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## Mashup Cinema or Eisenstein's Legacy

**Abstract.** The paper focuses on the supposed fundamental change in contemporary films. After a short survey of several points of view on the matter I discuss the case of *mashup cinema*. This genre is based on recycling of cinematic sequences in order to create new narrative and fictional discourses. Contrary to Dada's rhetoric, mashup cinema is prone to create narratives based on continuity. New semantic constructions are elaborated out of heterogeneous filmic scenes and sequences. Discontinuities, viewed as autonomous sequences, are enjoyed *per se*. Sequences are further bound by narrative roles, and by abstract and sensorial modifiers such as music, movement, shapes and colors. This characteristic has been, since its birth, an explanatory element of what we call film.

Today's *mashup cinema* tends to become an audiovisual hieroglyphic language available to viewers and users situated at both ends of the spectrum, i.e. producers and addressees. Faced with this democratization of audiovisual use poststructuralist philosophical approaches have a gist of panic, and today's films and shorts are considered to be the epiphenomena announcing an apocalypse. Film analysts like David Bordwell, Roger Odin or Laurent Jullier adopt a more sober stance and study the new shifts in emphasis and the innovative use of new constructional schemas in a manner closer to the filmic text. Cinematic discourse, through the use of prefabricated chunks, cinematic *topoi*, is evolving towards a language which resembles the medieval literature and carnival where a common cultural thesaurus was available to users in order to create new conceptualizations and reality conceptions.

**Keywords:** Cognition, film analysis, mashup cinema, cinematic *topoi*, cognitive grammar, postmodernism, carnival, cinema of attractions, discontinuity, narrative.

### Preliminaries

During the last thirty years, cinema institution has undergone a significant shift. As Francesco Casetti (2007) once remarked, "film", as an object, is now dispersed" on a "plurality of supports (photographical image/digital image), a plurality of industrial branches (cinema, entertainment, TV, news, etc.), a plurality of products (fiction, documentary, archival materials, etc.) and a plurality of modes of consumption (in a film theatre, in a multiplex, at home, through cable TV, exchanged

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on the Internet, or seen on a mobile phone)" (2007, 36). As a consequence "there is no more theory because there is no more cinema" (35). Cinema is "everywhere and nowhere" and, due to its all-encompassing nature, the explanatory theories of cinema are no longer possible. Casetti quotes Janet Harbord (2002), who states that "the cinema today responds to different 'film cultures', established through different practices, different institutions and different discourses" (37). Thus we have Post-Theory,<sup>1</sup> which deals with a fragmented object, where nothing guarantees a "general" statement. Casetti admits that a "history of style" and the cognitive psychology of the viewer (the way audiovisual texts produce meaning) are today's main areas of investigation. Another approach is represented by cultural studies. And the third one is proposed by Gilles Deleuze. Therefore, the debate over the specificity of the cinema may seem adjourned, yet it lies in "disguise" inside the proliferation of discourses about cinema.

While working inside a different theoretical framework, Roger Odin's proposes a heuristic model, the "semio-pragmatics" approach (1983, 1991, 2000), that acknowledges the existence of various audiovisual communicative practices. Since both the meaning and the understanding of the audiovisual discourse depend on the viewers' pragmatic and cultural practices, the artifact is viewed as an "institution".<sup>2</sup> Odin elaborates different viewing institutions (documentary, fiction, fabula, aesthetic, artistic, discursive) that provide meaning to the audiovisual stimuli and discourse based on a series of functional operations activated by the viewer, which we will not elaborate here. David Bordwell's (1985, 1989, 1990, 2013) "constructivism" is also based on the idea that the spectator actively constructs the narrative world through the use of audiovisual cues. Between the viewer's cognitive models and visual cues, there is a kind of negotiation which arises / takes place. The claim would be that, within the framework of the theory of reception, diversity is better coped with and a theory can better be articulated. As Edward Branigan (2006) convincingly showed us later on, multiple cues and multiple contexts of use / viewing provide a large amount of film objects.<sup>3</sup> At any case, for this perspective on cinema, film is a fuzzy category that is just one among many other discursive practices evolving in time.

### **Digital in cinema (cinema of attractions)**

Due to a massive presence of digital use (production, distribution, reception) of audiovisual messages, the classical narrative film has changed (television, gaming, internet). David Bordwell (2005, 2006) has explained in a large extent the stylistic drift from classical continuity to "intensified continuity". Without eliminating narration, the film has achieved greater impact by enhancing its expressive means: an intensified pace of cutting, a restrained focalization of faces by using close-up framing, alternating with a multilayered reality framed in landscape views and a more wide-range camera movement. The film creates more fascination and expression by deepening the importance of movement: "today's Hollywood style is always on the move – if not through cutting, then through camerawork" (Bordwell 2005, 29).

In a similar vein, Shaviro (2010) elaborated the “post continuity” concept. Working on three cases: *Gamer* (Mark Neveldine & Brian Taylor, 2009), *Southland Tales* (Richard Kelly, 2006), and *Zoolander* (Ben Stiller, 2001), Shaviro focuses more on several features of a cinema that represents a “vast, open performance space” that demands a more “carnavalesque participatory and overtly self-reflexive experience” on the part of the viewer (2010, 43). This cinema is based on weaker narrative ties (a paratactic narrative).<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary digital film is a distributed medium that easily includes “home video footage”, where camera work is more closely tied to the mental states of the character (38), while narrative coherence is often acquired through extensive use of sound and music (49).<sup>5</sup> The present moment of the diegesis is augmented as an “intensified present” (65), and affective / emotional appraisals of the viewer are manipulated moment-to-moment (69), and create an excess of autonomic responses in the viewer. Extreme fragmentation of analytical cuts that create a “blurred confusion” is associated with the “headlong rush of movement forward” (69). In a post Marxist perspective, Shaviro links this stylistic emphasis to the “metamorphoses of capital” where the continuous crisis, commodification and capital accumulation are entwined with the repeated experience of destruction as necessary parts of the capital’s “perpetual self-valorization and rejuvenation” (76). He also lets off a concluding remark, which purports that “the role of art is to explore the dangers of futurity, and to ‘translate’ these dangers by mapping them as thoroughly and intensely as possible” (80). Confronted with the hypermediacy of a capitalist control society where the ubiquitous digital technologies reign while organized in a “timeless time” and a “space of flows”, the artist can solve this crisis by exhausting it; only “by going further and further into gamespace might one come out the other side of it” (75).

Cherchi-Usai ambiguously celebrates / mourns in a hybrid text – both critical and literary - the “death of the cinema” in a renewed Dark Age where the “ultimate goal of film history is an account of its own disappearance”. David Rodowick (2007) also mourns the death of analog cinema and the lack of indicial link between the image and the model (117). For Rodowick, digital image is, strictly speaking, not fully present in space and time. It is a simulation - a discontinuous and fluid illusion - linked to displays. Fluid movement and continuous present are the main features. The subject is defined through a multitude of contradictory places of possible activity and actions, and similarity propagates and circulates freely between items.<sup>6</sup> Discourse is “entropic and dispersed”, a distributed communication (50). The subject is defined by the multiple and often contradictory places of possible discursive activity and actions on the body (52). “Similitude circulates the simulacrum as an indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar” (67). The disappearance of designation is the most powerful consequence of the new digital technologies (71).

“Representation no longer exists in the sense of distinctive differences between media. Any sign can be stored digitally and reconstituted in another form; thus indexical-

ity is no longer the measure of the 'truth' of the image. The figural enonce is virtual; it does not necessarily derive from any prior existence. Split from within by the noncoincidence of figuration, affirmation, and designation, signs proliferate in an endless temporal stream. The figural is the electronic and digital era par excellence." (71)

In an article dedicated to the influence of the television narrative style, Max Dawson (2011) talks about the "aesthetics of efficiency" characterized by "streamlined exposition, discontinuous montage and ellipsis, and decontextualized narrative or visual spectacle". He points to the "rapid-fire montages", semantically synecdochic tropes that disclose a "fetish for brevity". Shorts "highlight and intensify fleeting moments", and help a kind of "aesthetic criticism" on behalf of the viewer. Since the spectator can view and review shorts, step through them one frame at a time and freeze or reverse the flow of their diegetic time, he can also identify bounded textual elements that are exemplary and representative for the text as a whole. In brief, viewer experience becomes also a critical experience. Shorts coalesce traditional fictional viewing of films with critical, advertising, demonstrative and documentary modes of reading of films. Shorts contain antagonistic demands as they carry out "the functions of promos, content, and commercials all at once" (23). Equally, to use Brown's words (2009, 71), we are now witnessing the rise of a "posthumanist cinema", where a kind of intensified realism prevails and within which "digital technology has transformed the cinema into a subset of animation rather than the other way round, which has traditionally been the case".

Faced with this new filmic regime, we beg the question: do we have to mourn or do we have to enjoy it? Just as Roland Barthes once made a remark about Sade's literature, the same experience of sexual torture can be enjoyed or painfully suffered (Justine / Juliette).

Tom Gunning (1990) has indicated that early cinema was an artifact that "displayed its visibility". Even from its very beginning, cinema, as a device that transforms its own exhibition into an attraction (a performance or an installation, in contemporary terms), was a "cinema of attractions" where "theatrical display dominates over narrative absorption". The reference for this paradigm is Sergei Eisenstein who tried to explore the theatre that aggressively subjects the "spectator to 'sensual or psychological impact'". Eisenstein chooses the term "attraction" from the fairground - where roller coaster experience is prototype -, and popular festive culture. Avant-garde cinema and Dadaist films find their sources in the "enthusiasm for a mass culture" (and they, I might add, represent the modern resurgence of carnival cultural tradition).<sup>7</sup> Gunning's description of the early cinema is an illustration of contemporary shorts:

"Film appeared as one attraction on the vaudeville programme, surrounded by a mass of unrelated acts in a non-narrative and even nearly illogical succession of performances. Even when presented in the nickelodeons that were emerging at the end of this period, these short films always appeared in a variety format, trick films

sandwiched in with farces, actualities, 'illustrated songs', and, quite frequently, cheap vaudeville acts".

Gunning's excerpt is premonitory. What cinema once was represents an announcement of future consequences. What cinema *was* reflects what cinema *is*.

The Neo-baroque style is another label that covers the idea of a contemporary revival of the carnivalesque tradition and popular culture in film. Ndalians (2004) singles out five characteristics of the neo-baroque as an entertainment regime: the serial form (including the elaborate relations between originals and copies or remakes within and across media); intertextual labyrinths; hypertextual navigation as a mode of narrative engagement; spectacle and immersion; and the transcendental role of the technological sublime. Furthermore, Sean Cubitt talks about a Neo-baroque Hollywood (2009, 47). The Baroque can be understood as a synonym of postmodernism (49). "The baroque was also an immensely playful period: a play of liquid and fluid shapes, of the irruption of the natural into the artificial and vice versa, the play of fountains and *trompe-l'oeil*, the play of practical jokes, an era of great comedies." (30). These technical features—graphical composition and graphical matches, navigation, soundscaping, depth of field and staging in depth, disorientation, proprioception, pattern-based narration and isolation—suggest that the neo-baroque represents a fundamentally spatial aesthetic (52). The neo-baroque proliferation of signs drains the meaning out of any single instance of symbolization (51). Shaviro talks about a kind of "televisual flatness", a "literalism" that drains the symbolic and metaphorical meaning out of the film (2010, 50), in which "multiple differences ramify endlessly; but none of these differences actually makes a difference, since they are all completely interchangeable" (77).

Andre Gaudreault (2015) remarks that, even if the digital turn produced a convergence of media concomitantly, a great number of divergences would arise "between *what cinema was* (or rather "the idea we had of cinema") before the digital shift and what cinema is in the process of becoming" (2015, 191). The cinema apparatus gives way to the "video apparatus" (193) where one can consult films – where one can interrupt and modify the video experience within a discontinuous and non-linear viewing - and view them where and when one wants. Cinema is proliferating in a widened "media ecosystem". For him, new forms of entertainment that are widespread today do not correspond to our notion, which is still in force nowadays, of cinema. These forms include such "non-film" presentations like "operas, ballets, visits to museum exhibitions, sporting events, etc.", and are a growing phenomenon in what he has suggested we call the *tele-agora*. This instantiates a new kind of relation with the movie theatre. I would also like to add that, today, one can witness the intermedial performances of the postdramatic theatre in which the emphasis is placed on the theatrical staging of the cinema – see the works of Jay Scheib – or on the cinematic theatre – see the works of Romeo Castellucci.<sup>8</sup>

### Postmodernism

Laurent Jullier is a fervent advocate of the post-modernism of contemporary films (1997, 10). For him, the postmodern cinema uses the recycling of ready-made past film fragments in the present time (*recognize and enjoy*), celebrates the pleasure of shapes and colors, gives preeminence to soundscape, and exploits immersive forward traveling and circular camera movement in order to create the "film concert". He also focuses on the connection between the "amusement park ride" of the film concert and the carnival tradition (30). Jullier was one of the first scholars to underscore the massive use of bottom up perceptual and cognitive mechanisms involved in the conceptual negotiation with the audiovisual flux. He also underscores the presence of acausal narratives (parametric narration) (106-107). He also highlighted the Dogma poetics: violent images are depicted *in* the frame of the image, and not off the frame – violence is entertained as a spectacle in full view - (94), the *run-and-gun* technique, amateur shooting (*lo-fi* where the cameraman does not know where the character will move next and where often descriptive panoramas at irregular speeds are employed) (128). It's a technique of make-believe trying to show that something improvised and sudden can still happen before the camera today (128). Ultra gore and violent images generate a retreat of the viewer to the comfort of the senses as a defensive mechanism. He will either focus on the perceptual and expressive qualia of the film or he will adopt a ludic mood (this is a play) (145). In brief, Jullier emphasizes the role played by the postmodern cinematic procedures that are based on the automatic, encapsulated, low level perceptual mechanisms of the brain. This style either immerses the viewer or cues him to adopt a type of reading of it as an artifact (this is a film).

Seen from a wider historical perspective, these cultural practices embody mental conceptual structures that have not changed in drastic ways at least since the appearance of linguistic use. The technical context may change, but the ways of appraisal and conceptualizing depend on embodied corporal mechanisms and brain structures that are not prone to sudden changes. As Jullier (2016) puts it, cognition, perception and emotions are embodied mechanisms that do not take into consideration whether the viewer is in the jungle facing a tiger or he is comfortably seated in front of a screen depicting a tiger. In his 2016 article, Jullier talks about the fact that the film is a "protolanguage" based on embodied perceptual, cognitive and emotional mechanisms. Our manner of perceiving the world and our "sense of movement" are simulated on screen by cinematographic patterns of organizing visual data in relationship to an *experiencer* (a sentient entity / a character that we are able to simulate mentally in order to understand how the world looks and feels for others). In all narrative films we have a shot framing the character (a *single*, for example), a shot illustrating his point of view (a *POV shot*) and a shot with the character (an *over-the-shoulder* shot). And those three instances of relationship between character and an exter-

nal object are instances of our being, perceptually and cognitively, in the world. We see the external world from an egocentric position (POV shot), we can have an allocentric view of a situation which we are in (*establishing shot*) or we can adopt the other's view on a situation (a Theory of Mind) (the *over-the-shoulder shot*). This protolanguage is biocultural.<sup>9</sup> Jullier states that, ever since the beginning of the XXI century, immersive shots and shots done by a subjective "cameraman" (the *run and gun style*) have become widely used. They used to be marginal patterns in classical cinema. Ever since the advent of a new cultural context based on new technological developments, those cinematographic patterns have become more conventional. The multiplication of gliding sports (ski, ski jumping, sailing) and the widespread presence of gaming experiences operated in the POV mode made the immersive forward traveling a "natural" and conventional cinematic trope. Images produced by telephones, newsreels with amateur footage captured on the spot and You Tube / Facebook video testimonials also made conventional the figure of viewing from a point of view embedded in a scene / in diegesis. As Jullier states: "it's not our body that has changed, it's the fact that we have found new means to create pleasant and speaking images from its given capacities" (19).

I adopt a similar theoretical perspective. The architecture of the brain hasn't changed since the appearance of moving images. The same perceptual-cognitive-affective mechanisms are used for coping with meaningful conceptualizations that are probabilistically indicated in verbal or audiovisual cues.<sup>10</sup> A common conceptual grammar underlies both types of expressive channels: verbal and visual. XXI century film just explores new ways of reshuffling conceptual elements in new constructional patterns. Since those complex expressions continue to be instantiations of more schematic constructional patterns of content (schemas) which are common to the verbal and visual discourse, the conceptual content is intelligible.

### **Cinema in digital (mashup cinema)**

Thomas Elsaesser (2015, 103) explores the "idea of obsolescence", and argues against a "radical break between analogue and digital" which points to the fact that the digital can be seen as a "reflection on the basic assumptions of film history". In particular, he defends the idea that "the past had believed as being its own future", an "open-ended past" of the cinema (104). In this case "obsolescence can even be the rallying point for sustainability and recycling" (106).

As once Arthur Danto remarked, film can mimic photography (1979). It can, as a stylistic possibility, do freeze frames. Photographic media can't do the opposite. The digital film can mimic and thus appropriate analog cinema. The opposite can't occur. The artistic object is the result of our pragmatic attitude and knowledge about the possibilities of the media. Digital film and screenings can immerse viewers into the theatrical experiences (virtual reality), but the inverse effect is not possible. Theatrical

experiences can embed tokens of film screening but those are still tokens in an experience that, in itself, is not filmic.<sup>11</sup>

“Suddenly screen and projection, motion and sound are everywhere, when previously hushed silence and the stillness of immersive contemplation reigned supreme in the temples of art we call museums. Some reasons are internal to the development of modern art practice, if one accepts that for many of today’s artists, a digital camera and a computer are as much primary tools of the trade as a paintbrush and canvas were a hundred years ago.” (109)

Elsaesser talks about a *cinema d'exposition* which prefers the recycling, re-staging or reworking of the classics, preferably the works of Alfred Hitchcock. He mentions Douglas Gordon’s *24 Hour Psycho*, Matthias Müller and Christoph Girardet’s *The Phoenix Tapes* (2000), Johan Grimonprez’ *Looking for Alfred* (2005) (110). For him this new sense of ownership of the cinema by the museum, by artists and by art spaces is connected with the bidirectional ambiguity / conjuncture of the “death of the cinema” and the anniversary of the cinema (110).

At the other end of the spectrum, the collage and compilation can produce their own kind of apotheosis, as with Christian Marclay’s *The Clock* (2010), which has raised the stakes considerably for anyone dreaming of making a cinephile “found footage film,”. Marclay’s film “at once proving and disproving that film history’s undiscovered riches are lying right there at the surface, in the myriad of objects, details, sounds, gestures and textures, by working – indeed labouring – on this film history’s ‘optical unconscious’.” (111). Elsaesser states the diagnosis: we are confronted with a “poetics of obsolescence”, where to be retro means to be novel, where “going vintage” is “avant-garde.” (112). Media archaeology, understood as an integral part of a poetics of obsolescence, would be the perfect balancing act between both these possibilities, where the future of the cinema renews itself whenever we experience its obsolescence as a promise (114).

The films quoted by Elsaesser seem to be the tip of the iceberg. Lately, a new genre has arisen. Loosely called *mashup cinema*, it contains films that recycle excerpts from other audiovisual texts. Cinema images, shots and sequences are re-appropriated by digital images on a wide array of displays. The corpus one can consult comprises works like *A Movie* (Bruce Conner, 1958), *Dead Men don't Wear Plaid* (Carl Reiner, 1982), *Home Stories* (Mathias Muller, 1990), *La Classe Americaine* (Michel Hazanavicius & Dominique Mezerette, 1993), *Telephones* (Christian Marclay, 1995), *The Phoenix Tapes* (Cristoph Girardet, 1999), *Heart of the World* (Guy Maddin, 2000), *Fast Film* (Virgil Widrich, 2003), *Pure* (Jacob Bricca, 2009), *The Clock* (Christian Marclay, 2010), *Final cut. Ladies and Gentlemen* (Gyorgy Palfi, 2012). One must highlight the fact that a lot of other creators do work within this trend, like, for example, Jean-Gabriel Periot. As usual in cinema, the template can be found earlier: in our case in *Rose Hobart* (Joseph Cornell, 1936).<sup>12</sup> But most of the contemporary creators are anonymous. This indi-

cates that we are confronted with a revival of the archaic and medieval mode of communication, when the author of an artifact was not considered relevant. Popular culture is anonymous and oral. Digital culture is democratic, anonymous and audiovisual (non logocentric). Creators search in a film archive (cinema history, internet, You Tube) bits of ready-made texts that will be recombined in order to obtain new messages. The bits are like narrative emoticons, i.e. ready-made visual pictograms or ideograms.<sup>13</sup> Medieval culture and the carnival used *topoi* that drifted freely between texts. An oral culture uses ready-made sequences. The user's (creators and addressees) main goal is to communicate and not to create an aesthetic artifact. I emphasize this aspect since the analytical tools used to study popular culture are more appropriate for this cinematic communication.

I will make a survey of some of its characteristic traits. Some of them can be generalized / projected upon other cinematic works of the 21st century. I will also test a cognitive approach and a model of audiovisual language based on conceptual grammar requisites. We will test the hypothesis of the dawn of a "new cinematic language", i.e. what we mean by a *new* language.

### Recycling

One feature of mashup cinema is explicit from the start: recycling. I have to stress the fact that all the carnivalesque tradition is based on intertextual games, notably satire and parody, operating on media products (Deaca 2009). The postmodern use of ready made texts within a new context is an epiphenomenon of a constant cultural practice. The carnival tradition is one such constant. The meaning of a text is generated within the context of its use (Branigan 2006). Interpretative cues are provided by external sources or are embedded within the text. The viewer can also bring about schemas that provide contexts for the identification of justifiable cues. Between text and viewer, there is a conceptual negotiation that is ensued.

Mashup cinema just puts several (sometimes incompatible) cues inside a text and augments the quantity of contradictory items in a restrained textual space; sometimes there is a scarcity of interpretive cues. Classical cinema and neo-baroque elements co-exist. Lo-fi and the observational texture are contiguous to the spectacular Hollywood cinematography. Recycling doesn't care if the source of the image is fictional or documentary. Heterogeneous sources are mixed more freely. The viewer is free to choose.

As Jullier puts it (2015, 165), when faced with a palimpsest like the video text, several approaches are possible: 1/ one can entertain a transparent communication (the enunciator means what he shows); 2/ the viewer assumes a language game and understands the parody stance (the enunciator takes a parodical distance, and expresses something else); 3/ the invisible pastiche is the communicative code (the enunciator makes explicit that he *could* be ironic, but he just chooses to make a serious reference); 4/ the message looks like a parody, and necessarily so (the enunciator is constrained by a volitional act to take an ironical stance and, simultaneously, highlights

a transparent communication of themes), and 5/ the interpretation is free from any constraints. Multiple interpretations and layers of interpretation focus on the text. Awareness of this knowledge is the contemporary viewer's arsenal. At the same time, the cinematic image is the purveyor of both a parody stance and of a serious one. One is making fun in an ironical way, but gives new vitality to classicism (Jullier 1997, 18-19). Different speech acts, frames of reference and reality conceptions coexist on the same audiovisual support. And this is achieved in a manner that is much more visible and programmatic than in classical cinema.<sup>14</sup> The difference with respect to the classical Hollywood narrative is that the text can embed the cues necessary for this radial reading more freely and, secondarily, that the viewer has, in his interpretive knowledge, this reading strategy ready to be applied at any time.

The model I use accepts that a particular visual expression (be it one shot or a construction made up of several shots) evoke an encyclopedic network of knowledge about the scene or the event depicted. This knowledge can be described, in an amodal fashion, as a *descriptive system* – a collection of categories - or can be simulated modally by the viewer; and, in this case, is a *situated conceptualization*. Barsalou names this ability to maintain a category instances into some sort of integrated representation the *concept*, with each category corresponding to a component of experience (Barsalou 2003). A “situated conceptualization typically simulates four basic types of components: 1/ perceptions of relevant people and objects, 2/ an agent's actions and other bodily states, 3/ introspective states, such as emotions and cognitive operations, and 4/ likely settings” (Barsalou 2005, 620-650). Situated conceptualizations support conceptual inferences via pattern completion. When one part of a situated conceptualization is perceived, the remainder of the conceptualization becomes active, constituting inferences about the current situation. I have to mention that the situation is not represented as detached and separate from the conceptualizer. Situated conceptualizations place the conceptualizer exactly at the center of the respective situations, By re-enacting an agent's actions and introspective states, these complex simulations create the experience of the conceptualizer being in the respective situation, and generate the experience of “being there”.

The scene or event represents an instantiation of a category that can be described in a schematic manner. The key to accessing the knowledge is a *construal*. A construal is expressed through camera work, framing, montage, narrative or emotional cues. A situated conceptualization is a manner of instantiating a descriptive system. In film, scenes and events are processed in a conscious manner at the perceptual, cognitive and emotional levels. Scenes and events are bounded regions within their conceptual domain / descriptive system. The construal creates a smaller onstage area in the bounded region.

Mashup cinema detaches situated conceptualizations (a particular descriptive system under a construal) from their initial context and reinscribes them into others. Sometimes the initial expressive channel is left unaltered and, at the other end of the

spectrum, massive intervention is applied to different stimulus features. This mechanism never produces perfect copies or cloning. Each new experience is loaded with memory traces from previous experiences of the stimulus, but, at the same time, each revival of past memories is corrupted by the present experience. Each quotation has a metadiscursive effect (it is an opaque proposition). But, at the same time, since a new conceptualization takes place, this one can be construed in such a way that it creates a new cinematic experience (it is an immersive and transparent proposition). For mashup cinema, films are a lexicon where one can select items of variable internal complexity and can embed them in new strings that are either unaltered or internally modified. The modification goes as far as the point of overwriting a new speech act scenario and an antiphrastic (ironic) message. Even out of highly recycled heterogeneous material, mashup cinema is able to elaborate scenes and events (situated conceptualizations) that are coherent and cohesive to the viewer.

For example, one can choose to take just the visual stream from the quoted cinematic scene, but he can also choose to take the sound or the character or a certain salient camera trope. Two situated conceptualizations will be evoked: the original one and the new one. I would like to mention only two cases. One of them is more obvious. A short mashup titled *Hell's Club*<sup>15</sup> mixes, in the same setting (a disco bathed in red light), characters from several films (from *Saturday Night Fever*, *Titanic*, *James Bond* to ... *Star Wars*). This short quotes the fictional characters and the models (John Travolta, Ewan McGregor, Tom Cruise...). The second one example uses just analytic cuts of characters bodies. On screen we can see just fragments of bodies. Several shots edit or make up the "decoupage" of the event / scene of a couple waking in the morning. Those bits are sufficient to evoke the descriptive system of "a couple in the morning". The viewer's experience is immersed and transparent. The construal - i.e. the framing of a body in movement - is a construal quoted from Robert Bresson. The image is not transparent anymore, but represents a token / a sample of a kind of camera work. The new conceptualization will evoke the descriptive system of "cinema" and the situated conceptualization of Bresson's films. The example is taken from *The Seventh Continent* (Michael Haneke, 1989).

### **Discontinuity as such – The first legacy of Eisenstein**

As we know, frustration gives rise to an aesthetic mode of reading. Mashup cinema intensifies the sensory experience that takes place within the conceptual space that is eluded by perceptual cinematic cuts operated in *media res* (inside an event sequence). Perceptible cuts, as an unnatural film effect, forces a "conscious awareness of the medium", the reveling of a "cinema of attraction" that affords "a richer and stranger cinematic experience" (Poulaki 2015, 32). I have to stress out the fact that Marie Claire Ropars (1981) was already interested in Eisenstein's comparison of the structure of montage with that of an ideogram obtained from relations of conflict and discontinuity. The "hieroglyphic editing" is organized by montage patterns that de-

stabilize and disturb mimetic and analogous object recognition in order to give way to new *abstract concepts* (that have a greater conceptual semantic aspect).

For Jullier (1997, 80), the erratic cut creates an obstacle to the viewer's tendency to zap because the film activates the act of zapping before them and generates an acute expectancy to see what's next. In a sense, the "seeking mechanism" and "curiosity" based on interest are the main psychic drives that create bridges of signification between disparate elements.<sup>16</sup> Jump cuts, for example, disrupt narrative comprehension, but emotional involvement can be enhanced in this manner.

Poulaki suggests that "the multiplication of internal boundaries (within a scene), for example through a perplexed series of shots, delays the formation of a new pattern, prolonging the drift between a number of possible patterns" (2015, 34). And these figures of style – e.g. rate of cutting, viewing angle, camera motion, jump cuts, temporal reordering, relations between music and narrative action, deviations from perfect audiovisual synchrony, dubbing and subtitles – point at the "artifice" of our mind itself as a medium of representation (33). Some films obviously delay this process more than others, avoiding or delaying the completion of coherent scenes, introducing complexity at the medium time-scale of connections between shots, effectuating breaks within—and not between, like action boundaries do—the units of action. Self-reflexive devices and discontinuous editing mediate such delay.

Discontinuity can be "a way of prolonging the neurocognitive drift between patterns" (36) but in most cases, it is solved by metaphorical conceptual elaborations. However, in some privileged cases, delaying pattern formation or prolonging the sight of discontinuities means forging memorable units of tense cognitive-perceptual-affective experience for the viewer.

### Narrative roles

As in classical narrative cinema, mashup cinema uses the same kind of narrators, i.e. purveyors of narrative information.

Due to the modularity of mind, sometimes the image is a transparent channel towards a diegesis and at other times the same representation can be apprehended as an artifact. Each narrative role mediates a particular epistemic stance towards a reality conception.

Torben Grodal (1997) points out that postmodern frames, as parody, create, on the one hand, a distance, and, on the other hand, further enhance the immersion or absorption in diegesis. The viewer undergoes a negligence / inhibition of the framing context. At the same time, the viewer can recognize a pastiche of a Frankenstein movie but can "experience" the fiction with an emotion of fear. Several channels are cued in parallel and a roller coaster of dynamic reshuffling of hierarchies is developed in the cinematic flux. The movie looks like a continuous figure / ground illusion spread in time.

In the model I use for explaining the narrative roles, I posit a simplified version of Edward Branigan's stacked layers of narrators that is more akin to Ronald

Langacker's *conceptualizers* version.<sup>17</sup> Therefore I use 4 narrative roles / conceptualizers that ground the expression into a specific epistemic context: the *experiencer* (i.e. the character that allows for empathic simulations and a Theory of Mind), the *profiler* (i.e. the construal that profiles an object viewed in a particular manner. This narrative role lies within the diegetic space and is always in the present tense), the *narrator* (i.e. the extradiegetic epistemic stance that allows past or future tense, and can direct shot to shot compositions), the *storyteller* (i.e. the extrafictional discourse that allows a secondary speech act scenario that sets the artifact as a target). At this level, the status of reality is taken into consideration. The status of fiction, fact, imagination, hallucination or memory is also elaborated at this level. Mashup discursive practices allow for a more dynamic composition and recomposition of narrative stances. The originally "quoted" image keeps a part of its narrative structure (experiencer, profiler, narrator) intact, but the storyteller – who is responsible for the discursive message – is frequently substituted. For example, documentary footage is reevaluated in political contemporary discourses.

In other cases, shot A contains an experiencer quoted from an image excerpt (e.g. Humphrey Bogart). In a second over-the-shoulder shot B, the experiencer is from another "film" (e.g. Steve Martin from *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*, Carl Reiner, 1982). Shot A is devoid of its storyteller and narrator. The profiler is virtual and used by any narrative layer. As a consequence, "Humphrey" is profiled in the diegesis posited by shot B (he is an experience in Steve Martin's diegetic world), and is embedded in the narrative context of *Dead Men...* (narrator and storyteller). The encompassing narrative layers control the epistemic area of manifestation of inferior layers. The viewer fully enjoys the narrative pleasure of the actual film: *Steve Martin talks to Humphrey Bogart*. But he can also shift to a different mode of approach. He can use another interpretive strategy. He can enjoy the initial narration in which "Steve Martin" is embedded: *Humphrey Bogart talks to Steve Martin*. The initial narrator and the storyteller are preserved (even for a fleeting instant). Both conceptual trajectories are used in alternation in a figure ground illusion fashion.

The pleasure of the viewer is obtained through the constant comparison of the initial discursive context (narrator and storyteller) and the actual discursive context. The image support is nevertheless maintained (profiler construal). I want to emphasize that similar constructions represent a conventional cinematographic language today. For example, a film like *Cache* (Michael Haneke, 2005) is evolving around this cinematographic pattern. Films by French director Jean-Gabriel Periot enmesh found footage or stills collected from Google images in complex political discursive acts (*Dies Irae*, 2005; *Nijuman no borei*, 2007; *The Delicate Art of the Bludgeon* (2009); *100jours* : +67, 2012; *Une Jeunesse allemande*, 2015; *Les barbares*, 2010) and Andrei Ujica's reevaluated communist Romanian propaganda newsreels in *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceausescu* (2010). Corneliu Porumboiu's *Al doilea joc* (2014) proposes a similar perspective on football matches during the Romanian communist era.<sup>18</sup>

### Narrative coherence despite all odds – The second legacy of Eisenstein

We have already mentioned Eisenstein as a precursor of mashup cinema. Antonio Somaini argues that, during late 1920s, Eisenstein developed a theory of arts and cinema based on “organicity” and “pathos” (2015, 71-98). This “epistemological shift” highlights synthesis and not conflict as the one responsible for generating emotions and concepts. Eisenstein’s theoretical notions were formulated in the framework of empirical psychology and “associationism”. His interest inclined towards the ideas of internal monologue as defined by Joyce, the “internal language” of Lev Vygotski and the “prelogical thought” of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (71).

Mashup exacerbates montage sequences where a collection of diverse elements do add in a coherent whole. Jullier finds that a typical feature of the contemporary cinema is the explicit disruption of the diegetic space that is linked, nevertheless, to the same movement trajectory (1997, 113). The same object is depicted in two adjacent shots in two different locales and different objects obey the same movement. Mashup cinema goes a little further. In adjacent shots, the character and the locale are different, but the movement and the goal of the character are preserved. Narrative diegetic coherence is based on the apprehension of an instantiation (a situated conception) that is categorized as a particular member of a descriptive system / schema of a scene or of an event.

In each shot, a partial depiction of a scene or of an event is perceptually present. Other off frame elements are inferred. Pattern completion is expected. Therefore they are expected to be further perceptually explored in subsequent shots. The absent elements have a cognitive nonvisual “felt presence”, and are schematically represented in the viewers’ mental understanding of the scene / event. The scene or the event evoked here represents an instantiation of a correspondent descriptive system / schema. We posit several levels of elaboration from abstract coarse grained schematic semantic content to elaborate finer grained modal simulations. Each simulation in its turn contains constitutive elements that are “schematic space-time” regions that generate the expectancy for further perceptual elaboration.

The particular image profiled / construed by a cinematic profiler is an instantiation of a schematic description of the object (that categorizes it), but evokes a larger situated conceptualization that activates simulations of modalities (perceptual, cognitive and affective). This larger simulation contains schematic elements (called *elaboration sites* or, in short, *e-sites*) that will or not be elaborated by subsequent shots. An e-site is a coarse grained conceptualization of an entity and the elaboration is a finer grained representation. For example, if in shot A we have a character looking off frame we can describe the situation linguistically as *George is looking at something*. The nominal *something* stands for a schematic object, an e-site, embedded in a propositional construction *at something*. Shot A is an instantiation of the relationship between two entities as manifested by the process of viewing: somebody views something. We un-

derstand that a process like “viewing” presupposes, within its conceptual description, the existence of the relationship supposed between two elements. In shot A, we have one element: the viewer who is perceptually present on the screen and the object viewed which is schematically inherent to the conceptualization. Shot B can elaborate perceptually the viewed object.

But the relationship between two shots is biunivocal or reciprocal. An e-site from one shot (A or B) is elaborated by the other one. The Kuleshov effect is present in those cases. An entanglement arises. One strong connection is established by the off frame deictic gaze. This constructional pattern overwrites variable elements. One can adjoin shots from different locales with different characters and still preserve the feeling of a strong connection established between these shots. Classical analytical cutting just elaborates elements that are schematically evoked in an establishing shot. Contemporary Hollywood films reduce the presence of establishing shots since the entangled connection with the second shot is the best probabilistic guess, and it is based on a conventional cinematographic use.

In a similar manner, event sequences impose a coherent conceptualization. The evoked expectations of an action overwrite the differences in setting or character. For example, one character begins by opening a door and another enters through it and the third one closes the door behind him. Coherent event sequence imposes a coherent conceptualization, regardless of the differences in character identity, aspect of the locale or lightening patterns. Diegetic homogenization is thus achieved.

In the Odessa stairs sequence from *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925), both continuity and diegetic homogenization are achieved by scene coherence (one e-site is elaborated by further shots) and by event coherence (descending the stairs: soldiers that are advancing, people that are running, and a baby carriage rolls down the stairs). For Eisenstein, redundancy is achieved through similar light patterns, costumes, type of objects or camera movement and character iteration. Mashup cinema changes those features and imposes a supplementary strain on continuity. The viewer is automatically forced to coalesce divergent elements in coherent scenes and events, but he is also able to perceive the differences more easily. As in the narrative layout, the viewer will perceive the differences and will elaborate a discursive instance (a storyteller) that makes an artifact patchwork. Authorship presence and discourse are further enhanced in mashup cinema when different settings and characters are brought together in shot to shot constructions.

### **Modifiers are central**

Emotions, sound and music, shapes, colors and movement are elements of cinematic construal that modulate the expressed content. Therefore, they categorize the represented objects and bind together sequences of shots.

For Jullier (1997, 71-80) in postmodern films morphs and traveling dissociate the depicted object and the movement more often and much deeper. Free camera move-

ment and work – often associated with time flow manipulations – are more deeply involved in the perceptual act. No diegetic reason motivates camera work. Vertigo perceptual effects involve a loose attribution of movement. The viewer is uneasy to conclude that the movement belongs to the object (an object is moving) or to the screen (a camera is moving). Just like a child, he mistakes his mouth for his mother's breast and the movement of one towards the other (80).

Low level perceptual modules process shape, movement, color. These are understood, within the model of cinematic conceptualization, as extremely schematic conceptualizations (inherent meaningful). The adjective *pink* (a modifier) is an instance in the semantic domain of color. *Pink fish* is an elaboration of the e-site schematics within the conceptual description of the nominal *pink* (*something* is pink). Schematic elements categorize the profiled element of the overall construction which is, of course, the *fish* (he is the profiled referent of the construction, i.e. one talks about a *fish*).<sup>19</sup> The schematic element is dependent upon its nominal counterpart which is, in turn, independent. An expression can profile a relationship (*X looks at Y*) or an entity (*George looks at Y*).

Mashup cinema and contemporary films do indeed detach modifiers from their situated conceptualizations. Emotions bridge divergent elements. Music creates a cohesive atmosphere. Similar movement links different objects in different locales. For classical films, a moving pattern was highly dependent on the object that instantiated the movement qualia. For a mashup film, the object is more dependent on the movement that instantiates a qualia inherent in the conceptual description of the object. Cinematic construals and constructions bring into profile the modifier. Sensual and low level expressive elements are pushed to the fore as fully fledged referents.

The viewer produces pattern and object recognition and, as a consequence, the relationship between autonomous vs dependent elements, e-site vs elaboration or nominal vs modifier is preserved. We still see a *pink / moving fish*. But, concomitantly, the cinematic expression brings the modifier into an autonomous position. The qualia of sound, movement or color, inherent as e-sites in the conceptualization of the entity, are elaborated by cinematic perceptual construal. We can conceptualize, in those instances, something like a *pink / a movement fish*. Double binding and entanglement are preserved and coherence is achieved.

As a case study Lennard Hojberg (2014, 83) discusses the effects of the circular motion of the camera on the viewer. Viewers' emotions are enhanced because the circular camera movements tend to elicit the viewer's emotions. Viewers experience a bodily emotion when confronted with particular stylistic figures such as the circular camera movement. According to him, "when our normal perception is somehow challenged, it elicits emotions" (84) and other particular stylistic figures like "camera movements, bird's eye views, fast tracking, hand-held camera, and different distances to the object on the screen challenging our normal perception". Viewers experience the perceptual consequences of those construals as bodily feelings. For Hojberg, spe-

cific stylistic features “naturally belong to specific content categories”, and are therefore “necessarily tied to specific constellations of meaning” (86).

In a similar fashion, mashup cinema intensifies the bodily connections of the viewer with the cinematic construal or flux of stimuli in a manner that is more autonomous than the content of the story depicted on the screen.

### Conclusion

New expressive occurrences instantiate constructional schemas that are to be considered grammatical rules. For the cognitive grammar, there is a gradient between novel and conventional expressions and rules. Conventional expressions are entrenched and automatic structures. Novel ones create new combinations that are not yet conventionalized. Films display a great palette of conceptualized situations and there are less conventionalized patterns of expression. But, “behind the scene”, unconscious schematic patterns of conceptual content sanction and insure coherence to particular instantiations. Films propose novel ways for the viewer to explore particular conceptualized situations. Filmic sequences offer viewers emotional, perceptual and conceptual “journeys” inside conceptual templates, more stable, schematic and abstract in nature than their instantiations.

Grammar is based on content and is therefore symbolic. Expressive conceptualizations are linked to the conceptual content in symbolic units. Digital elements like letters conjugate into words paired with conceptual content (even if it is pragmatic and contextual). In vision low level features like shape, motion, color are, by means of top-down mechanisms, categorized as cues in descriptive systems that constrain categorization and object recognition. Today’s mashup cinema tends to become an audiovisual hieroglyphic language available to viewers and users situated at both ends of the spectrum, i.e. as producers and addressees. In front of this democratization of the audiovisual use, poststructuralist philosophical approaches have a gist of panic and consider that today’s films and shorts are the epiphenomena announcing an apocalypse. Film analysts like Bordwell, Odin or Jullier take a more sober stance and analyze the new shifts in emphasis and the innovative use of new constructional schemas in a manner which is closer to the text. Today’s films employ more widely the well known stylistics of medieval literature and carnival culture where a common thesaurus of motives (*topoi*) is employed by anonymous authors that create, by constructing different combinations out of old material, new conceptualizations and reality conceptions. Thus we assist today at a cultural revival of what once Ernst Robert Curtius considered to be the characteristic of medieval culture.

Literature comprises poetry, novel and theatre. No sound critic has yet complained that verbal texts include juridical texts, essays, and literary texts. Cinema was for a while considered as something similar in status to the concept of literature and nowadays has been “downgraded” to the level of the novel. As Gaudreault posits it (2015, 194) “by hitching cinema to other “moving images” means that cinema is, in

the end, only one possible manifestation of moving pictures, that it represents only one element among the moving picture arts and industries." "Cinema is no longer the "whole thing" it once was; it has become a *part* of a whole." (194). It is one of many "images animees" (195). "We might finally see Athanasius Kircher, Christiaan Huyghes, Joseph Plateau and Émile Reynaud as the precursors not only of cinema, but also of television and video..." (195).

### Notes

- 1 Casetti makes an explicit reference throughout his essay to Bordwell and Carroll's reference volume, *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (1996).
- 2 Pragmatics is understood in the linguistic sense of speech act theory (see Austin and Searle).
- 3 Edward Branigan further develops and refines the conceptual perspective of a pragmatic production of meaning operated by the viewer confronted with audiovisual stimuli. For him, diverse uses, "language games", confine the radial meanings of analytical notions that define cinema (frame, camera etc). See *Projecting a Camera* (2006).
- 4 The notion was derived from Bordwell's notion of "parametric narration", and from his analysis of Godard's narration (1985: 281-318). On this topic, see also "paranarrative worlds" and "constructive instability" in Elsaesser (2009: 150-170).
- 5 See also Donnelly (2009: 103).
- 6 See also Rodowick (2001: 43-111).
- 7 In *Le Carnaval et le film de Fellini* (2009), I analyse the characteristics of carnival presence in film. Dadaist film and avant-garde films are prolongations of the carnivalesque perspective on the world and its stylistic approach.
- 8 I make an analysis of Scheib's play, *This Place is a Desert* (2007) in (2013a: 166-174; 2013b; 2016), and Castellucci's theatre - *Inferno* (2008) and *Tragedia Endogonidia* (2002-2004) - (2013a: 215-221). For postdramatic theatre, see Lehman (2006 [1999]).
- 9 Here, Jullier joins Grodal's bioculturalist approach to cinema (2009).
- 10 A cue can be envisaged as a minimal gestalt in a conceptual domain that instantiates, in a top/down fashion, a descriptive feature of the domain and is a nodal access point to the domain in a procedural bottom up manner.
- 11 Even if it seems that I have said the opposite earlier in the paper.
- 12 We can also quote here the films that display their own making as part of fiction: *Fantasmagorie* (Emile Cohl, 1908), *Sherlock Junior* (Buster Keaton, 1924), *Hellzapoppin* (H. C. Potter, 1941) or *Duck Amuck* (Chuck Jones, 1953).
- 13 Marie Claire Ropars (1981), in a semiotic framework, talked about pictographic scripts like the crosswords or the hieroglyph that poses a challenge to the phonocentric model of signification, but allows for a cinematic "sign" that is mixed and permutable.
- 14 For Branigan, classical narratives also represent, in a virtual manner, a superposition of different narrative "voices". The spectator is free to navigate between those narrative roles (Branigan 1992).
- 15 Antonio Maria Da Silva AMDSFILMS, <https://vimeo.com/137961348>.
- 16 See, in Badt (2015), a discussion about the "seeking mechanism" that was identified by the neuronantomist Jaak Panksepp and for the viewer's interest for films in Tan's theoretical approach (Tan 2013; 2014).

- 17 For a detailed presentation of the four narrative roles, see Deaca (2015). For the concept of narrative layers see Branigan (1992), and for the notion of “conceptualizer” see Langacker (2008; 2009).
- 18 See Doru Pop’s conference *The non-cinematic stylistics of Corneliu Porumboiu’s movies* (24 November 2016).
- 19 In a similar way Carroll (1996: 142) discusses the function of music. Music is understood as a modifier that operates a filling-in of the emotional content of a particular scene.

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