describe 'a Grand Argument Story... in which every point is made,' 'is a model of the mind's problem solving process.'

The analogy of narrative as a representation of problem solving processes is less the issue here than what it is that distinguishes human – computer interaction and, for example, human – pen-paper interaction. I suggest there are minor interface disparities in that both the narrative game processes of formulation and fabulation (or construction/ reconstruction; reading/'writing',etc) are psychological processes in which, whatever medium is employed, the end result occurs subjectively regardless of the technology.

Consequently, Laurel's claim that the computer is not a tool but a medium is dubious, for depending upon which side of the 'mystic divide' the imaginative faculties are employed, the computer can function as either; as a system of representation (cf. film, television, book), or as aid to story construction – 'story' here synonymous with *inspirare* in contrast to *imago* – the creative process rather than the imitative process. What, after all, is the agent that 'animates' Eliza? Eliza is not a game but a computer programme which provides the pretext of a game. The game is 'generated' by the player, not only through the

narrative game's 'suspense of disbelief', but through the player's enactment of character. The player must create a scenario in the role of 'interviewee' and Eliza as 'interviewer'. As with *The Story of Lucy* the narrative game provides a framework for the player to create their own story. The reader is the writer.

In the final analysis digital play is – as other forms of screen play – inextricably linked to the gulf between human and screen, whether computer, television, cinema, proscenium stage, page of a book, or the internal screen that captures the projected images of dreams. Dennett uses the term 'centre of narrative gravity', as a metaphor for the seat of consciousness; for Münsterberg the cinema screen represented the internal psychological process uniting film and viewer – in short, interaction.

Interaction means to act on one another – a two way process, as in the relationship between game and player, text and reader, as formulated in the paradigm: text ÷ reader. According to Brenda Laurel, interactivity is characterised by:

1. frequency (how often you can interact)
2. range (how many choices are available)
3. significance (how the choices affect matters)

Optimum interactivity allows the 'user' to do what they want when they want, and to be able to act within the representation itself. Theatre and computers both represent action with multiple agents, although from Laurel's definition, a book and a lively imagination fulfills the 'optimum interactivity' criteria.

Ray Kristof and Amy Satran suggest that computer interactivity 'means that the user, not the designer, controls the sequence, the pace, and most importantly, what to look at and what to ignore,' and that 'figuring out what the user wants to do at any given time is the basis of all interaction design.' Information design means 'creating an interesting journey – or at least a clear path – through the information.' Suggested options include the image map or the metaphor; an image map which uses a selection of images to represent content; or the metaphor – a book, an office desk, a control panel – an object or device

with which the user is already familiar and can thereby facilitate information access.

John Barry defines interactive as 'responding to input and producing output to which a user can respond...', a definition self-evident in human-computer interaction, yet containing wider implications of the text ÷ reader paradigm listed above.

The interactivity promoted by computer game manufacturers is misleading in that players' options are limited to the options provided by the software programme. Yet clearly the mental interaction of audio-visual narrative is not the same as the physical interaction of the computer game. Apart from the obvious distinction of manipulating an apparatus (although this also applies to the television and video remote control) what are the similarities and distinctions of these audiovisual forms? What they have in common is a player/viewer interactivity of writing – rewriting, constructing – reconstructing, comprehending – interpreting. Yet computer game interactivity is not necessarily a guarantee for an extension of options. Disparities between the two arise in defining attributes of the computer game, which include:

- the absence of character
 - an impedant narrative trajectory
 - a random narrative trajectory
 - an indeterminate or self-determined duration of play
-
- the absence of character

With the absence of character the player engages with plot, with its emphasis on speculation and outcome. Without a character's narrative 'moral centre' any emotional quandary over dilemma is diminished.

In regard to film narrative Lloyd Michaels defines character as 'a represented person that corresponds by analogy to our understanding of personhood in real life without being confused with reality...' Murray maintains that in computer games the player is the protagonist; 'we are always the protagonists of the symbolic action' in plots such as 'I

encounter a confusing world and figure it out..., I encounter a difficult antagonist and triumph over him..., etc'

Computer games, in most instances, rely on the kind of first person narration discussed in an analysis of *Lady in the Lake*. (3Chapter 5). The computer game narrative, like Montgomery's experiment, I suggest, reduces possibilities of interpretation and impedes rather than promotes, a narrative flow. Thus, the predominant first person subjective mode of the computer game requires an alternative set of criteria compared to the 'play' of fiction film. For example, the narrative device employed in *Citizen Kane* was that of the surrogate investigator – Thompson as the probing reporter – investigating as the viewer investigates. It is a mystery story, in which, as David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson suggest, 'instead of investigating a crime, the reporter investigates a character.'

Michaels argues that the viewer's 'repressed knowledge of the image's unreality' (my italics) enables the viewer to perceive character in terms of both presentation and withdrawal. The cinema's signification is distinguished from the novel through 'the imaginary aspect of the film image.' Michaels suggests that a 'paradigm of presence/absence' explains: (a) how character's indeterminacy is signified cinematically; (b) how certain character 'types' and narrative modes predominate, and 'illuminate' their reflexivity, and; (c) why certain classic works endure by constructing character as 'a lost object', 'replenishing spectatorial desire.' In narrative terms the distinction is marginal, I suggest, between the reader imagining 'I' in *Rebecca*, the novel, and the verbal description provided by Daphne du Maurier, and perceiving the 'represented' 'I' in the film. The representation via the description in the film's narration – cinematic signifiers as opposed to literary ones – provides prompts and suggestions, rather than a definitive representation. Thus the viewer may invest in the character at whatever level they choose and at any time in the duration of the narrative.

- 'impedant' narrative trajectory

Impedance in electrical circuits is achieved through a combination of resistance and reactance which controls the flow of an

electrical circuit. Similarly, in the impedant digital narrative, the player's 'flow' is 'controlled' – the interaction required to overcome obstacles relates to manual dexterity with computer peripherals, in contrast to film narratives emphasis on dilemma and speculation.

In computer games the player's objective is not necessarily 'victory', but in most instances, a high score. With many computer games 'victory' is not possible anyway; the computer game format is principally impedant. The 'contest' computer game plot-line can be reduced to: fight villain and solve mystery, with an outcome of 'survive', or 'die – try again.' Similarly, the story line of most contemporary action cinema favours plot impedance over character; the intertextual relationship between the two forms have produced games based on films; Die Hard, Alien, Star Wars (Rebel Assault and others).

The narrative limitations of computer games – apparent in the impedant plot-orientated game – is largely the affect of machine logics' capability to simulate 'strategic thinking' and inability to contend with 'dilemma' (emotional engagement) and complexity of character. The contest game, Murray suggests, 'is open to expressive expansion in many ways once we move the protagonist beyond the role of simple fighting machine.'

- 'random' narrative trajectory

Whereby prediction/speculation is multilinear/multivalent: anything can happen – the player's plot orientation is dependent on development through replay. Outcome is also random. There is no guaranteed 'happy ending' – in certain scenarios the novice player 'dies' through lack of expertise.

Voyeur (1995) is a variation on the Rear Window game promising a different narrative with each start-up. As voyeur the player is witness to a family plot to reveal a power-hungry presidential candidate as the villain. Interaction lies in a choice of 'windows' which contain segments of plot - clues – which pieced together provide a unified narrative. The segmentation is a digital equivalent of a Thomas Pynchon novel and the seemingly disparate episodes whereby fusion into narrative unity is left to the reader; or the episodic structure of

Dennis Potter's *The Singing Detective* where the six separate plot 'trajectories' are disclosed as having emanated from the same source, namely the feverish delusions of an invalid author. The difference which *Voyeur* (and computer games in general) publicise as an added 'interaction', is randomness, equivalent to an instability of the plot.

- indeterminate duration of play

The interactive computer game allows the player to define duration (indeterminate); the linearity of film and TV narrative is determined – a 90 minute feature film, a 30 minute television programme. However, it is a disparity open to interpretation. When does a player decide to stop playing? When does a narrative game end?

Disparities between the narrative games of computer software and film/TV fiction, then, are not absolute, rather shifts of emphasis. As industry verticality of CD-ROM game and feature film production develops, the two forms continue to advance within the commercial mainstream. Concurrently, digital media experimentation with character has led to established actors in 'digital' roles, and the characterisation of digital figures; Mario, Gareth Knight, etc. Regardless of form, and regardless of 'screen' upon which to play, the issues for producers and players relate to effective story telling. The discernible distinctions are in the form by which the stories are presented.

Digital Games

Game as Metaphor

'We can't always say what counts as a game,' writes Edward Branigan reiterating the deliberations of Ludwig Wittgenstein outlined in Chapter 1. Eric Berne argues that games 'are basically dishonest, and the outcome has a dramatic, as distinct from merely exciting, quality.' Neither games nor play necessarily imply fun or enjoyment; games of sport and contest can take a serious turn and 'play' applied to the stock market or military conflict, provides only a limited few with the

possibilities of the game's pleasure or stimulation. A game is based on pretence which constitutes a contract and a code of behaviour between game and player. The player can choose, if so wished, to regard game playing as a form of deceit, pretence, self-delusion, which in essence it is; or as a correspondence to the issues of what game players term RL – Real Life. Narrative as metaphor for life's games, provides the reader/viewer with the option to consider strategies and moves in simulations of real life dramas and dilemmas.

Throughout the text I have considered game as narrative, not as metaphor, nor as analogy but as a 'correspondence.' I refer to the reflections of Gaston Bachelard who suggests that whereas metaphor perpetuates an illusion of a possible 'proper meaning' that predates the image, in correspondence two words 'exchange their powers', and supplement rather than supplant each other. The correspondence between game and narrative is not an obvious one however, as reflected in the views of, for example, Espen Aarseth (< Chapter 2, pp. 30 - 31), and of Chris Crawford who distinguishes story and game as the distinction between 'an immutable sequence' and the game's 'branching tree of sequences.'

'The audience of a story must infer causal relationships from a single sequence of facts,' writes Crawford, 'the player of a game is encouraged to explore alternatives, contrapositives, and inversions. The game player is free to explore the causal relationship from many angles.' Crawford argues that a story is meant to be experienced once, whereas a player expects to play the game many times, trying different strategies each time. 'The storyteller has direct creative control over his audience's experience; the game designer has indirect control...'

Like Aarseth, Crawford's distinctions between game and story derive from a necessity to characterise an emerging narrative form; the correspondence of story to game is founded upon a viewer orientated theory unifying player and game, story and experience. A more generic view of game is provided by Marshall McLuhan, who considers games as 'popular art, collective, social reactions to the main drive or action of any culture...' games are 'faithful models of a culture...' Moreover, games 'permit simultaneous participation of many people in some significant pattern of their own corporate lives,' suggests McLuhan, and concludes

that 'the desperate need for games in a highly specialised industrial culture' derives from that games constitute 'the only form of art accessible to many minds...'

The correspondence of narrative to game, I suggest, lies midway between these two seemingly irreconcilable interpretations of earlier cogitations around what counts as a game. Ultimately game as a system of representation means that imagination – the suspense of disbelief, the leap of faith – is what makes the game work. A player has to want to play – has to accept the representation as a make-believe reality. Thus the four common factors that Crawford lists which constitute a game – representation, interaction, conflict and safety – I suggest are as applicable to the audiovisual narrative games as to the five kinds of games defined by Crawford: board games, card games, athletic games, childrens games and computer games. In addition, the game-board screen – as opposed to mindscreen – functions as an interface to the game play of film, television or computer.

A screen can plug into a video, a broadcasting aerial, cable service or satellite decoder and a computer. On one and the same screen a viewer can watch a film, a TV programme, play a computer game or download a web-site. Whatever is screened, the viewer can choose their own level of interactivity. With video the viewer can fast-forward, rewind or still-frame a video tape; with television, 'zap' TV channels, with computer, 'surf' the Internet, or compete/play within the digital environment. The proponents of computer games emphasise 'play' over 'view' – how an 'interactor' can manipulate many characters, explore diverse storylines, and 'end' when they want – my aim here is to consider the extent of choice present day computer games can offer. My contention from the outset is based on interactivity as a psychological state of mind whereby narrative strategies are determined, indirectly by viewer return of investment (viewing selection); and directly by production demands of investment return (viewing provision).

The narrative forms of film, television and computer games may devise/assume any kind of narrative strategy – yet each form assumes an optimal strategy based on the pragmatics of investment return noted above. In other words, in general terms, film stories have one character, one problem, one plot; television stories have many

characters, many problems, many plots and the computer game has the potential for choice of character(s), choice of problem(s) and choice of plot(s).

Film	Television	Computer Games
(uni)linear	multi-linear	opti-linear
one character	many characters	choice of character(s)
one problem	many problem	choice of problem(s)
one plot	many plots	choice of plot(s)
one line	several lines	limitless line(s)
one perspective	many perspectives	any perspective

The term opti-linear narrative (from opti/optare - to choose) distinguishes television's multi-linearity. The digital environment (the game board screen) provides further options in character multiplicity. A syntagmatic axis provides 'context' – a sequential description of a character, in this case defining age, social status, appearance, dress, demeanour and education. The paradigmatic axis provides options. Consequently, the first two lines of a character delineation grid for The Story of Lucy (3Chapter 4) generates 36 possible 'Lucies.' A six line paradigmatic axis gives Lucy x 46,656. If each of the other four characters are provided with similar options, any given combination provides over two billion character combinations, each with a potentially distinctive slant on the narrative.

Is Peter a fair, tall and shy 18 year old student, a short stocky 48 year old lawyer, or a 60 year old professor? Is he sexually inexperienced; a notorious womaniser – a bounder, recently widowed, or married, or a labile alcoholic? Is Lucy, 13 years, 15, 25, 35? Is she betrothed, married, a virgin, a prostitute, a career woman? Is she fair, dark, be-spectacled, robust, shy, demure, awkward, alluring, bold, aggressive, a femme fatale? Arthur Asa Berger lists 19 traits an author can include in character description (name, age, gender, height, weight, race, hair colour, hairstyle, complexion, eyes, nose, posture, body language, voice, accent, clothes, facial expression, occupation, setting), any one of which may provide a new slant on The Story of Lucy.

The Story of Lucy – 'filling in the blanks'

s y n t a g m a t i c		a x i s					
		AGE	STATUS	APPEARANCE	DRESS	CHARACTER	EDUCATION
p a r a d i g m a t i c a x i s	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

By adding options for place (country, region, landscape, environment) time (of day, of year, historical period), weather conditions, description of the river (undertow, swirling torrent, calm, deep and dark) and the narrative possibilities match the complexity of a chess game. To the descriptive elements of the narrative could be added plot point options: Peter and Michael are brothers; William is a six year old child and Lucy is his governess; David goes back, Peter jumps into after Lucy; William knows that unbeknownst to Lucy, Peter is her brother, separated at birth; David is the father of Lucy, or Michael was ruined through Peter's avarice. The table below represents a selection of options available to an author on either side of the narrative screen.

A story of less than a dozen branch points, with two choices at each branching, would require hundreds of endings. With only two menu options at each link, with branches providing a maximum of five options each, generates 32 possible; branches with 10 options would generate 1,024 possible endings. Compare this to a game of chess where there are 30 - 35 possible moves at each turn, which can be responded to in 30 - 35 ways, defining about 1 thousand complete turns. An average chess game lasts 40 turns, yielding 10120 different chess games. According to Steven Pinker the number of variables are more than there are particles in the visible universe. Similarly, given ten choices for a word to begin a sentence, ten choices for a second word, and ten choices for a third word yields 3000 three word beginnings, so that a number of sentences of 20 words 1020 yields a hundred million trillion sentences. In music if a melody can be selected from 8 notes, 64 pairs of notes, 512 motifs of three notes, 4,096 phrases of four notes, yielding many trillion musical pieces. Pinker claims these examples are to impress the reader 'with the vastness of thought,' but they subsequently demonstrate the limitless-ness of options, narrative or otherwise. My point is that in regard to narrative, options of this multitude – whether generated digitally or mentally – only acquire significance in the context of the narrative itself, and in the individual's 'playing' of the narrative.

Game to Story

What is required to effect a transition of game into story? Firstly, ascertaining what determines a story – a cogent story in accord with the criteria of film and television audiovisual narrative – provides a suitable point of departure. For example, the strong opening, the satisfying ending, an obvious conflict, obstacles, engaging characters, a consistent plot (narrative logic), structure, and some sense of moral, theme or premise – that a story is about something.

That the computer game incorporates multiple plots and multiple characters as part of an overall narrative strategy, is not necessarily innovative – rather narrative options that have their precedents in both literary and audiovisual narrative. *Intolerance* (1916) intercut plot and character; the television serial employs multiplicity in plot and duplicity in character as overt narrative strategies to accommodate multiple readings (Chapter 7). The role of J R Ewing in *Dallas* (1978 - 1990) oscillated from hero to villain depending on the plot-line, prompting a viewer's changing perspective and allegiance. Similarly, players of *Rebel Assault* confront options of character allegiance – from Rebel to Empire – an ambiguity of affinity dependent upon a player's perspective of the Empire as representing stability and order, or tyranny and oppression.

Whereas the multilinear plot contains multiple characters (from *Intolerance* to *Short Cuts*), the multiform plot, according to Janet Murray, 'works as a kind of scientific proof of the meaning of one person's life. The protagonists of *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Blind Chance*, *Sliding Doors*, etc (Chapter 3) experience both plot A and plot B; Marty in *Back to the Future* (1985), 'rescripts' his life', and Phil in *Groundhog Day* (1993) tests divergent 'scripts' in his attempts at seduction – a narrative strategy which Murray describes as 'an updating of 18th century novel conventions where courtship is a process of moral education.'

Murray writes that, 'in the incunabular days of the narrative computer we can see how 20th century novels, films and plays have been steadily pushing against the boundaries of linear storytelling,' comparable to novelists attempts to 'turn a linear passive medium into

an interactive one...' So what do the 'game-plan' strategies of the multilinear narrative entail? Broadly speaking, the film/television pre-production 'gameplan' comprises:

idea ' > synopsis ' > treatment ' > script (linear) > ' shooting script

In the computer game:

idea > synopsis ' > treatment ' > script (opti-linear) ' > story board



flowchart

According to Kristof and Satran, flowchart design is determined by:

Content: organisation and structure of information

Usability: topic categories and access routes required by the user

Simplicity: design clarity to production time and costs

The flowchart link is an 'access control' corresponding to the transition of one film scene to another. A film/tv scene transition uses the fade out/dissolve/cut/wipe – forms of cinematic signification, which usually affect the entire screen as each frame in film and video is a single unit. As these cinematic signifiers constitute narrative devices, what then of the digital correspondences? Digitally, a transition need not affect the whole screen – images can be introduced or phased out independently, interdependently, thematically or timed to specific moments for specific purposes. The digital transition is in a process of creating a vocabulary of its own, initially based on the cinematic transitions devised, for the most part, a century ago.

Writers, as gamemakers for computers, are taking the technology from the computer engineers in order to create narratives and narrative devices, in a manner comparable to the emergence of the writer in the cinema's transition from technological play to the narrative

fiction game. Playing with fast motion, for example, was taken from the hands of the machinists and into the fiction with films such as *Onesime the Clockmaker* (*Onésime horloger*, 1912), reverse motion in early Lumière actualités, likewise the machinists splicing inserts, later assimilated by filmmakers into a narrative discourse.

Tom Gunning maintains that the cinema of attractions 1895 - 1907 incorporated narration behind the 'attraction' using the audience familiarity with tableaux – from readily recognisable narratives of the day. Today, the situation is comparable with the authors of the computer game relying upon the player's familiarity with narrative based on film: 'the cultural interfaces of the 1990s try to walk an uneasy path between the richness of control provided in general-purpose HCI [human-computer interface] and an 'immersive' experience of traditional cultural objects such as books and movies,' writes Lev Manovich.

Janet Murray describes the 'continued loosening of the traditional boundaries between games and stories, between films and rides, between broadcast media (television & radio) and archival media (books, videos), between narrative forms (books) and dramatic forms (film, theatre) and even between audience and author.' However, she argues, (albeit from a predominantly literary perspective), games and stories are quite different: games involve activity, whereas a story only requires that a reader 'pay attention.'

Murray addresses reader response critics as distinguishing between an emotional and cognitive activity; game implies consciousness of activity and thereby changes our relation to the story. Yet, I suggest, the audiovisual narratives of film and television and the game playing options they provide, suggest a reflexivity and 'interaction' clearly at odds with Murray's concept of story. 'Emotional activity' is only a part of the game playing interaction with narrative; speculation and strategic thinking are as much part of reader/viewer interaction with story, as with (in Murray's definition) game.

Murray further distinguishes story closure and game closure – the latter's 'superiority of the losing ending' in certain games which 'suggest a basic opposition between game form and narrative form.' Yet options provided by 'certain' audiovisual narratives are not so dissimilar as Murray maintains; player options in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *The*

Taking of Pelham 1 - 2 - 3 (1974), for example; as well as the viewer's option to 'rewrite' the narrative closure, forsaking the traditional Hollywood 'happy ending' ('good story, but I couldn't buy the ending' response of some viewers); or 'amending' a 'negative' ending (the contract killer survives in Leon (1996), is reunited with the orphaned girl and they embark upon a successful television series. Or the fourth bride of Raise the Red Lantern (1991) regains her sanity and undertakes to avenge the death of 'third bride'..., etc). The issue here is one of perspective – a phenomenological perspective considers viewer response as a psychological interaction. This, I suggest, can be likened to game playing interaction where selecting an interface option on a computer screen is still subject to the same scrutiny, analysis and subjective response of a story segment or sequence in the audiovisual narrative.

Quest Games

The Edison kinetoscope's restricted viewing to an individual 'experience' bears comparison to the contemporary solitary human-computer interaction. One player at a time. The solitary audiovisual experience appropriates a hitherto unexplored aspect of homo ludens, man the hunter.

'Present day man is essentially Man-the-Hunter, very similar to Cro-Magnon Man, who appeared in Europe some 35 000 years ago,' write Howarth and Gillham. '...there has been no radical change in human physiology in the intervening period. Man today is psychologically fitted to an environment which no longer exists.' They suggest that as a consequence artificial hunting ground environments are manufactured. The contemporary techno environment restricts problem solving, in the main, to be dealt with at a cognitive symbolic level, not necessarily involving behavioural activity.

Certainly the audiovisual narrative provides such environments; mimetically in the form of the car chase, the pursuit, the hunt, the contest, and explicitly as medium. From the film festival, and the individual viewer's pursuit of the 'neglected' or 'cult' film (closely tied to Freud's 'rescue fantasy'), to video retail outlets, to the television

'zap' or the Internet 'surf' as a means of constructing an indigenous text through the pursuit of narrative fragments, images or random information. Hunting fragments, on television via the 'zap', or on Internet via the 'surf' generate random narrative, or the possibility of narrative, in contrast to the unravelling of the 'pre-determined narrative.'

The significance of the 'pre-determined' film narrative is diminished in ratio to its availability – a 24 hour period on US television, for example, provides the viewer with a choice of ca 50 feature films via cable and network television. Internet, on the other hand, provides 'a root system of separate and autonomous networks' the size of which no one knows, though in 1996 comprised an estimated 4.8 million computer host sites, in turn serving any number of peripheral computers. Internet is 'hypertextual', defined by George Landow as 'an infinitely re-centerable system whose provisional points of focus depends upon the reader... it is composed of bodies of linked texts that have no primary axis of organisation.'

The implications of the 'zap' or the 'surf' is not on problem solving through speculation and hypothesis, but the 'indeterminate' creation of narrative from the fragments 'hunted down.' The hunt, itself a simulative game, is no longer interaction between player and game, reader and text; but the skills and exertions of the player required to create a game.

Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com, speaking from a commercial perspective, maintains that 'the ubiquity of the Internet is more important than the technology of the Internet,' but it is not just that Internet is everywhere at once, but everything at once, representing a seemingly limitless assortment of textual segments – lexia – to be assembled into a 'narrative flow' bound only by the spatial and temporal parameters set by the player/interactor.

Internet web sites constitute 'assemblage points' – independent production units where texts are thematically collated. The interactor can select and reject lexia in a form of screen play – whereby, as with the earliest examples of cinematic picture play – narrative is arbitrary. A further form of Internet screen play is erecting websites, which correlates to the process of seeking them; searching for a narrative

form via page links, sounds, images, and text. Here are the makings of a narrative form, as nebulous as the pre-cinema experimentation and 'play' with form – as yet undeveloped, but developing. The audiovisual style of the web site window emphasises fragmentation, indeterminacy and heterogeneity, and, writes William Mitchell, 'process or performance rather than the finished art object.'

Similarly, the means of distribution is in such a phase of development. In the early 1900s filmmakers functioned as heads of independent production units with their own artistic and production standards. The Hollywood studio system and the industrialising of film production in the 1920s was borne primarily of a need for distribution. A hundred years later CD-ROM and Internet 'directors' are, likewise, heads of their own production units – each web site is a potential production company. Distribution is free, the market is global, but the market needs guidance. In 1983 the internet hosted 562 sites; 1987 – 28,174; 1991 – 617,000; 1995 – 6,642,000. In 1994 web usage growth was estimated 2,300%; commercial sites had grown from 27,000 in 1995 to 750,000 in 1998. As distribution paved the way for a film industry – and the shaping of narrative norms as a result – Internet – and whatever narrative norms develop as a result – requires an alternative strategy, namely selection.

Already the profusion of narratives and narrative strands has led to increasing complexity in television narrative, as with the multiple story lines of Hill Street Blues and the subsequent open ended stories of television series and serials (3Chapter 7), that lends itself to the narrative hypertextual environment of Internet. Selection – like 'surfing the net' – is the key issue in the 'playing' of the hypertext narrative.

Janet Murray envisages an emerging cyberdrama – the coming digital story, like novels and films, which 'will encompass many different formats and styles but will essentially be a single distinctive entity – a reinvention of story telling for the new digital medium.' Yet even the most optimistic projection of such a narrative form must entail the shaping of narrative to individual needs – the multiplicity of options risk intimidating the player with an overabundance of choice.

Here too the analogy to the formative years of audiovisual narrative in general bears consideration. The peep shows and stag films

of early cinema; VCR in the 1970s and the rapid rise of the hardcore film video, both retail and rental; and the Internet sex sites that continue to dominate Internet user selection. Although critics maintain that Internet events such as the 'Internet Sex Hoax' (July, 1998) threaten the Net's credibility, the interest in terms of user interaction, exemplifies the Net's potential narrative effectiveness. The President of Internet Entertainment Group, Seth Warshavsky, claims that 'the two 18 year olds who invited the world to watch them lose their virginity' was an event 'aimed at fooling more people than Orson Welles' 1938 radio drama, War of the Worlds...'

Likewise the maximum hits recorded on a single day, occurred on September 12th, 1998 with the Internet release entitled: 'Referral to the United States House of Representatives pursuant to Title 28, United States Code, 595(c) Submitted by The Office of the Independent Counsel' together with 'Highlights From the Kenneth Starr Report' which carried the government warning: 'The report itself contains explicit descriptions of sexual activity that may be unsuitable for children under the age of 18.'

If the narrative potential of Internet is to be realised, the first prerequisite is a standardising of form; hypertext or 'stream'? The merging of screens – television and computer – is a means by which to sustain television 'streaming' – 'real-time' transmission of television without having to 'download' to the home computer harddisk. Internet would thus become a viable alternative broadcasting system, with television/Internet providing new forms of participation. Previously broadcast episodes of television series would be available to the viewer, checking references to earlier episodes or other series would also be feasible options.

Critics of the web's integration with television, however, maintain that 'web surfing and channel surfing are genuinely different pursuits; to imagine them as equivalents is to ignore the the defining characteristics of each medium.' Steven Johnson argues that a web surfer clicks on a site out of interest – thereby creating links through association. The television 'zap,' however, is a random and aimless activity borne of boredom. Johnson sees Internet's neglect of hypertext's possibilities as ignoring the primary motivation for the user's interaction

with the web; 'the freedom and immediacy of movement – shuttling from site to site across the infosphere, following trails of thought wherever they led us...'

Johnson draws upon a linguistic analogy – that 'the link plays a conjunctive role, binding together disparate ideas in digital prose.' The fact that Internet ignores hypertext and 'a whole new grammar of possibilities, a new way of writing and telling stories,' does not mean that a new generation of digital storytellers do likewise, whom, according to Johnson 'are busy conjuring up the new grammar and syntax of linking.' Johnson's enthusiasm for the hypertextual form notwithstanding, the two forms of 'narrative assemblage' – associative links and random 'digressions' are not necessarily contradictory plausibilities – Internet's storytelling potential may even lie in these two disparate strategies finding a complimentary platform.

As a narrative medium, Internet in its present form, has certain weaknesses compared to established forms of audiovisual narrative. These, I suggest, include: lack of strong personalities – the basis of television, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, 'the quick thinker' (< Chapter 7); genre, amounting to audience identifiable expectations; clarity and cohesion of narrative; cross promotion – and the story selling apparatus which pervades both television and film industries; some form of EPG – an electronic programme guide which can direct the viewer to readily accessing a narrative of their choice.

In effect, Internet's storytelling debilities – which may prove to be the strengths of the hypertext narrative – can be attributed to two main areas; an absence of context – the user has no knowledge of who they are dealing with, of authorship, of narrative credibility, reliability or continuity; and, an absence of contest – the impartiality and multilinearity of hypertext does not favour taking sides in the experience of the primal narrative form of the psychomachia contest of wills. It does favour – as opposed to taking sides – the opportunity to experience both sides; to enter the realm of the participatory narrative.

9. Scenarios

Internarrativity Games

Intertextuality

Trivia means 'three roads'; the medieval curriculum comprised seven liberal arts – the lower level trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and the upper level quadrivium (geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, music). The contemporary reading of the word ('of little value or importance') was modified marginally with the popularity of the Trivial Pursuit parlour game (© 1984) in the mid 1980s. Trivia is not important, but trivia can be fun. The intertextuality games of audiovisual narrative, like trivia, constitute 'three roads,' or options, directed to primary, secondary or tertiary texts.

Intertextuality in the cinema consists of the 'referential relationships with other films, from the casual references one film may make to another to wholesale borrowings or "appropriations"...' Richard Gollin writes that genre is an 'especially significant form of intertextuality,' yet I maintain that genre constitutes only one of three roads, or options, that intertextual game playing provides. Genre adheres to John Fiske's concept of horizontal intertextuality; 'relations... between texts... explicitly linked, usually along the axes of genre, character, or content.'

The term 'intertextuality', attributed to Julia Kristeva's suggestion that 'any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, and that any text is the absorption and transformation of another...', has found application to a range of texts, from literature, cinema and television to semiotic studies of shop windows and advertising. This first road of intertextuality constitutes a game of 'I spy' or 'spot the reference', which permeates the contemporary cinema both outside and within the commercial mainstream.

In the Hollywood film the glib intertextuality has a self-reverential (as well as self-referential) function, as opposed to self-distancing. In *Twins*

(1988) the Arnold Schwarzenegger character regards a Sylvester Stallone Rambo poster contemptuously, the Danny de Vito character chides, 'no yodelling' and Schwarzenegger assures an old woman 'I'll be back...'; 'action-hero', 'Austrian', and 'Terminator', respectively. In *Die Hard 2* (1990) the Bruce Willis character's off-handish references to the film's predecessor, rather than deconstruct the text, serve to aid the viewer's 'leap of faith' (as opposed to suspense of disbelief) in accepting the implausible sequence of events from film one, which is to be repeated in film two.

The popularity of *Casablanca* has resulted in an ongoing intertextual game that covers the breadth of both audiovisual and literary narrative; from *A Night in Casablanca* (1946), *Breathless* (*A bout du souffle*, 1959) to *Play It Again Sam* (1972), to television situation comedy parody (*Parker Lewis Can't Lose*, *Red Dwarf*, *The Simpsons*, etc), to the 1980s debut staging of the original play, *Everyone Comes to Rick's* and Woody Allen's play on which the film *Play It Again Sam* is based (taken from a line not spoken in the film), to gender reversal in *Barb Wire* (1996) to cultural-reversal in *Far East* (*Australia*, 1982), with Bryan Brown as the world-weary bar owner, to intertextual wordplay (*The Usual Suspects*, 1996), to computer games (*Grim Fandango*, 1998), to literary texts, Robert Coover's *A Night at the Movies* (1987).

Coover's short story, 'You Must Remember This,' is an intertextual game played around the transition of two scenes manipulating both the psychological significance of the dissolve and the historical context of the Hays code. Ilsa Lund confronts Rick at gun point and demands the letters of transit that will ensure hers and husband's, Victor Lazlo, safe exit from *Casablanca*. In the film, not in the original script, the continuity is broken by a dissolve to an exterior shot of the airfield and the sweeping light of the beacon. The light sweeps across Rick standing on the balcony smoking a cigarette as he speaks the last line.

The ellipsis indicated by the dissolve is indeterminate, although minimally the time taken to open the Champagne bottle and consume half the contents. The transpiring of further events is open to the same

kind of game playing interpretation of The Story of Lucy. Coover takes this dissolve as the point of departure for a speculative game describing a graphic sexual encounter between the two principals and their reminiscences of sexual encounters during their Paris sojourn. The second dissolve provides a 22 page literary game, 'engaged with the question of the space between film and language,' says Coover, which, as with other literary games based on film narratives, is 'to get inside these widely shared stories, shake them up, knock their halos off..'

RICK'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

...

ILSA, seen close, rises, still pointing the gun at RICK. Her finger rests on the trigger. It seems as if she is summoning the nerve to press it. Then, suddenly, her hand trembles and the pistol falls to the table. She breaks up, covering her face with her hands. RICK walks into the scene and stands close to her. Suddenly she flings herself into his arms.

ILSA

Richard, I tried to stay away. I thought I would never see you again... that you were out of my life. The day you left Paris, if you knew what I went through! If you knew how much I loved you... how much I still love you...

Her words are smothered as he presses her tight to him, kisses her passionately. She is lost in his embrace.

FADE OUT

RICK'S APARTMENT fades in. Then a little while later, there is a close view of a table before a couch. There is a bottle of champagne on the table and there are two half-filled glasses. We hear ILSA talking as the scene moves to her and RICK. She is gazing into space as she talks. RICK is listening intently, but not looking at her.

RICK

And then?

CONT'D...

David Thompson takes the title of his game playing tribute to Hollywood film noir, *Suspects* (1984), from the penultimate lines of Louis Renault. Rick, Ilsa and Victor Lazslo are amongst 'rounded-up suspects' whose manufactured biographies intertwine with characters spread over 50 years of Hollywood cinema. Lazslo dies in America in 1952, after having named names to the HUAC; Richard Blaine finds true love and moves to Marseille with Louis; Ilsa Lund, abandoned by the two men in her life, devotes her life to other causes, and dies in the aeroplane crash in West Africa in 1961 en route to Kinshasa, as personal assistant to Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary General of the UN.

The classic cinema is no longer played, but re-played; manipulated into new texts, *mise-en-abyme*, an intertextual bridge between the game playing codes of then and now, which have sired the plethora of cinema-based games devised by writers, computer programmers, theorists and viewers. Bogart's 'Here's looking at you kid,' is the catchphrase of the audiovisual narrative generation where *Casablanca* provides discrete audiovisual wall decoration in cafes, restaurants and video discos, played at subdued volume in deference to cafe conversation. For Jean-Luc Godard *Casablanca* is one more of Cinema's *histoires*, where he plays the Rick-Ilsa scene backwards, forwards and freeze-frame, speaking, typing and intercutting with Hollywood references, where sounds and images occupy a labyrinth of audiovisual tracks embroiling the viewer into a maze; a game that is both history and story, with no particular emphasis on either. (*Histoire du Cinema*, 1991).

In its broadest sense, intertextuality relates a text to any other system of representation (as opposed to the limitations of 'context'), or can be reduced to the specific applications of Gerard Genettes 'transtextuality' and five sub categories of which intertextuality is one; together with paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality and hypertextuality, the latter relating to adaptations, with clear connotations to narrative cinema.

Vertical intertextuality, which Fiske directs to secondary texts, relates to reviews, critique; in the case of television, discussion programmes, studio publicity; the intertextuality 'of a primary text's relations with other texts (of a different type) which refer specifically to

it.' The third level of intertextuality, Fiske describes as the 'texts that the viewers make themselves out of their responses, which circulate orally or in letters to the press, and which work to form a collective rather than an individual response.' Internet's intertextuality embodies the 'third road' trivial pursuit metatext in which viewer is both player and game master, a manipulator of texts upon the collective playing field where the boundaries delineating information and narrative are abstractions imposed by the user.

Cliché

The interplay between narratives – in addition to intertextuality games – is further enforced through the use of cliché. Film and television use cliché as recognisable codes both to facilitate the understanding of a narrative as well as 'play' with it. The familiarity of the cliché assists the viewer, making commonplace the untrodden territory of a new story, amplifying audience identification. 'Two clichés make us laugh but a hundred clichés move us,' wrote Umberto Eco, describing the cumulative effect of clichés in *Casablanca*.

Post classical films are games with clichés; Eco describes the cineastes that join in the game watching *Casablanca*, cinema aficionados are likewise moved by the array of the familiar and the identifiable; 'because we sense dimly that the clichés are talking among themselves, celebrating a reunion... the extreme of banality allows us to catch a glimpse of the Sublime.' Richard Kearney describes 'A Critique of the Rule of Cliché' whereby 'postmodern society is increasingly portrayed as an artificial world woven together out of repeatable clichés and bereft of any real experience of historical praxis or coherence.'

Gilles Deleuze suggests that clichés are 'floating and anonymous images which circulate in the external world, but also penetrate each person and constitute his internal world, so much so that each one of us possesses no more than the psychic clichés by means of which he thinks and feels, becoming himself a cliché amongst others in the world which surrounds him. Physical clichés of sight and sound and psychic clichés feed off each other. In order for people to survive such a world it is necessary that this miserable world has infiltrated into their

innermost consciousness, so that inside is like the outside.' These 'condemnations of cliché' are founded upon the way cliché manipulates the 'person'; in accord with the text ÷ reader paradigm, the process is reciprocal – the 'person' as player equally manipulates cliché. Cliché is, in essence, one more text game playing option. For just as 'cliché' is 'stereotype' – the duplication of an original; it is also by implication, the duplication of an 'archetype'. The postmodern cinema's conscious manipulation of cliché elevates the banal to the mythological. The happy ending is intrinsic to the nature of the popular film, and it is the cinema's 'happy ending' that has become the most potent cliché of all. This does not prevent the viewer 'playing' with it.

David Lynch describes *Wild at Heart* (1990) as 'a violent comedy (in which) ...some scenes are a game with clichés.' The caricatured 'happy ending' of *Wild at Heart* ('I couldn't buy the ending of the book,' says Lynch) is at once complying to the mainstream cinema's convention of an ending most gratifying to the largest possible audience, and at the same time, a pastiche; a game with the cliché.

The Interactive Player

Interaction is the subjective process between game and player, between stimulation and story; interface is the common boundary between narrative intent and narrative comprehension – the screen, the page, the game board. According to John Barry interface 'implies much more than human/computer interaction... it connotes a connection, a relationship of some sort, between or among diverse elements... although interface, zen-like, means everything and nothing, its most general sense is 'link' or 'connection.'

Film narrative (game) on the one side, can be defined as a system of representation; film viewer (player) is a system encompassing perception, reception, comprehension, construction and interpretation, on the other. What is the means – the interface – by which these two systems are connected? The viewer may rewrite, reconstruct and review a film before, during and after the game-playing experience, but only through the stimulation prompted by the film's narrative to begin with.

Richard Gerrig and Deborah Prentice propose 'a participant theory of audience response' based on (a) that under appropriate circumstances 'experiencers of narrative produce psychological responses as if they were really participating in the events' and (b) the formal properties of film – 'particularly how film fixes a focus of attention (which) make it especially likely that such as if responses will occur. Gerrig and Prentice suggest that the 'skills individuals acquire through conversation are exactly those required by film.' Like listening to a conversation, the viewer is involved, without disrupting the proceedings.

The problem with this argument is the implication that 'involvement' is a culturally acquired skill, relegating the emotional engagement with the narrative to social codes of behaviour. The listener may deploy the strategic thinking required of narrative engagement, yet on the periphery of a conversation, options for writing and re-writing the ongoing scenario are limited.

A line of argument purporting the interactive viewer, and later, 'viewer as scenarist,' leads to one of the more contentious issues of film theory: authorship. Whether for marketing, legal or aesthetic purposes the epithet 'a film by...' ensures its continuance. In *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985), David Bordwell brought new perspective to the issue: why should it matter who directs the picture? who writes the script? who produces? who photographs? it is the 'spectator' who constructs the story. To the question: who is narrator? Bordwell suggests, there is no narrator, there is narration.

It is a view not without opposition. Seymour Chatman, (*Story and Discourse*, 1978; *Coming to Terms*, 1990), maintains that a film has a narrator; the narrator is the agent of narration. The issues of narration/narrative/narrator serves to distinguish alternative approaches to narratology and cinema studies. 'Film seems particularly important to narratology...if we are to formulate the general principles of Narrative...', writes Chatman. 'Only a general narratology can help explain what literature and cinema have in common... (and) to understand what is distinctively cinematic or literary.' Chatman maintains that 'cinematic implied authorship' is a concept as 'vital to cinematic (as) to general narrative theory.'

'Implied author,' a term coined by Wayne Booth, defines the impersonal idealised 'author', an 'official scribe' or 'second self' that distinguishes the 'implied author' of one work from the implied authors of other works. The implied author could be described as a persona or construction of the real author.

Chatman argues that in regard to cinema 'there is always an implied author (although) the narrative may have been composed by committee (Hollywood films).' In *Coming to Terms* Chatman defines the implied author as 'the agency within the narrative fiction itself which guides any reading of it,' or in the words of Italo Calvino: 'The author is an author insofar as he enters into a role the way an actor does and identifies himself with that projection of himself at the moment of writing.' Chatman argues that many texts are created in collaboration, and ultimately it is the reader who is the unifying agent, but that 'film critics no less than ordinary readers need to believe in individual and personal, not collective and anonymous, authorship.'

Subsequently Chatman, in assessing *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951) considers John Huston's role as director, together with the roles of the editor, producer, composer, designers, and author, Stephen Crane, on whose book the film was based. The list of 'real authors' consists of all the above together with actors, cinematographer and others, in spite of which, says Chatman, the film 'gives an impression of unity so strong that reviewers spoke persistently of a single authorial source: it was 'Huston's film'... not the real John Huston but the film's implied author.'

Chatman considers the implied author as synonymous with 'textual intent' as a means of distinguishing between the 'original authorial', yet, to the question; 'whose textual intent?' Chatman argues that the cinematic narrator is not a 'who' but an agent, not necessarily human. Bordwell maintains that authorship is essentially an application of a literary term which debilitates the film viewer's comprehension of meaning. Implied authorship, argues Bordwell, is to distinguish between characters addressing an audience (ie., looking at the camera) and narration; which relates to characters, not narration.

Narrative is either recounted (diegetic) or enacted (mimetic), thus, writes Chatman, the Narrator is either a Tell-er or a Show-er. The

'cinematic narrator' 'is the transmitting agency, immanent to the film, which presents the images we see and the sounds we hear. It is not the filmmaker or production team but bears the same relation to those real people as does the narrator to the real author in a novel.' The differing views may seem marginal – Chatman concludes that 'it comes to the difference between '-tion' and '-er.'" Nonetheless, the term 'narrator' is problematic. If there is a narrator, who, or what, is narrating? Chatman argues: 'the overall agent that does the showing I would call the 'cinematic narrator.' That narrator is not a human being... it is the cinematic narrator that shows the film...'

Chatman describes the cinematic narrator as 'the composite of a large and complex variety of communicating devices' which encompasses the multitude of components which make up the sound and image of the film narrative. The viewer synthesises these components into the narrative. Bordwell contends a film is narrated, but has no narrator; it is a process between narrative and viewer, the viewer is an active participant who is part of the process of constructing a narrative.

The question of implied author relates to 'whose story are we watching?'; the cinematic narrator addresses the question 'who is telling the story?' Chatman's 'narrator as an agent of narration' appears an abstraction that begs the question. Bordwell's generality attributing 'narration' to the viewer, on the other hand, apart from avoiding a 'difficult' area of cinema studies, relegates the question of narrative 'source' to a metaphysical void whereby the narratives that stimulate a 'spectator's story constructions' are manifest through cultural and historical influences that constitute the impersonal derivations of what Bordwell defines as a 'historical poetics of cinema.'

Bordwell and Chatman's respective analyses of *Rear Window* attempt to define their contrasting perspectives: Chatman suggests the opening sequence is descriptive; 'that a cinematic describer – the cinematic narrator as describer – explicitly presents the opening sequence.' However, it could be countered that the camera's anonymous sweep over the courtyard and apartment's viewed from the apartment of L B Jeffries, present narrative components rather than descriptive; the shots comprise beginnings of stories to sub-plots relating implicitly to

the main thrust of the plot – the relationship between Jeffries and Lisa Fremont. Combined with 'non-narrative shots' (Chatman's term) the narrative style, which is random or casual, prompts the viewer to assess what is relevant and less relevant both to the unfolding sub-plots, and the relationship between the sub-plots and the narrative trajectory of the main plot.

For Bordwell the viewer becomes part of the process of narration, or as Chatman writes in *Story and Discourse*, the viewer 'cannot avoid participating in the transaction' whether a narrative is performed or is a text. But whereas Chatman's 'viewer' acts as a synthesizer of the narrative components he describes as 'cinematic narrator', Bordwell's 'spectator' is an integral part of the film's narration.

'... the rather startling belief that the spectator is the narrator,' writes Edward Branigan, (renders) 'such concepts as 'narrator,' 'character,' and 'implied author'.. merely convenient labels used by the spectator in marking epistemological boundaries, or disparities, within an ensemble of knowledge...' In other words, there is no narrator as such, only the spectator's expectations of a narrator.

My suggestion that Bordwell's 'narration' is analogous to 'interface' and 'game board', is an attempt to compliment the concept of 'narration' with a metaphor that introduces a broader context than 'story-telling' or 'as story being told.' The game board provides a structure, a paradigm and a context which provides for the expression of the player's own 'centre of narrative gravity', whereby meaning is dependent upon the investment made by the player(s).

The game board functions as 'scheme,' 'map,' 'fiction,' – a cognitive and symbolic 'interface' – a system of representation in which play provides the simulation of Life dilemma / problem/ intrigue within the risk-free context of the Game – in short, an exploration of possibilities. In this context I employ Joseph Gixti's description of play as 'a means of developing a sense of competence and of forming an appraisal of the nature of fantasy as well as of the extent to which possibilities and limitations are determined by physical, personal and social reality...'

The cognitive function of play, to use Bateson's phrase, is to test map-territory relations; the game board interface enables the player

to confront risks, explore possibilities, dilemmas and issues. In addition, the game board provides a context by which the player can write personal subjective scenarios, prompted, but not dependent on the 'interface' itself; scenarios personalised with idiographic responses to the dilemmas/intrigues presented in the fictional context of the narrative. Is then the implication that the 'game board interface' – the on-screen narrative – is merely peripheral to the imaginative and psychological processes of the player.

Peripheral can mean 'of minor importance,' but the word has two specific meanings which relate to the concept as viewer as player, player as scenarist. Firstly, peripheral has an anatomical connotation – near the surface of the body; secondly, in computing, a peripheral is an attachment to the computer but not an integral part of it.

The screens of the cinema, television and computer are peripherals extending audiovisual narratives to the viewer. When does the technical peripheral become a mental essential? Speculative fiction provides a range of possibilities; here are three: 1. 'The Feelies' (from Alduous Huxley's *Brave New World*); 2. 'The Holographic Novel' (Wild Palms, 1994; *Star Trek*, 1984 - 1998, *Disclosure*, 1994 &c); 3. 'The Game' (*The Game*, 1997; *Total Recall*, 1990; *April Fool's Day*, 1986; *Scream*, 1997; *Scream II*, 1998 &c). These three 'interactive' audiovisual narrative forms consider the varying degrees of mind/body interaction, which correlate to some extent, to Noël Carroll's distinction between emotions as mind driven, and feelings as visceral.

In *Brave New World* (1932) 'Emotional Engineers' fabricate 'ignoble' narratives. 'There's a love scene on a bearskin rug; they say it's marvellous. Every hair of the bear reproduced...' in a society which forbids 'the folly of allowing people to play elaborate games which do nothing whatever to increase consumption.' *Brave New World's* interloper, the 'Savage', is instructed to grasp the metal knobs in his pneumatic stall in order to get 'the feely effects' of 'Three Weeks in a Helicopter', described as 'an all-super-singing, synthetic talking, coloured stereoscopic Feely, with synchronised scent-organ accompaniment.' 'Six thousand spectators in the Alhambra tingled with almost intolerable galvanic pleasure' as a Beta-Plus female embraces 'a gigantic Negro.'

'The holographic novel' combines Virtual Reality technology with literary works whereby 'readers' interact with characters in a three dimensional space. 'The Game,' on the other hand, is a ruse. In April Fool's Day (1986) practical joker (Deborah Foreman) invites college friends to spend the weekend in her family's mansion on an off-coast island. They are killed off one by one in Friday 13th/Halloween /slasher film style, until the remaining couple uncover the family secret – Foreman has a deranged twin sister. In the climactic confrontation they are about to be killed when they stumble into the main room to find the 'victims' restored to life, rejoicing at having pulled off the ultimate April Fool joke. Foreman explains she is going to convert the mansion into a 'whodunnit' theme hotel and her friends were trial guinea pigs. The guests are not the only patsies – the viewer is lured into the game; a play on genre and the genre's codes and conventions of manipulation, the specifics of which are articulated in both *Scream* (1997) and *Scream II* (1998), by the characters and the discourse.

In *Total Recall* (1990) ReCall Inc. offers clients 'the memory of a lifetime,' 'a vacation from yourself... an ego trip with a choice of alternate identities.' The 'vacation' the salesman offers, however, is the standard Hollywood scenario where 'by the time the trip is over you get the girl, kill all the bad guys and save the entire planet.' Consumer Recreation Services (*The Game*, 1997) provides Nicholas van Orton (Michael Douglas) with a 'game' to test the divide between Game and Life, and fabricating a diversion of such proportions that the character's gratitude at the end of 'play' is as circumspect as the conventional closure.

'The film is like a battleground,' quipped Samuel Fuller in *Pierrot le Fou* (1965), yet in essence the film is a playground – for however 'interactive' the narrative, interaction remains firmly in the court of the player. The suspense of disbelief is, like story telling, is grounded in deception. The question remains, how much 'belief' is required of the player in order to 'interact'? I suggest different levels of interaction are determined by levels of investment with diminishing/escalating returns. Narrative comprehension represents a break-even point ('I understand the story'), whereas 'diminishing returns' comprise:

endurance: minimum return ('I'd rather be doing something else)

encounter: diminishing return ('I'm aware of its existence')

perception: diminishing return ('I see and hear')

Escalating returns refer to:

interpretation: escalating return ('I'm playing it.')

assimilation: escalating return ('I get it')

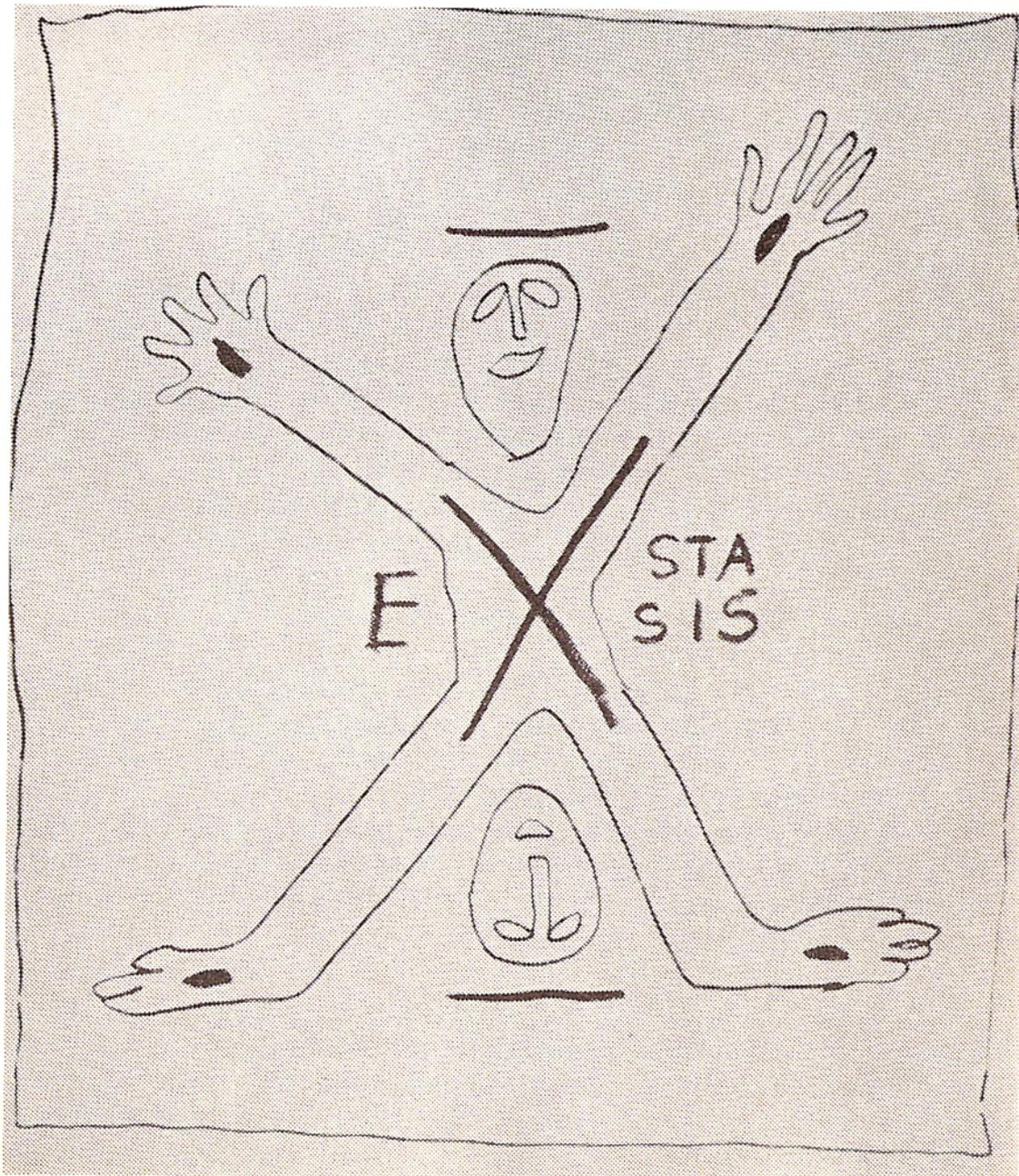
immersion: maximum return ('I surrender myself to the narrative world')

Janet Murray describes 'immersion' as the ultimate participatory narrative, 'when a storyteller captures our attention and induces a deep state of absorption... filled with real sensations and emotions for imaginary objects.' However, I suggest there is a further stage, incommensurate with diminishing/escalating returns, as the game ceases to be a game. The condition of ecstasy, literally to be outside one's self, is when an individual subjugates their sense of identity – where 'play' is no longer an option, as reflexivity is overtaken by the intensity of experience.

Exstasis

Sergei Eisenstein's formulations on how 'pathos arouses deep emotions and enthusiasm' constitute strategies of discourse to engage the viewer with the film narrative. 'If we wish the spectator to experience a maximum emotional upsurge, to send him into ecstasy, we must offer him a suitable "formula"...' Two strategies Eisenstein suggests include (a) presenting an on-screen character in 'a state of ecstasy' and/or (b) 'the more effective method... constant qualitative changes in the action – not through the medium of one character, but through the entire environment.'

The ideological implications of Eisenstein's concept of ecstasy – exstasis – have been considered earlier in terms of the non-negotiable narrative. The state of ecstasy bears comparison to Johan Huizinga's condition of play – 'rapture' (< Chapter 1; p. 16) which similarly conveys the meaning of being seized away; the subjugation of the self to the experience. Eisenstein's own visual interpretation of the state suggests both 'out of body' and, paradoxically, 'in two minds.' As non-negotiable narrative exstasis implies the absence of options; the inadmission of play



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Exstasis, drawing by Sergei Eisenstein, 1931

– a form of narrative autism. As a subject of speculative fictions this state of psychological absorption is defined as a state whereby the viewer is so immersed in the narrative experience that to distinguish between what is real and what is not real, is no longer an option.

Of the ten Lumière films screened at the Société de l'Encouragement in Paris on March 22nd, 1895, the sight of a locomotive

pulling into a station provoked the most trenchant audience interaction. 'People were astonished and even panic-stricken to see a locomotive charging toward them,' claims Francis Doublier, the motion picture operator. It is an account, as Tom Gunning reveals, imbued with its own narrative agenda. Within a few years films such as *The Countryman's First Sight of the Animated Pictures* (<Chapter 6; acculturation) made a 'play' upon these myth-spun reactions of viewers' cinema experiences. In the Edison studio remake, *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (1903), Josh watches three films and responds with the ingenuousness attributed to viewers of the first Lumière actualités. Josh responds with horror to the approaching train in 'Black Diamond Express', gets up on stage to dance with 'Parisian Dancer' and tears down the screen to rescue 'a damsel in distress' in 'A Country Couple.' Judith Mayne argues that 'his naïveity reflects a fundamental truth of the cinema: the image of woman is his to consume,' while what is apparant is the 'fundamental truth' is that the image on the screen, regardless, is the viewer's to 'consume', and 'play' as they choose.

An inability to distinguish between game and reality, space and cyberspace in *Matrix* (1999); an absorption in recorded dreams in *Until the End of the World* (1992), in the collective soap opera *Fahrenheit 451* (1967 – based on the novel by Ray Bradbury), in induced projections of the past stimulated by holographic images in the *Star Trek Voyager* episode 'Persistence of Vision' (1996). Alison McMahan suggests that *The Truman Show* (1998) and *EDTV* (1999) reflect 'a fear of domination through the mass art of television and the manipulation inflicted by Big Brother in the guise of studio executives.' However, the narrative problem, of especially *The Truman Show*, relates to the crisis of identity of protagonists in *Dark City* (1998), *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999) *Matrix* and *eXistenZ* (1999); stuck in a game of someone else's devising. These latter films, suggests McMahan, are 'more metaphysical, a fear that at last we have reached an understanding of the human condition, and that understanding is that we are all players in some huge virtual reality game.' Yet the narrative problem of both *eXistenZ* and *Matrix* constitutes the traditional dichotomy of the empowered antagonist contra a 'resistance,' with settings designed to optimise digital effect facilities. The moral to such tales can be encapsulated with: 'play with the game,

or the game will play with you' – an epithet as germane to The Countryman's First Sight of the Animated Pictures. The question is to what extent are such scenarios narrative speculation, and to what extent scenarios of viewer exstasis?

Eisenstein's concept of exstasis is principally theoretical – the state the filmmaker contrives to induce in the viewing audience. It is a theoretical construct comparable to Jean Cocteau's description of the filmmaker as hypnotist; a claim unendorsed by research into the subject. On an individual level the state is psychologically classifiable – Janet Murray's 'immersion' for example – and the extent to which narrative can 'blur the line between game and real life' is the question posed in Sherry Turkle's study of Internet and user interaction. How 'we keep a sense that there is a reality distinct from simulation?' is no longer the subject of speculative fiction but as a question of – in Turkle's words – 'identity in the age of Internet.'

Multi-User Dungeons (or Multi-User Domains) 'are a new kind of virtual parlour game and a new form of community... a new form of collaboratively written literature. MUD players and MUD authors, the creators as well as consumers of media content has much in common with scriptwriting...' Turkle suggests that as players participate they become authors not only of a text but of themselves, constructing new selves through social interaction.' The new technology, writes Turkle, 'oblige(s) us to ask to what extent we ourselves have become cyborgs, transgressive mixtures of biology, technology and code. The traditional distance between people and machines has become harder to maintain.'

The distinction, Turkle maintains – as implied in the book's title – is the distinction between screen play and screen life. I contend that screen interaction, whether television, film, computer game or MUD, remains a psychological process dependent on investment level and negotiation capabilities. When Turkle poses the question: 'Are we living life on the screen or life in the screen?', I suggest the operative word here is play. 'It is computer screens where we project ourselves into our own dramas, dramas in which we are producer director and star... computer screens are the new location for our fantasies, both erotic and intellectual. We are using life on computer screens to become comfortable with new ways of thinking about evolution, relationships,

sexuality, politics and identity...’ But it is not the computer screen, rather the screen – the interface between game and player, story and viewer, where viewers, interactors, players ‘project’ into dramas, via the screen interface/ meeting place of the collective and idiographic narrative. I suggest that computers do not raise questions about our involvement in digital narrative, but the effect on how we narratise – as with the audiovisual precedents of cinema and television – and the technological possibilities of audiovisual narration.

‘We step through the screen into virtual screens’ writes Turkle, to ‘reconstruct our identities on the other side of the looking glass...’ Within cinema studies Vivian Sobchak also considers the screen-as-mirror metaphor; likewise Bruce Kawin; likewise Peter Cowie when he writes: ‘The screen itself is a form of mirror, a glass that both reflects and enables the spectator to pass through into another state of life.’ The metaphor is deceptive – as indeed the mirror’s reflection is deceptive – a screen cannot reflect our identity, but rather enables/prompts the manipulation of the contents of the screen that enables a viewer to ‘play’ with certain aspects of identity.

The Internet MUD – whether adventure MUD, game MUD, or social MUD, enables the ‘user’ to enter an incomplete scenario – with detailed descriptions of rooms, places and objects. Should the user wish to examine an object – such as a book – the word BOOK is typed and it is described in more detail. The explicitness of the descriptions is comparable to the narrator describing a film to the blind ‘viewer’. (3Chapter 4) Characters have names – the user has a name – and enters a form of role play in strictly literal terms – the procedure is conducted in writing only. If there is a film to the narrative it is, like *The Story of Lucy*, the film going on inside the user’s head. As Turkle notes it is writing ‘in a culture that had apparently fallen asleep in the audiovisual arms of television.’

MUD interaction integrates components of reading, television, acting and script writing – the player reads a text, but unlike reading the drama unfolds in real time; the player also contributes to the text, shaping the drama with character interpretation (performance) and plot development (scripting) in the process, ‘much in common with

psychodrama..' writes Turkle, who describes MUD games as 'laboratories for the construction of identity...'

However, the attributes that Turkle sees as particular to MUD interaction ('creating screen personae is thus an opportunity for self-expression...') describes as much the screen play process with film and television narrative. Similarly, when Turkle suggests that with MUDs 'each player can create many characters and participate in many games, the self is not only decentred but multiplied without limit,' it is a perspective founded on an over-emphasis on technology at the expense of the mental processes involved in addressing the technology. While new technology enables new perspectives on the role of player to narrative game, the essence of interaction and narrative game remain founded in play and negotiation.

The concept of what Kenneth Gergen describes as 'the saturated self' describes how emergent technology affects individual notions of the self which 'dissipate into a stage of relatedness.' It is a description of narrative immersion founded on the 'raptures of multiplicitous being' in contrast to Eisenstein's concept of exstasis and the subjugation of identity through narrative immersion and cinema's 'fundamental activity... to exert an influence on people.' The individual states of 'saturation of identity' and Eisenstein's effacy (influence) culminating in exstasis, represent disparate ideological points of departure, yet result from the same resistance to interaction.

In the William Gibson novel, *Neuromancer*, 'jacking in to the simstim' is to joyride someone else's consciousness; an ecstatic experience that transcends mere loss of identity through narrative absorption, as in *Until the End of the World* where turn-of-century itinerants wander aimlessly doped out in an addiction to their own recorded dreams; or the characters of *Fahrenheit 451* more preoccupied with their dramatic roles in the daily interactive 'screen' serial than their own; or the game designer of *Tron* (1982), trapped inside his own game. Likewise, the characters of *The Truman Story*, *Matrix*, *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999) and *eXistenZ* trapped inside games of their own or other's devising, aware at some stage that these are games they no longer want, or have never wanted, to play.

There is the counter condition to ecstasy, however, which the characters of *Until the End of the World*, *Fahrenheit 451* and *Tron* come to experience after the initial exhilaration – that of despair. Like the characters in an episode of the BBC television series *Red Dwarf*, who re-enter 'reality' in which their 'real' selves are so loathesome they are driven to the brink of suicide, only to discover that the 'reality' is the game, and a return to their actual situation (alone in space for three million years) is their salvation.

These scenarios of speculative audiovisual fiction beg the question of narrative absorption, as phrased by Janet Murray, '... would the power of such a vividly realised fantasy world destroy our grip on the actual world? Will the increasingly alluring narratives spun out for us by the new digital technologies be as benign and responsible as a 19th century novel or as dangerous and debilitating as a hallucogenic drug?'

For the authors of the fictions referred to, clearly the worst-case scenarios make for better drama, constituting morality tales advocating a return to reality and human relations (*Until the End of the World*), literature and human relations (*Fahrenheit 451*) and the life of the 'noble savage' (*Brave New World*). 'For Huxley and Bradbury, the more persuasive the medium, the more dangerous it is...' writes Murray. 'We surrender our reason and join the undifferentiated masses...' Murray provides a more optimistic outlook on the possibility of a holographic novel, however. The 'holonovel' is not aimed at neuron stimulation like *Feelies*, but at the imagination, providing 'a safe space in which to confront disturbing feelings we would otherwise suppress; it allows us to recognise our most threatening fantasies without becoming paralysed by them.'

Murray's description of '... an optimistic technology for exploring inner life,' compares to the description of the sandbox and sandplay (<Chapter 1; p. 21) and the freedom and protection provided by the 'secured symbolizing field' or 'transitional play space' used in therapeutic and projective story telling exercises. In contrast to Murray's views, however, I suggest the 'worst-possible scenario' fictions listed above, are more to do with conjecture on the plight of the human condition, rather than information-based considerations concerning human-narrative interaction. The speculative fiction of the 'worst

possible scenario' is, in effect, game playing along the narrative and dramatic lines that constitute effective storytelling. It is a view that rejects the possibility of a player becoming so immersed in the narrative game that they are no longer able to distinguish between game and reality. The key word is 'narrative' – the history of the human species provides a breadth of examples of the subjugation of the 'self' – through a range of physiological and psychological 'persuasions' – but is narrative so empowered? Not as game, in which a 'suspense of disbelief' is a condition of play. Providing the viewer is involved in a narrative game, the option to 'cease play' is ongoing – if that option does not exist it is no longer narrative game, but the coercion of non-negotiable doctrine.

10. Viewer as Scenarist

The Participatory Narrative

Karl Popper uses the analogy of the cinema to describe a determinist world view:

The intuitive idea of determinism may be summed up by saying that the world is like a motion picture film: the picture or still which is being projected is the present. Those parts of the film which have already been shown constitute the past. And those which have not yet been shown constitute the future.

In the film, the future co-exists with the past; and the future is fixed, in exactly the same sense as the past. Though the spectator may not know the future, every future event, without exception, might in principle be known with certainty, exactly like the past, since it exists in the same sense in which the past exists. In fact the future of the world will be known to the producer of the film – to the Creator of the world.

My intention is to argue in favour of 'the participatory universe' – and how this relates to narrative – in regard to the analogy of the determinist motion picture film. To the question: is a film determined? in the most literal sense – on the surface ('film' means surface) – this is self-evident. Regardless how many times the film is screened, the ending remains the same. However, in that the film is only a story when experienced by a viewer; endings, as examined in earlier examples, are subject to the individual viewer's interpretation. Or in the words of David Bordwell, 'spectators are always able to interpret a text in accord with their own aims and interests.'

Only the human mind 'can create interests, purposes, problems and ends...' writes Popper, and suggests that brain – mind parallelism exists up to a point, listing four positions regarding the inter-relationship between body (or brain) and mind. In brief: (i) immaterialism, denying the world of physical states; (ii) materialist, behaviourist view upholding identity of brain and mind; (iii)

'psychophysical parallelism', which asserts the parallel between mental states and states of the brain (denying consciousness any biological function); (iv) the Cartesian view that mental states can interact with physical states.

Popper rejects (iii) and proposes a form of 'psychophysical interactionism' which draws the distinction between World 1 of conscious and subconscious experience, and World 2 (behaviour) and World 3 (verbal behaviour) both of which deal with language, story telling and theorising. The term is cumbersome, but an appropriate description of the psychological processes that makes 'game' of narrative, and player of 'observer'; in other words, what makes the narrative a game is the participation of the player.

Jonathan Culler, positing a post-structuralist perspective, suggests that text-related theories fail as there is no common-ground 'competence' which produces them. Reader-related theory however considers the reader's competence to make sense of the text; the game only makes sense in relation to the player.

In the narrative game it is the act of prediction that empowers the player, providing the sense of control that makes the game playing a sufficiently stimulating enterprise. The player's familiarity and knowledge of film structure, discourse and genre further empowers the player's predictive course of action, as exemplified in Luis Buñuel's Hollywood film 'prediction game,' which he devised in order to demonstrate 'that the American cinema was composed along such precise and standardised lines, that thanks to my system, anyone could predict the basic plot of a film simply by lining up a given setting with a particular era, ambience and character.'

The appeal of game playing – of speculation, prediction and problem solving – is, according to Robert Wright, a consequence of that 'the human brain is a machine for winning arguments, a machine for convincing others that its owner is right – and thus a machine for convincing its owner the same thing... the human brain wants victory not truth... more admirable for skill than for virtue...' Victory is the satisfactory ending to the dramatic narrative; playing the odds and winning; calculating, speculating and predicting. Yet the individual is not just a calculator, suggests Popper, but a constructor of calculators.

'We make them because we are interested in problems whose solutions are beyond our limited calculating powers; and, even more, because we are fascinated by the new problems which the construction of calculators present to us. Our fundamental intellectual impulse is to search for difficulties – or even to invent difficulties, in order to overcome them.'

To 'invent difficulties' is the function of the scenarist, devising narrative games within the game matrix of dramatic structure. Playing, however, as considered in earlier chapters, constitutes more than 'calculation,' as the audiovisual narrative is more than 'prediction game' grounded on knowledge and familiarity, and more than 'speculation game' which depends on how much knowledge and how much familiarity the player has with the game itself. Dramatic structure provides a matrix to facilitate problem solving; plot defines the problems. Yet play without 'investment' is, like a calculator, 'going through the motions'. Calculators can turn out mathematical theorems, distinguish proofs from non-proofs, theorems from non-theorems, writes Popper; but it cannot distinguish the interesting from the uninteresting. Dramatic structure prompts the calculation of strategies to contend with the simulated dilemmas, the significance and emotional impact of which, only the player can determine.

John Wheeler, as one of the first prominent physicists to propose that reality might not be wholly physical, suggests the universe is a participatory phenomena, requiring the act of observation. 'The observer is elevated from 'observer' to 'participator'', writes Wheeler. 'What philosophy suggested in times past, the central feature of quantum mechanics tells us today with impressive force. In some strange sense this is a participatory universe.' Wheeler's pronouncements led to Claude Shannon's claim that information theory, like quantum theory, is also defined by the act of observation. Like the narrative-inducing game outlined in Chapter 4 (3 pp. 73 - 74), John Wheeler describes a variation of the game 'Twenty Questions.' One person leaves a room while the rest of the group select some person, place or thing. The player returns and tries to guess what the others have in mind by asking 'yes/no' questions. Unbeknownst to the player the group has decided beforehand to only think of an object after the questioner asks the question. 'Not until you start asking a question, do you get something...' says Wheeler.

An example of the pertinent question is represented in this Peanuts comic strip (#10862/98).

Sally (watching TV): My team lost again.

Charlie Brown: It wasn't a real match. It was just a movie.

Sally: What do you mean, a movie? There were real people!

Charlie Brown: When it ended, didn't it say "The End"?

Sally: Sure. But I'm still here, right?

Narrative closure does not necessarily determine the end of play: narrative is 'the participatory narrative.' But to what extent does the degree or type of participation depend on the narrative form? 'Whereas novels allow us to explore character, and drama allows us to explore action, simulation narrative can allow us to explore process,' writes Janet Murray. '...as a participatory medium it allows us to collaborate (my italics) in the performance.' The extent of collaboration in future simulation narrative – whether the holographic novel, or other form – remains an unknown factor; the subject of the speculative fiction game playing of *Star Trek*, *Red Dwarf* and the novels of William Gibson. For the present, whether player is user, or player is viewer, interacting with audiovisual narrative is participating in the fiction game. The participatory narrative must maintain the presence of the viewer and the viewer's 'views,' readings and interpretations. It is a psychological process, in which the advances of technology are peripherals, not essentials.

Mind Games

Performance

Role-play opens the game to the player; what then the mental processes that open the mind to role-play? Or if role-play is a prerequisite for narrative game playing, is the emotional response elicited by the game also role-play? Where does play end and where do feelings begin? What is the difference between an emotional response to a narrative game and an emotional response?

Robert Trivers maintains moralistic emotions are strategies in a 'reciprocity game': liking, anger, gratitude, sympathy, guilt, shame – they are emotions whereby there is only 'pay-off' in reciprocation. According to Trivers the 'hypocrisy' of what he terms 'sham emotions' are not necessarily conscious, and are most effective when they are not. If the emotional responses through narrative interaction are founded on role-play, does screen play evoke sham emotion or real emotion? Are the emotional responses symptomatic of the pretense that play evokes? Or are all emotional responses linked to the game playing that makes up on-screen and off-screen interaction?

Steven Pinker's line of argument – and that of evolutionary psychology – maintains that emotions, are, like strategic thinking, aligned to the mind's survival mechanisms: 'the mind is a neural computer, fitted by natural selection with combinational algorithms for causal and probabilistic reasoning about plants, animals, objects and people. It is driven by goal states that served biological fitness in ancestral environments...' Thus emotional responses are founded on logical rules, 'supplemented or superseded by special inference rules appropriate to the content.' Pinker suggests that according to the computational theory of mind, 'beliefs and desires are information, incarnated as configurations of symbols'. A computation theory of mind, says Pinker, is not the same as the computer-mind metaphor but that brains and computers embody intelligence for some of the same reasons. 'Human thought and behaviour, no matter how subtle and flexible, could be the product of a very complicated program, and that program may have been our endowment from natural selection.'

A computational theory of mind defines consciousness as intelligence, and defines the mechanistic process of mentality – of perception, reception, cognition – in terms of modules extending from intake to meaning. The question of individual interpretation however, is for both Pinker and Daniel Dennett (Chapter 4), and from the perspective of evolutionary psychology/biology in general, 'irrelevant' in contrast say to a phenomenological approach which reconciles subjective meanings to mental processes.

Narrative, suggests Pinker, cues a switch to a non-mathematical definition of probability; a degree of belief determined by

the information presented and based on probable cause, weight of evidence, and reasonable doubt. When watching a film or television, the surface perception module 'tells the rest of our brain that we are seeing real people and places... the visual system never 'learns' that television is a pane of glowing phosphor dots, and the person never loses the illusion that there is a world behind the pane.' Mental modules enable the mind 'to make fallible guesses from fragmentary information... making assumptions that are indispensable but indefensible...' The dilemma posed by a theory of computational functionalism is that it ends where narrative begins. From the perspective of evolutionary psychology or Dennett's allusion to the brain as an information processing system – once the neurological process has been defined, there is nothing left to explain. Pinker notes that 'the mystery of sentience' is a 'topic not for science but for ethics.'

Thus to the rhetorical question: what is it about the mind that lets people take pleasure in stories and myths?, Pinker pursues the evolutionary psychological tenets of goal setting and problem solving with emotional responses incorporated into the general equation. To this should be incorporated the game playing teleological processes of speculation and resolving dilemma which enables emotional response within 'a safe and sheltered place.' (cf. Chapter 1; sandplay, and Chapter 8; computer games).

In his study of portrait painters Michael Podro suggests that when a painter paints a portrait the process incorporates (a) acting the subject; (b) addressing the subject, and (c) becoming the subject portrayed. Podro sees the portrait and painter as analogous to the actor and the actor's role; a form of 'subject – object indeterminacy,' as 'our imaginative centre shifts from viewer to what is viewed and back again.' Podro writes: 'Just as we address with our own voice and thought and make our personality manifest to them through these, so the painter in addressing others in his own persona does it by the exercise of that voice and thought which are his art.' Similarly, in watching a film, the viewer addresses the role (role-play/speculation); addresses oneself as protagonist (positioning self through dilemma); and as scenarist, rewriting, revising and devising divergent or alternative scenarios.

In the game play of narrative, one 'self' plays, one 'self' observes; or there are multiple players and multiple observers within the same individual as the role-play of the performer (s) merges with the scrutiny of the observer(s). Screen play theory challenges the 'saturation of identity' (3Chapter 8) and incorporates the multiplicity of 'a society of agents' within what Marvin Minsky describes as the 'society of the mind.' However as James Glass suggests, multiplicity (3Chapter 9) is not viable if it means shifting among personalities that cannot communicate, or if it means being confused to a point of immobility. Similarly Robert Lifton suggests embracing the idea of the multiplicity of a fragmented self risks a breakdown of moral grounding and cohesion of identity. A healthy protean self on the other hand is grounded in coherence and a moral outlook. It is multiple but integrated.

Daniel Dennett suggests a Multiple Drafts model of consciousness as an alternative to a traditional model he terms Cartesian Theatre; an approach that defines the self as a centre of narrative gravity (3Chapter 4), and the persistence of that narrative dependent upon a process of ongoing revision. William Calvin's comparable model of consciousness is founded on what he describes as 'scenario spinning.' Role-play requires a script.

Script

In clinical psychology scripts refer to the process of fictionalising the self – manufacturing an identity, a history, a past; and manufacturing the personae dramatis within one's own life. Scripts are the individual traits that select given information to support an individual's own inclinations, beliefs, views, opinions and attitudes. R C Shank and R P Abelson suggest the individual carries scripts of people, scripts for events and for social interactions. Thus the individual enacts greeting scripts, request scripts, apology scripts, conversational scripts – schemata of behaviour depending on the situation. Jo Brunas-Wagstaff defines the script as cognitions about what to expect in certain sorts of situation based on past experience which influence behaviour whenever a similar situation is encountered in the future.

R E Nisbett and L Ross suggest that such individual life scripts selectively process information in order to verify their own established views. In narrative, however, the individual script provides the means by which to evaluate the narrative on the viewer's own terms. The script enhances selective viewing and selective listening, modifying the narrative so that, up to a point, the viewer sees what they want to see; hears what they want to hear. The life-script enables an individual to process information quickly and automatically, whereby a familiar code of events is addressed with a prescribed strategy; the life-script facilitates the narrating process of the human mind. For the viewer a script transforms narrative comprehension to personal experience, through modifying, recasting, replotting and the ongoing negotiation with the narrative.

Whereas evolutionary psychology places emotional responses within an adaptive mentality, but stops at individual responses, the point at which evolutionary and cognitive psychology ends is where narrative begins, both as scripts of 'self' and the scenarios suffused onto the game board screen. Just as fiction is especially compelling when the obstacles to the protagonist's goals are other people in pursuit of incompatible goals, the activities of daily life, suggest Pinker, are similarly constructing worst possible scenarios. With reservations the analogy is an apt one – the reservation being that the viewer/player process of 'scripting' on-screen narratives and scripting in daily life, requires the alternation between both best and worst possible scenarios.

Examples listed in Chapter 4 included Melina's reading of *Medea* (Never on a Sunday); Antonio and reading of *Of Human Bondage* (We All Loved Each Other So Much) which illustrate concrete renditions of script enactment; but the process also functions on an abstract level. For example Steven Pinker describes a movie plot whereby a protagonist strives to attain a goal, an antagonist interferes, and thanks to a helper, the protagonist finally succeeds. The 'actors' consist of dots; the main character is a dot moving upwards on an inclined plane. Regardless, the viewer 'engages' with the situation. Fritz Heider and M Simmel, who devised this and other 'abstract' narrative games, conclude that – 'people construe certain objects as animate

agents...' which have (a) a source of energy, and (b) a goal – motion and motive.

Pinker suggests 'pictures are ambiguous, but thoughts, virtually by definition, cannot be ambiguous.. common sense makes distinctions that pictures by themselves do not... between gazing and thinking images must give way to ideas.'

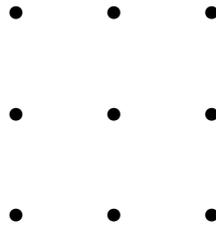
What lies between the gaze and the thought? This is the issue Münsterberg addressed considering the 'mystic gulf' between viewer and screen. My claim is that whereas in film production terms the process between thought and film is the filmscript or screenplay; in regard to the individual story experience the process between film and thought is the lifscript and the screen play that the lifscript dramatises.

The problem here is that mentality begins where behaviourist psychology and physics ends; the mental state is imperceptable and immeasurable – thought can neither be seen nor quantified. The consequences of the mental processes of thinking and imagining, however, are made tangible in the stories, revisions and interpretations produced by the viewer.

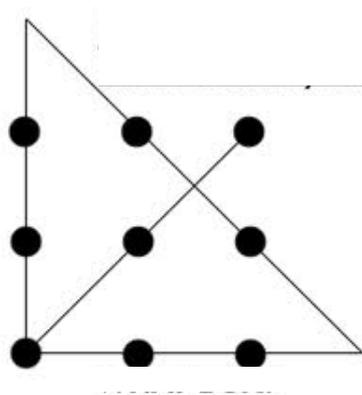
Skills

How does a viewer play the audiovisual narrative game 'skillfully?' What are viewing skills? How does the viewer resist the 'automatic game' of plot syntagma and predetermined outcome?

The 'nine dot' puzzle presented in Chapter 5 (3p. 101) provides an analogous illustration of the viewing pattern of staying 'in-frame and on-screen.' Joining the dots can be done many ways, but in four lines requires a different approach. The square shape creates a mindset – boundaries exist because they are formed by the viewer; what Gestalt theory refers to as 'fixation.'



The on-screen narrative role-play is grounded in character investment and mentality; the off-screen viewer role-play is grounded in cultural and individual values ('narrative gravity') and attitude. The on-screen investment in Louis (Kind Hearts and Coronets, 3Chapter 3; pp. 61 - 63) represents a mentality (justice seeking, family honour); the off-screen viewer role-play concerns an attitude to Louis and the diversity of cultural and individual values that affect that attitude; nationality, gender, social status, age, etc. This distinctions are significant, I think, in better understanding story investment and story motivation; where mentality stimulates investment – and the narrative speculation that goes with it; and attitude provides motivation (what the viewer finds 'moving' 3Chapter 4) to sustain that investment.



Playing off-screen provides new perspectives, new gains and new insights; like solving the problem of the nine dots, such gains require looking 'beyond the frame.' J L Adams notes how most people attempting to solve the 'nine dots' contain themselves within an imaginary boundary, although it is not in the definition of the problem. An approach of moving outside the square Adams terms 'conceptual blockbusting.'

Off-screen play with audiovisual narrative includes; (a) hypothesising 'what if...' scenarios outside the frame – to agendas of culture and context; (b) playing narrative against, what David Bordwell terms 'an historical poetics of the cinema' (4Conclusion); (c) interpretation. In the case of the latter, interpretation, too, encompasses agendas and game plans (4Conclusion); Tzvetan Todorov writes: 'interpretation is no longer true or false, but rich or poor, revealing or sterile, stimulating or dull.' For just as narrative is negotiable, so too is interpretation. And as negotiation requires a dialogue, based – not on ideology, nor position – but on mutual interests and mutual benefits, an interpretation needs also to fulfill such criteria.

Viewer as Scenarist

'You will see that this little clicking contraption with the revolving handle will make a revolution in our life – in the life of writers. It is a direct attack on the old methods of literary art. We shall have to adapt ourselves to the shadowy screen and to the cold machine. A new form of writing will be necessary... this blending of emotion and experience – it is much better than the heavy long drawn-out kind of writing to which we are accustomed. It is closer to life... the cinema has devined the mystery of motion.' Leo Tolstoy, 1908.

Tolstoy's 'new form of writing' constitutes a polemic pertinent to both screen work (the professional scenarist) and to screen play (the viewer as scenarist). The discourse of film narrative is the audiovisual play that motivates authorship on both sides of the screen. The emergent film narrative form at the turn of the century embraced a new literacy, and a new kind of authorship – creating and devising the scenario.

Yet, how does the viewer 'write fiction' when the fiction is on the screen? Is the viewer's process of manufacturing a story – an interpretation – from the story on-screen, so dissimilar to writing the script on which the story is based? Research in cognitive psychology suggests the processes are not so different. The art of story telling is, after all, the art of skilfully 'telling lies' – a process which requires 'imaginal operations' and 'visual creativity.'

Imaginal operations describe the process of creating 'a picture in the mind,' a process which is similar to perception from a cognitive psychology perspective. Four basic paradigms of research relate imagery to perception: illusions, selective interference effects involving modality conflict, reaction times to like and unlike stimuli, and mental transformations. Peter Sheehan concludes that imagery is linked functionally to remembering and perceiving, yet, he writes; 'although imagery exists... we do not know how exactly we should define its nature.'

Elsewhere cognitive psychologists, through lack of 'hard evidence,' suggest that 'stories about scientists and artists producing their most creative work through visual thinking... are among the best

indicators that we have of the power of visual thinking.’ In a study of process thinking in children, Sandra Russ concludes that ‘play is similar to the elements involved in creative thinking’ and ‘play facilitates convergent problem solving.’ Russ describes the mastery of play as an assimilative process, that ‘play is a major form of conflict resolution.’ The correlation between play, game and narrative, and their parallel functions, further suggest the interrelation between ‘reading and writing’, viewer and scenarist.

For example, William Labov in *Language in the Inner City*, postulates a structure of a ‘fully formed oral narrative’ comprising:

1. abstract – what the story is about
2. orientation – who what where what
3. complicating action – what happened next?
4. evaluation – so what, why is this interesting?
5. result or resolution – what finally happened?
6. coda – bridging back to the present situation

According to this model when someone is in conversation, relating an incident, or ‘telling a story’ to someone else, the teller falls into a dramatic narrative mode innate to the ‘telling’ process.

John Harris and Jeff Wilkinson describe ‘a model of the writing process’ comprising six inter-related components of task, writer’s ‘world knowledge’, pre-writing (organising ideas), writing (transcription), text and text revising/reviewing. Earlier chapters have considered the narrative structure (morphology) of Vladimir Propp (preparation – compilation – transference – struggle – return – recognition); Brenda Laurel’s transference of Gustav Freytag’s dramatic schema to computer schema, and schema commonality to audiovisual narrative outlined in Hollywood screenwriting texts.

Structures of textual organisation, whether for reading or writing, listening or telling, watching or showing, playing or game-making are comparable; so too is the psychological process of speculating outcomes, identifying dilemma, with the option of assimilating insight available to either viewer or scenarist, regardless of disparity between the two. The main distinction is a physical one; the writing process of the scenarist leads to a printed page, audiovisual

narrative, or digital fiction. The cognitive and phenomenological processes of reception, perception, comprehension, interpretation and the imaginal operations that interpretation entails, are common to both sides of the 'narrative screen' in whatever form that screen is manifest.

The mental activity of speculating and hypothesising is associated with imagination, which Murray Smith terms 'schema theory' to provide 'a model of mental activity which accounts for both conformity to the 'spontaneous' and developments away from it... changes in what is conceived as 'the familiar.' Smith distinguishes between cultural schemata which are 'learned and sustained within a given cultural environment' and automatized schemata linked to behavioural responses. Smith maintains that the fiction film experience is 'a process whereby centrally imagining 'other' perspectives is imbricated with imagining situations as if we (rather than the character) occupied a position within them, and where both are held within a structure of acentral imagining.' I suggest that this 'imagining' process is similar regardless which side of the narrative screen the individual is placed. A viewer is not necessarily a writer – which is a physically active process – but there is a case for the viewer as scenarist – and the psychologically active processes implicated.

Letter from Siberia (*Lettre de Sibirie*, 1959) is an example of how 'play' creates different texts and narrative alternatives. Chris Marker provides three different voice-overs to the same visual sequence which shows: a bus passing a car on a city street and three shots of workers paving a road. Each voice-over begins with 'Yakutsk'; the first commentary narrates: 'the joyful spirit of socialist emulation, happy Soviet workers... etc'; the second: 'bending to the task like slaves, the miserable soviet workers... etc'; and third: 'with courage and tenacity under extremely difficult conditions, Soviet workers... etc.' Bordwell and Thompson conclude that 'the audience will construe the same images differently, depending on the sound track,' but this is only the beginning of the game. The voice-over narration 'at play' with what purports to be the non-negotiable text, incites the viewer to subversive readings, to further 'play' – to continue an on-screen and ongoing negotiation. Letter from Siberia provides three possible scenarios to a single sequence – how many more can the viewer provide?

Film director Rouben Mamoulian recalls that during the shooting of *Queen Christina* (1933): 'Garbo asked me: "What do I play in this scene?" ... I said: "Have you heard of *tabula rasa*? I want your face to be a blank sheet of paper. I want the writing to be done by every member of the audience. I'd like it if you could avoid even blinking your eyes, so that you're nothing but a beautiful mask." So in fact there is nothing on her face: but everyone who has seen the film will tell you what she is thinking and feeling. And always it's something different.' Bruce Kawin suggests 'the viewer's interplay between passivity and creation is analogous to the sleeper's, since both forget, almost continuously, that the dream world is "made." The process I suggest is a more active one – both as interplay which is linked to the narrative, and as 'play,' which is linked to the viewer, and an active viewer at that.

Charlotte Brunsdon, both television theorist and self-confessed television soap opera fan, speculates on future episodes of *Brookside* (TV4:UK) based on her own knowledge of genre conventions and familiarity with the series (3pp. 237 - 238; Skills): on surmising as to whether a character will have a baby, she dismisses the idea based on reasons that are 'partly generic' and partly 'intuitive.' Her viewing pleasure, she concludes, is based on 'how my prediction comes true.' John Fiske comments how 'the viewer assumes the role of author and sets her 'script' against the one to be broadcast in the future. This 'script production is remarkably similar to the actual scriptwriting processes which draw upon the same knowledge of the conventions of soap opera in general and the structure of character relationships within this one in particular.'

Fiske maintains that this kind of 'writing' is only possible because of 'television's sense of happening in the present in the same time scale as that of its viewers. The future of a television serial appears to be 'unwritten' like the real future...' thus television 'engages its viewers more intensely because its enigmas appears to be unresolved and the viewer is invited to experience their resolution, not merely to learn of it.' Yet it is, I maintain, a process not particular to television, but to the screen play of the cinema, television and more transparently, within digital environments.

Martin Wallace defines three elements of narrative; that a narrative contains space for individual involvement with the story (beyond the scope of the text); a narrative is a cooperative enterprise between reader and writer (the negotiable narrative) as participants within a historical social and cultural context; and that narrative is created through the act of reading – not by readers, writers and narrative conventions. Edward Branigan suggests further that readers and writers possess identical skills of comprehension, and that 'a writer is merely a first reader.' The processes of narrative experience (comprehension and interpretation) and writing are both based on organising principles of causality and association. 'The genius creates good ideas because we all create good ideas,' writes Steven Pinker; 'that is what our combinatorial, adapted minds are for.' Similarly, the film director makes good films because the viewer makes good films; the scriptwriter writes a good script because the viewer writes a good script, and the performer creates an engaging role because, as player, the viewer creates engaging roles.

The disparity between scenarist as writer, and scenarist as viewer, then, is a marginal one. This is not to denigrate the role of the scriptwriter, but to distinguish between what constitutes screen play and screen work, and the professional and technical criteria which pertain to the latter, and playfulness which pertain to both. The process described by Ingmar Bergman in sketching out an early scenario for a film which would result in *Persona* (1966), corresponds to the process of 'play' undertaken by the viewer when experiencing the scenario Bergman describes, but with obviously divergent meanings: 'I imagine a bleached white strip of film,' writes Ingmar Bergman. 'It runs through the projector and gradually words can be made out on the soundtrack... then a face appears almost indiscernible within all the white. It is Alma's face. Mrs. Vogler.'

In scripting the scenario for *Secret Agent* (1936), Alfred Hitchcock tells François Truffaut, the question posed was: "'What do they have in Switzerland?" They have milk chocolate, they have the Alps, they have village dances, and they have lakes. All of these national ingredients were woven into the picture.' Similarly Dutch windmills serve as a point of departure in *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) and Mt Rushmore and Kansas cornfields in *North by Northwest* (1959) together

with a Detroit Ford automobile assembly line which was not filmed. The associations devised by Hitchcock and the studio scenarists, and incorporated into the scripts, constitute an effectivity of story telling probably denied by the greater proportion of viewer-scenarists, but the free-play associations – or ‘feeling for free fantasy’ as Hitchcock describes the process, to ‘local topographical features.. used dramatically’ is a universal attribute of the human mind.

Conversely, Janet Murray maintains that ‘interactor’ as author ‘is a misleading assertion...’ and that there is a ‘distinction between playing a creative role within an authored environment and having authorship of the environment itself.’ What then is an author? The Oxford Reference defines an author as the originator of an event or a condition, thus the expression, ‘the author of my woes’ to describe a self-inflicted state of misery. The issue here is – author of what? I maintain the player/viewer is ‘creating a story’ – albeit within ‘an authored environment’ with a degree of similarity or dissimilarity dependent upon the player/viewer. ‘Contemporary critics are attributing authorship to interactors because they do not understand the procedural basis of electronic composition...,’ writes Murray, yet I argue, this is as much authorship as game design. There is not story to a game until it is played – the player creates the narrative. The viewer’s play – ascribing meanings to characters, situations, events and images – is a process comparable to the scenarist using the prompts of situations and characters, either real or imagined, to fabricate a narrative along the lines of (most often) a well-established game plan.

‘The procedural author creates not just a set of scenes but a world of narrative possibilities,’ writes Murray, yet, I suggest, it is up to the viewer/player (interactor) to realise a narrative from the possibilities – or options – provided by the game. This is the essence of authorship and a distinction necessary to presage the evolving narrative forms whereby authors as ‘game designers’ – writers – provide situations and prompts, and the viewer, as author, proceeds along the divergences most satisfying to themselves.

Paul Feyerabend says stories, not abstract models, explain and advance knowledge; ‘the listener (or, in our days, the reader) makes judgement and derives the limits of courage from it... The instances show

what courage and wisdom are; they do not nail them down as does a logical definition.' Feyerabend disputes that, in the sciences, 'abstract and unusual concepts are exclusively the results of individual creative acts...' but the arguments are equally applicable to the status bestowed upon writer/artist – everyone, afterall, creates scenarios. 'The conceited view that some human beings, having the divine gift of creativity, can rebuild Creation to fit their fantasies has not only led to tremendous social, ecological and personal problems, it also has very doubtful credentials, scientifically speaking,' concludes Feyerabend.

'A story is an act of interpretation of the world, rooted in the particular perceptions and feelings of the writer,' writes Murray, yet, both acts of interpretation, and the scenarios created by the viewer, are similarly ingrained in the perceptions and feelings of the 'player' interacting with the narrative game before them.

If, throughout the text, the boundaries between the player – as viewer (creating idiographic narrative games from audiovisual narrative), and player, (as manufacturer or game deviser of audiovisual narrative), are unclear, it is because the boundaries are unclear. Audiovisual narrative constitutes a collaboration – a participatory narrative – in which the viewer is both player and scenarist.

Conclusion

The silent space at the centre of the vortex...

In the short treatise, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, published in 1916, Hugo Münsterberg sought to define the processes whereby the photoplay 'mentalised' the world. While Münsterberg set out to explain the psychological and phenomenological implications of cinema, in Sept-ember of the same year, a group of Italian futurists published a mani-festo, advocating the liberation of film, and the creation of a 'poly-expressive symphony.' A list of 14 points included simultaneous plots, multilinear narrative, experimentation with sound and image, and many of the attributes associated with contemporary post-modern narrativity.

The Futurist movement, with a series of manifestos published between 1909 and 1918, inspired the founding of Vorticism in Great Britain, a short lived and dynamic literary and artistic movement. 'Vorticism' was initially a theory of metaphysics advanced by Descartes that the universe is a plenum in which motion propagates itself in circles. The Vorticists, with Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound (who coined the term) at the centre, attacked what they considered the sentimentality of 19th century art, and from 1912 to 1915 promoted new artistic forms that represented 'the age of the machine.' With simultaneity and multilinearity as principal aesthetic notions, Vorticists described the movement with the analogy of the artist as an observer in 'the silent space at the centre of the vortex' – the Vorticist stands in the 'great silent space watching the world spinning around...'

Vorticism and Futurism aligned with 'the age of the machine', advocating a dissolution of boundaries, and a manifesto proclaiming an aesthetic of multilinear lyricism, provides a curious contrast to the film narrative aesthetics purported by Hugo Münsterberg. Yet the dissident tone of the Futurists can be considered less social critique than a perspective; that there are many perspectives, not least concerning film. The multilinearity of narrative in a digital environment and the interactive format of the personal computer, suggests Domenic

Stansberry, can be seen as 'a manifestation of the early Futurist movement.'

The study of technology and narrative from a century ago illustrates the transition from picture play to the emergence and formation of the new audiovisual narrative form – how 'play' becomes 'game' – in a period of experimentation not dissimilar from the fin-de-siècle IT playground of the present. As forms of picture play began a process culminating in the visual narrative of the photoplay, present day digital 'playing around' represents the on-going development of some distinct audiovisual narrative form. 'If the current multimedia CD-ROMs are the equivalent of the photoplay...' asks Janet Murray, 'what will carry electronic narrative... from additive to expressive form?'

It is cinema – the development of, and the narrating of, that provides the analogies to consider what shape such an expressive form may take. In its formative years, writes André Bazin, evolved the 'myth' of the cinema 'as a total and complete representation of reality.' The technological developments – sound, colour – only take cinema closer to the 'myth.' 'Total cinema' is a product of the imaginations of the 19th century mind – each new technical development takes it closer to the total cinema once imagined. 'Cinema has not yet been invented,' concludes Bazin.

The 'myth' of new technology interactivity does not provide the user with control, so much as the illusion of control; as Domenic Stansberry suggests, 'the ancient puppet masters still work behind the scenes.' It is an illusion based on 'options' – but they are limited options, and compared to the multiplicity of idiographic options the viewer can provide, very limited indeed.

In *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) Dorothy asks of her three companions: 'Which road shall we take? this road or this road or this road?' The chosen road provides only the storyline required by the narrative as a whole. What storylines would the two alternatives have provided? The decision tree of Chaplin's *Easy Street* encounter with Eric Campbell outlines a series of options – the narration itself follows one predetermined line of motion. An 'interactive' version of the same story would provide story lines for alternative lines of motion, yet move toward predetermined resolutions regardless. Alternatively, as in the

case of many examples of digital fiction, the narrative provides 'looped' options and return to the main plot line, toward the same resolution, via some marginal narrative 'sidetracking' on the part of the user.

So what would the 'myth' of total narrative interactivity imply? Is it, as physicist Marvin Minsky suggests, downloading another person's experience – 'the ultimate interactive narrative experience' – which would mean possessing the other person's memories, and becoming the other person? And thereby forfeiting one's own identity? Or are there less radical alternatives? What is lacking in contemporary CD-ROM and digital narrative? The majority of plot based computer games rely on interacting as strategic thinking – the means by which to solve problems, eliminate enemies, unravel puzzles, investigate mysteries – yet distanced from the 'emotional engagement' that dilemma and character afford. Similarly, early cinema narratives employed predominantly strategic ploys until around 1908, with more 'dilemma' orientated narratives. (3Chapter 6; acculturation).

Shortly after the publication of Münsterberg's *The Photoplay*, and around the time of the last Futurist manifesto in 1918, Victor Freeburg in *The Art of Photoplay Making* (1918) outlined the spectator's three 'criteria for appeal': 1. sense appeal to the eye, 2. emotional appeal, 3. intellectual appeal – 'the last criteria is less important than the others.'

Freeburg's emphasis of 'emotional appeal' – condemned by the Futurists as '19th century romanticism' – is similarly circumspect within today's postmodern paradigm and an age where 'intellectual' game playing provides a safer bet. 'In the postmodern age earnestness is to be avoided,' writes Robert Wright. 'It betrays an embarrassing naivete... the prevailing attitude is absurdism...' The postmodern paradigm provides a manifestation of fin-de-siècle speculative play: postmodernism's 'tendency of indeterminance', juxtaposes modernist 'purpose' with postmodern 'play'; modernism's 'detachment' against postmodern 'participation.'

Stjepan G Mestrovic's exhaustive list of the postmodern includes: '... neo conservative ideology, reactionary sentiments, cynicism, a rejection of narrative structure, parody, stylistic promiscuity, pastiche, schizoid structure, excremental culture, a preference for visual images over words, fantasy, a 'post-tourist' search for spectacle, the epistemological

equivalence of past and present, an end of the Eurocentric perspective, commercialism, nihilism, and a penchant for hyperreality in which distinctions between the real and unreal are no longer valid. Above all postmodernism is defined as an attack on the 'myth' of modernity, the belief that the progressive liberation of humanity shall occur through science.'

Like the Futurist and Vorticist manifestos advocated structural breakdowns – and in particular, narrative structure – in 'an age of the machine'; 'manifestations' at least, of the postmodern, advocate structural breakdowns – and once again, specifically, narrative structure – in 'an age of the computer.' Today the 'machine age' cinema technology contrasts 'computer age' digital technology; machine age 'picture play' finds a contemporary digitalised equivalent with computer age 'picture play'.

Janet Murray, in her exploration of possible narrative futures, takes the holographic novel and the 'holodeck' of television's Star Trek as a point of departure. Using the analogy of the invention of the movie camera a hundred years ago, Murray asks, 'if the digital environment (multimedia, networked, desktop, Virtual Reality, arcade, etc) is the 'camera,' then what will be the equivalent of the 'movie'? The holodeck [where the 'interactor' enters a three dimensional world, participating with digitally simulated characters and environments] provides one provocative model.'

Investigations led by NASA physicist, David Batchelor, into the plausibility of a holographic novel and 'holodeck' environment concluded that 'NASA physicists with today's physics... can't imagine a way to assemble matter as the same way as the light in a hologram.' Be that as it may, the speculations provide the basis for the 'myth of total narrative' as Bazin's '19th century imaginings' did for 'a myth of total cinema.'

'We fear the participatory narrative world because we don't know how to indicate what is real and what is make-believe, what is romantic and what is pornographic, what is fantasy and what is antisocial behaviour,' maintains Murray. '...The holodeck stories frame these anxieties in fascinating ways. I think the real problem is finding appropriate boundaries...'

Anxieties concerning the boundaries between the real and not real, however, again bear comparison to early film screenings. The records of audience re-actions, as fictionalised in the cartoons and meta-films at the turn of the century (3Chapter 6; acculturation and 3Chapter 9; exstasis) were either exaggerated, short-lived or the imaginings of the scenarists of the day. As easily as a game can absorb the attention of a player, so can a player distinguish between what is game and what is not.

The advances of technology will be what they will be – it is not feasible, I suggest, to correlate the speculative game playing of imaginative fiction with reality. As authors and interactors, it is more prudent to discern what we do have influence over and what we do not. The tangibles of technological advance is a random variable over which we have limited control – even as consumer we are subject to the vagaries of a 'market.' What we can control and develop are our game playing skills. In devising new narrative games compatible to the technology of our time, but imbued with the craft and skills of storytelling, as well as developing our skills in 'playing' the narrative game. The question is not the perennial 'is this art?' but 'what makes a game worth playing?' And what are the aesthetic criteria by which we can discern those 'games worth playing?'

Games worth playing

The aim of this dissertation has been to evaluate audiovisual narrative in the context of play and game, and thereby formulate a screen play theory, with its focus on the player/viewer within the audiovisual narrative game in which viewer as player selects to participate in narrative games, or to create them.

Central to this dissertation is how the viewer 'plays' a film, and how player options are determined by individual styles. Speculation and dilemma define part of the process: strategies of play are founded on (a) speculation ('what happens next?') primed by narrative causality, and (b) 'positioning' ('what would I do?') prompted by dilemma. But game theory is limited only to evaluating strategies and options available to

the player. A phenomenological approach considers how the player plays the game – the meaning the player invests into play. I suggest that a screen play theory reconciles an idiographic psychological / phenomenological approach to individual narrative readings to the broader spectrum of theories encompassing narrative, text and visual fiction.

To summarise: a screen play theory suggests that narrative games enable the player to recreate an imaginary fictional world onto an internal 'mindscreen' – an interface between the dramatic enactment of narrative and the individual experience of narrative: the actual screen functions as a game board, regardless the narrative form. The game board provides a structure, a playing field, whereby meaning is dependent upon the investment made by the player. The game board functions as a system of representation – the simulation of Life dilemma /problem/ intrigue within the risk-free context of the Game – an exploration of possibilities. The 'participatory narrative' is a psychological process, in which the advances of technology are 'peripherals' – the processes of 'viewing' and 'scenario-writing' are both phenomenological processes of 'imaging' and interpretation.

Subjectivist interpretation raises certain issues. For if interpretation is limitless, that each person has their own interpretation and each person can have many interpretations, how then to address the subjectivism, disparagingly referred to as 'cafe phenomenology?' Also it could be argued that in science the idea of 'meaning' is irrelevant – science is concerned with observations and descriptions. Yet, I suggest, that seeking meanings is an integral part of the process – like making sense of a 'game.' A subjectivist position holds that experience has no natural structure and that there can be no natural external constraints upon meaning and truth. The constraints of interpretation imposed by society, or culture, or – as Stanley Fish suggests – by the academic institution, provide the framework and context necessary for any meaningful discourse or evaluation. If the player wishes to remain in the game, there are certain rules and certain conditions of play, with which to comply.

In *Making Meaning* David Bordwell suggests that whatever the virtues of interpretation, they are outweighed by faults and excesses.

That film interpretation has become the basis of teaching and critical writing, has detracted from the study of form and style. Bordwell proposes to 'take the pleasure out of film interpretation' in favour of an 'historical poetics of the cinema' – and the subsequent concerns as to how films are put together, serve specific functions, achieve special effects.

Why then an 'anything goes' approach to the interpretation of audio-visual narrative? The process of creating an individual and idiosyncratic 'game' can only serve a purpose if the player succeeds in defining 'rules of play' that others are prepared to follow. Bordwell defines 'rules of play' to the game of 'historical poetics' which is, I suggest, in keeping with an ongoing process of consolidating cinema studies within the metagame of academic discourse. An historical poetics of the cinema provides a framework for the 'advanced player' as an historian of forms, genres and styles with 'concrete assumptions embedded in the filmmaker's craft.' An historical poetics of the cinema, however, need not detract from the inevitability of the freewheeling play of interpretation, with a proviso – an appreciation of the qualified interpretation's 'conditions of play.'

Stanley Fish argues – from the perspective of literary criticism – that 'like it or not, interpretation is the only game in town.' Whereas twenty years ago literary critics would not talk about the reader, 'conditions of play' have modified to incorporate a range of new reader-orientated games. Although many proclaim 'the right to rule out at least some readings,' writes Fish, 'the point is that although there are interpretations most of us would dismiss out of hand, it doesn't mean to say that such an interpretation is not accommodated by the text.'

Fish lists three ways to address reader-centred criticism threatened by the variability of readers – the risk of too many interpretations, too much 'playfulness' with its subsequent ludicrous overtones. These are: denying the variability, controlling the variability, or making it into a principle of value. Variability, I suggest, is not just the principle of value, but a principle to value – it is a question of the advanced player's ability to devise the kind of games that other players are prepared to play.

Fish lists the kind of 'moves' required to 'play the game' of academic discourse and concludes that 'there are no moves that are not moves in the game, and this includes even the move by which one claims no longer to be a player.' Fish describes how students devise interpretative strategies around a text and their understanding of what they 'could and could not get away with, of the unwritten rules of the literary game, [which] is shared by everyone who plays that game...' Fish's list of 'players' is long and comprehensive of those 'for whom knowledge of the rules is the real mark of professional initiation.'

What then are the implications of 'anything goes' in the game play of interpretation? Stanley Fish suggests that in a 'model of persuasion' (as opposed to a 'model of demonstration') 'the responsibilities of the critic are very great indeed, for rather than being merely a player in the game, he is a maker and unmaker of its rules.' Similarly, in regard to audiovisual narrative the adept player seeks out, discriminates and discerns the 'games worth playing', and in turn creates interpretative games sufficiently stimulating to lure other players to the playing field.

Addressing the issue of interpretation within the broader arena of scientific research, Paul Feyerabend maintains that the 'anything goes' slogan is not a pretext for 'making research easier and success more accessible,' but rather instead of 'objective standards' it means the researcher is responsible for their own standards. There are no correct methods, writes Feyerabend, but a demand for an open exchange that seeks understanding without being tied to specific rules.

A game without rules? A game without rules is play. Physicist David Bohm maintains that the evolution of science and knowledge depends on 'playfulness' and the creative 'play' of the imagination, reiterating the association made by Johan Huizinga in *Homo Ludens*. A state which, as Huizinga observed, does not exclude seriousness of intent.

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