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TRAVELING THROUGH SPACE:  
STYLISTIC PROGRESSION AND CAMERA MOVEMENT

by

LASZLO STRAUZ

Under the Direction of Greg M. Smith

ABSTRACT

This project examines the how camera movement as a stylistic element is used as a storytelling device in the films of select international filmmakers. The main intention of the study is to trace the changing function of the mobile frame to see how a specific stylistic element develops across different narrative paradigms, national industries and between “early” and contemporary periods of filmmakers. My primary assertion is that the norms guiding the development of the tracking camera expand gradually from normative functions toward figurative uses. In order to be able to differentiate between normative and figurative uses of the tracking camera with conceptual clarity, this project adapts Roland Barthes’s typology about the narrative function of distinctive textual/stylistic units. Barthes’ conceptual framework becomes functional by assigning specific codes (*hermeneutic*, the *semic*, the *proairetic*, the *symbolic* and the *cultural codes*) to the interactions of the elements of narration.

When transforming and changing the function of stylistic elements across their films, artists respond to a wide range of industrial, technological, aesthetic, cultural factors, from which this study focuses on socio-cultural trends. The underlying assumption of this project holds that the mentioned trends can be detected in the stylistic

choices of artists. This study takes a bottom-up route: starting with an analytical interpretation of a specific aesthetic device, it moves towards an explanation that connects camera movement to larger, dynamic signifying systems. The arch of my project traces the relation between normative and figurative textual codes through the prism of camera movement.

INDEX WORDS: History of film style, Normative- and Figurative Textual Codes, Camera movement, Tracking shot, Interaction of Style and Cultural Motifs

TRAVELING THROUGH SPACE:  
STYLISTIC PROGRESSION AND CAMERA MOVEMENT

by

LASZLO STRAUZ

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2007



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Laszlo Strausz

2007

TRAVELING THROUGH SPACE:  
STYLISTIC PROGRESSION AND CAMERA MOVEMENT

by

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## Introduction

“A new form appears not in order to express a new content, but in order to replace an old form, which has already lost its artistic value...”<sup>1</sup> (Viktor Shklovsky, 1919)

The fascination of early cinemagoers with moving objects on the screen signaled a fundamental turn in the perception of the modern audiences. Film seemed to seize time, which artists had tried to capture in vain for centuries. Painters’ and sculptors’ need to encapsulate whole series of movements in a static figure was rendered obsolete by the moving image. Cinema fulfilled Lessing’s dream about an art form that does not have to compress Laocoon’s struggle with the dragon into one fleeting moment.<sup>2</sup>

After the invention of the moving image, early filmmakers took only a few years to realize that the moving the camera can mirror the movement of characters and objects. Just as the spectator can walk around a sculpture, the viewer could “walk” around sets and characters, along halls and corridors and across rooms to capture an ever-changing world. The camera became a substitute for the curious viewer, and this fictitious body began to explore the world of moving images.

This project examines how camera movement as a stylistic element is used as a signifying device in the films of select international filmmakers. The main intention of the study is to trace the changing function of the mobile frame to see how the stylistic

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<sup>1</sup> Shklovsky, Viktor. “On the Connection between devices of *Syuzhet* construction and general stylistic devices.” *Russian Formalism*. Ed. Bann, Stephen and John E. Bowlt. New York: Harper’s and Row Publishers. 1973.

<sup>2</sup> G. E. Lessing in his essay *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) theorizes about the lack of temporal dimension in the visual arts and how paintings and sculptures condense longer processes or happenings into one expressive moment.

element develops across different aesthetic/narrative paradigms, national industries and social-cultural environments. My primary assertion is that the norms guiding the development of the tracking camera expand gradually from normative functions toward figurative uses. The investigation of artistic norms leads toward questions about why these developed the way they did, which in turn points at the larger historical contexts surrounding these filmmakers' work. When transforming and changing the function of stylistic elements across their films, artists respond to a wide range of industrial, technological, aesthetic, cultural factors, from which this study focuses on socio-cultural trends. The underlying assumption of this project holds that the mentioned trends can be detected in the stylistic choices of artists.

This study takes a bottom-up route: starting with an analytical interpretation of a specific aesthetic device, it moves towards an explanation that connects camera movement to larger, dynamic signifying systems. These, respectively, are, changing the narrative paradigms of the cinema of attraction and early narrative cinema where a systematic narrative function is assigned to the tracking camera (Chapter 1), different traditions of storytelling in national industries (Chapter 2), storytelling strategies under changing social-political circumstances (Chapter 3) and international stylistic trends translated to a local storytelling tradition (Chapter 4).

In order to be able to differentiate between normative and non-normative uses of the tracking camera with conceptual clarity, this project will adapt Roland Barthes's typology about the narrative function of distinctive textual/stylistic units.<sup>3</sup> In his influential study S/Z, Barthes gives a close reading of Balzac's Sarrasine and analyzes

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<sup>3</sup> Barthes, Roland. S/Z. New York: Hill and Wang. 1974.

how meaning is created in the structure of the text. Using his system of textual codes that causally, thematically or otherwise make the literary text operate, he describes the central narrative functions of distinctive textual units. According to Barthes, the reader moves through the text by continuously recreating meaning. Stories have the capacity for plural meaning, but the author limits the text's multiplicity by the arrangement of the codes and how these are worked into the structure of the text. Barthes' conceptual framework becomes functional by assigning specific codes to the interactions of the elements of narration. They are the *hermeneutic*, the *semic*, the *proairetic*, the *symbolic* and the *cultural code*.<sup>4</sup>

Two of the five codes are closely related to the causal connections within the story: the proairetic [ACT] and the hermeneutic code [HER]. These codes influence the ways the reader constructs the fabula as a linear progression of the story events. The hermeneutic codes are described as units "whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and a variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer; or even, constitute an enigma and lead to its solution."<sup>5</sup> The hermeneutic code regulates the dramatic question and its answer, and thus can be described as having a causal function in organizing fabula material. This puts the code in question into a similar category with the proairetic code, which allows the reader to organize pieces of information into coherent events. This is "the ability to rationally determine the result of an action."<sup>6</sup> The two mentioned codes together control the fabula that can be described more denotative than the last three Barthesian codes. I will call these *normative* units: the proairetic and the hermeneutic code manipulate the material of

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<sup>4</sup> Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. 1974, 16-18.

<sup>5</sup> Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. 1974: 17.

<sup>6</sup> Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. 1974: 18.

the fabula without referring to external elements. Both units provide internal causal or hermeneutic connections between textual units but do not activate external (non-causal, non-hermeneutic. i.e. connotative) functions. On one hand, the proairetic code arranges the elements of the fabula into causal chains. On the other hand, the hermeneutic code creates “enigmas” (or dramatic questions), the answer to which exists in the fabula itself. The normative codes create more immanent, denotative connections between the textual units of the narrative.

Connotation in the narrative is mostly organized by the three remaining narrative codes: the semantic, symbolic and referential units. While the symbolic code creates connotative meaning on a local textual level through setting up binaries, the semantic weaves a theme or topic all the way through the story. The semantic signifier occurs “in several places in the text; it is a shifting element which can combine with other similar elements to create characters, ambiances, shapes and symbols.”<sup>7</sup> Finally, the referential code points to cultural knowledge or a tradition that is commonly shared. The connotative element in the last three codes can be described as more complex than the proairetic and the hermeneutic functions. The symbolic, semantic and referential codes do not fulfill a task related to construction of immanent, causal connections between the story elements, but rather they invoke information that is implied more by the formal devices of style. The last three codes in Barthes’ system deal with more connotative functions. This study will refer to these codes as *figurative*: the symbolic, semantic and referential units activate meaning that lies outside of the causal or hermeneutic terrain of the narration. The symbolic code sets up binaries, which activate a connection between opposites: the

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<sup>7</sup> Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. 1974: 17.

viewer infers that the connection serves the purpose of comparing the elements. The comparison itself is a more connotative connection between the elements in question rather than denotative. The fourth code by definition activates connotative meaning: in Barthes's example, the semantic unit creates Sarrasine's connoted femininity throughout the Balzac text. Finally, the referential code initiates connections between elements of the text and its cultural, social or historical surrounding. The connotative element in the last three codes shows how they fulfill a figurative, non-normative function in the narrative processes.

This study uses the Barthesian codes as the central conceptual guideline for distinguishing between the normative and the figurative, but it also adopts the Neoformalist terminology as developed by Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell's work.<sup>8</sup> While the latter model works flawlessly with the classical mode of narration (specifically in delineating how narrative and style interact,) it is harder to explain the status of figurative stylistic norms in different storytelling paradigms within its bounds.<sup>9</sup> The current project will extend the neoformalist methodology to the connection between the normative and figurative uses of a specific stylistic element, the tracking shot.

In the neoformalist narrative model, the classical Hollywood narrative process is a set of material, technical, practical and aesthetic factors. According to Bordwell, "[i]t

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<sup>8</sup> Bordwell, David. Narration in the Fiction Film. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press. 1985. Bordwell, David-Janet Staiger-Kristin Thompson. The Classical Hollywood Cinema. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Thompson, Kristin. Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis. Princeton University Press. 1988.

<sup>9</sup> In Breaking the Glass Armor, Kristin Thompson borrows the first two codes of Barthes: "[a] useful pair of concepts for analyzing the syuzhet is the distinction between the proairetic and hermeneutic lines." which she chose to treat as structures running through the work (Thompson, Kristin. Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis. 1988. pp. 38-39.) The disinterest of the neoformalist paradigm in the more connotative codes is apparent by the fact that she does not mention how the proairetic and hermeneutic codes are part of the Barthesian typology, which consists of three more codes: the symbolic, the semantic and the referential. About Bordwell's explanation on figurative norms and narration, see pages 12-13.

seems intuitively apparent that different types of films call forth different rules and procedures of sense-making.”<sup>10</sup> These rules and procedures, i.e. modes are “historically distinct set[s] of *norms* of narrational construction and comprehension. The notion of the norm is straightforward: any film can be seen as seeking to meet or not meet a coherent standard established by fiat of previous practice.”<sup>11</sup> Norms can be detected at three separate levels: that of *devices*, *systems* and the *relations of systems*. The devices of classical filmmaking (for example match-on-action, or the shot-reverse shot) fulfill certain goals in the narrative process: the match-action technique establishes a continuity of space across the shots. These *functions* integrate the devices into one or more of the three systems, (1) narrative logic, (2) cinematic space or (3) cinematic time (both the match-on-action and the shot-reverse shot technique have the function of establishing a comprehensible cinematic space). On the most abstract level, the narrative can be analyzed how these three system relate. In Hollywood cinema, space and time are subordinated to the needs of the causal narrative logic<sup>12</sup>. The viewer makes sense of the narrative processes by creating *schemas*, which are built on the spectator’s previous experiences with similar films.

The neoformalist terminology allows for a more accurate rephrasing of the problem of the tracking camera. How did the aesthetic norms for camera movement surface? How did the device take on a fabula-altering function? How did it relate to the systems of narrative causality, space and time? Chapter One turns towards this question and analyzes the normative use of the tracking shot; Pastrone’s work established the proairetic and hermeneutic codes for this type of camera movement. Furthermore, the

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<sup>10</sup> Bordwell, David. Narration in the Fiction Film, 150.

<sup>11</sup> Bordwell, David. Narration in the Fiction Film. 150.

<sup>12</sup> Bordwell, David. The Classical Hollywood Cinema. 6-7.

neoformalist concepts refine the central question for the later chapters: how did the established norms transform when they are assigned more complex, connotative functions? What is the relation of narrative logic and cinematic space, when the tracking camera does not function as a proairetic or hermeneutic code?<sup>13</sup>

This project describes the developing norms of the tracking camera as ones that first focused on the normative functions, on which auteurs later could base other non-standard uses. The argument of my project is that the assignment of figurative function to the tracking camera presupposes that the same technique already is an established, recognized stylistic element, i.e. a normative- or a less complex figurative textual code. In other words, different storytelling functions of the tracking camera become widely accepted as norms before film auteurs start to experiment with more complex, figurative uses of the same device.

I do not propose a comprehensive model for the development of aesthetic devices. Rather, I will suggest that the figurative use of stylistic elements is built on normative codes or on other less complex figurative codes that interact with larger cultural trends informing the creative process. Roland Barthes presents five textual codes that vary in their degree of complexity. While the proairetic code's function is the connection of segments of the action in the narrative, the hermeneutic code poses larger dramatic questions. These two codes deal with internal relations of the narrative; the symbolic code, however, describes a more complex connotative operation that compares and contrasts through textual binaries. The semantic weaves connotative "themes" through the narration and the referential uses cultural codes to refer to the knowledge of a specific

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<sup>13</sup> These questions are closely related to those about the schemas of the audience. Although in this study I do not examine the reception of figurative aesthetic norms, further research could investigate how the changing schemas of the audiences follow the developing aesthetic norms of the artists.

audience. The five codes represent a progression from more “simple,” denotative textual codes towards more complex, connotative ones. Overall, this project argues that in order for the artist to use a more complex code, she relies on the interaction of a less complicated code and specific cultural factors.

Describing of the gradual expansion of stylistic norms from normative to figurative techniques is a formal exercise. However, I suggest that the analysis of the tracking camera’s figurative functions points to the correlation between the filmmakers and their cultural-historical context. The exterior norms that the auteurs of this project work along or against leave their mark on the films analyzed. Figurative stylistic devices are based on the interaction of the established aesthetic and cultural norms. The fact that the historian cannot exhaustively describe all cultural factors that influence stylistic norms should not prevent her from pointing out examples that show that these connections do exist.

These connections can be described more accurately if the scope of the study is narrow and it focuses on a specific stylistic device. As Barry Salt points out, early filmmakers resisted moving the camera through space: it calls attention to the process of filmmaking.<sup>14</sup> However, this wide rejection of the technique in the mid-1900s did not target all types of camera movements. According to Salt, “unlike the extensive use of pans by Porter and the Pathé film-makers (...) there were only a very few instances of the use of tracking shots in the 1900-1906 period.”<sup>15</sup> This account on the uses of camera movement shows that filmmakers considered the pan a more transparent device than the tracking shot. The decision of this project to focus on the tracking shots comes from the

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<sup>14</sup> Salt, Barry. *Film Style & Technology: History & Analysis*. London: Starword. 1992. p. 82.

<sup>15</sup> Salt, Barry. *Film Style & Technology: History & Analysis*. 1992. p. 47.



historical notion of the device: audiences read the pan and the tilt as a less flaunted device than the tracking shot. While viewers today are much more accustomed to any type of camera movement than a hundred years ago,<sup>16</sup> it seems safe to state that the tracking shot still tends to be a more noticeable technique than the pan.

Since this project focuses on the correlations between dynamic aesthetic norms and cultural-historical trends, the device of the tracking shot—as a self-conscious technique—seems a productive choice. If the concept of a gradual shift between normative and figurative narrative function has some explanatory power in the case of the camera movement, future research can address the question whether this model can be applied to other elements of film language (editing, lighting).

Methodologically, the focus of the study becomes the relation of stylistic elements to narrative processes. Therefore it seems necessary to outline how theorists of narration described this relation. Formalist models of narration rely on the work of the Russian Formalists critics (Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynianov, Boris Eichenbaum, Roman Jakobson) working during the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Using a linguistic methodology,<sup>17</sup> they described literary narration as a signifying process that manipulates the reader's understanding of the story material. Distinguishing between the structure and the material of the narrative, they coined the concepts of *syuzhet* and *fabula*. The Russian terms are usually translated to English as plot and story.<sup>18</sup> Theoretically, the advantage of

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<sup>16</sup> Chapter Four uses the concept of *intensified continuity* to investigate the technique's current place in the style of contemporary filmmakers.

<sup>17</sup> Their method goes back to the writings of Ferdinand de Saussure, most importantly his posthumously published study *Course in General Linguistics*, 1916.

<sup>18</sup> Kristin Thompson rejects this terminology for theoretical reasons: "This methodological procedure [the *fabula-syuzhet* distinction] has been translated widely as the story-plot distinction, and there is a temptation

the concepts is that they allow for a clear distinction between the raw material (story) and the procedures that are used to manipulate it (plot).

For the Russian critics, the initial question concerned the origin of tales that showed very similar structure across entirely different cultures. Viktor Shklovsky in 1919 observes that these similarities cannot go back to cultural interactions but rather to the similar formal rules that organize the story's material. Tales are not natural, as Shklovsky underlines, but "are continually disintegrating and being recomposed on the basis of particular (...) laws of *syuzhet* construction."<sup>19</sup> These laws, in Shklovsky's view, include not just the author's temporal manipulations of the material but also the modality of verbal language used. This shows that the early Formalists acknowledge the stylistic potential of the *syuzhet*. Eikhenbaum in 1926 writes about cinema that "[p]lot in film, after all, is constructed not so much by the movement of the story line as by 'stylistic' features."<sup>20</sup> For the Russian critics, the most important aspect of their theoretical program was the conceptual separation of devices and functions from the material of narratives. As Shklovsky points out, "[a] new form appears not in order to express a new content, but in order to replace an old form, which has already lost its artistic value..."<sup>21</sup> This latter formulation of Shklovsky foreshadows the hypothesis of my project, since it

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to use this English terms for simplicity's sake—as indeed I have done in the past. But the English terms also carry the burden of all the other senses in which non-Formalist critics have used them, while *fabula* and *syuzhet* relate only to the Russian Formalists' definitions. Hence for presentation of the neoformalist position, I have decided to stick to the original terms at the risk of adding some extra terminological weight." *Breaking the Glass Armor*. 1988, 38-39.

<sup>19</sup> Shklovsky, Viktor. "On the Connection between devices of *Syuzhet* construction and general stylistic devices." *Russian Formalism*. Ed. Bann, Stephen and John E. Bowlt. New York: Harper's and Row Publishers. 1973. p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> Eikhenbaum, "Literature and Cinema." In *Russian Formalism*. Ed. Bann, Stephen and John E. Bowlt. New York: Harper's and Row Publishers. 1973 p. 124.

<sup>21</sup> Shklovsky, Viktor. "On the Connection between devices of *Syuzhet* construction and general stylistic devices." In *Russian Formalism*. Ed. Bann, Stephen and John E. Bowlt. New York: Harper's and Row Publishers. 1973. p. 53.

concerns the exchange of normative and non-normative schemes: old (stylistic) forms serve as the basis of new (stylistic) schemes that, nonetheless, presuppose the existence of the latter. In summary, the Russian Formalist's descriptions of the narrative process foreground the role of *syuzhet* and style by showing how devices and functions manipulate the *fabula* material. However, the connection between style and *syuzhet* is not conceptually separated: they are often used interchangeably.

French Structuralism used a similar distinction between the material and the form of the narration, which they called story and discourse. For Gérard Genette, the “[a]nalysis of narrative discourse will be (...) a study of the relationships between narrative and story, between narrative and narrating, and (to the extent that they are inscribed in the narrative discourse) between story and narrating.”<sup>22</sup> His descriptions in Narrative Discourse extend the Russian model<sup>23</sup> with the concept of the *act of narration*. While the Russian critics also describe narration as a processual, they did not analyze the relation between *syuzhet* and style. Operating with the terms *histoire*, *récit* and *narration* (which translate into story, narrative and narrating), Genette refers to the significance of the relation between reader and writer. The characteristics of the narrating process (how is the narrator conveying the story, what *style* she uses) significantly influence the reader's reception of the story. While the initial model (of the Russian Formalists) integrated style into the structures of the *syuzhet*, the concept of *discourse* highlights that, aside from temporal or modal manipulations of the author, the actual practice of the presentation becomes significant. Style, as an element of narration, consists of the interaction of the concepts of mood and voice in Genette's terminology. The two terms

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<sup>22</sup> Genette, Gerard. Narrative Discourse. Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1980. p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> Although he does not explicitly cite the Russian critics.

describe (1) the diegetic character orienting the perspective of the narrative, and (2) the actual narrator of the story who left traces of her commentary in the text. The interplay of these two different “personalities” is instrumental in determining the act of narration. According to Genette, “the narrative discourse (...) depends absolutely on that action of telling, since the narrative discourse is *produced* by the action of telling in the same way that any statement is the product of an act of enunciating.”<sup>24</sup> The event of delivering the fabula to the audience stresses the role of style played in the narrative processes. By differentiating between narrative and narrating, Genette shows that the interaction of mood and voice, i.e. style, is conceptually not equivalent to, and cannot be fully integrated into the structures of the syuzhet.

When film scholars adapted literary theories of narration to motion pictures, it was clear that the film, which more than other art forms is highly dependent on the material conditions of production, has to integrate the stylistic element into its models of narration. David Bordwell’s 1985 study Narration in the Fiction Film grounds its model on the Russian Formalist paradigm by borrowing their terms syuzhet and fabula. However, Bordwell considers *style* to be a separate narrative system that influences the viewer’s construction of the fabula. On one hand, the system of syuzhet “arranges components—the story events and states of affairs—according to specific principles” and “embodies the film as a dramaturgical process.”<sup>25</sup> Style, on the other hand, is a technical process, which “names the film’s systematic use of cinematic devices.”<sup>26</sup> According to this narrative model, syuzhet and style interact to manipulate story information. The three major principles relating syuzhet to fabula are causal narrative logic, narrative time and

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<sup>24</sup> Genette, Gerard. Narrative Discourse. Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1980. p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Bordwell, David. The Narration in the Fiction Film. 1985. p. 50-51.

<sup>26</sup> Bordwell, David. The Narration in the Fiction Film. 1985. p. 50.

narrative space. In the Bordwellian system, these three story-constructing principles are influenced by style, but this influence passes through the syuzhet. Accordingly, “[s]tyle is (...) a notable factor in its own right, even when it is “only” supporting the syuzhet.”<sup>27</sup>

Bordwell developed his model based on the Classical Hollywood narrative modes, and he is right to assume that in most classical narratives, the style is subordinated to the needs of linear storytelling. When he turns to non-classical modes of storytelling, Bordwell allows that style can have an internal coherence, the significance of which parallels that of the syuzhet: this narrative mode he calls *parametric narration*. Relying on Burch’s work<sup>28</sup> who singled out certain parameters of filmic style (focus, sound, etc.), Bordwell states that the parametric mode combines binary opposites of these elements to achieve an internal stylistic logic.<sup>29</sup> The latter definition is very similar to the symbolic code [SYM] in Barthes’s system. However, the idea of certain codes are limited to specific narrative modes—here, the symbolic unit to parametric narration—is not very productive. Classical narratives apply not just the proairetic and hermeutic codes, but also make use of the symbolic, semantic and referential units. The explanatory power of the Barthesian codes lies in their wide applicability: the analyst can discover their presence in popular action films, classical melodramas and in Alain Resnais’s Last Year at Marienbad as well.

In several films of the Hollywood tradition, style is used to develop figurative ideas that complicate the viewer’s construction of the fabula. A well know example will show this: in Douglas Sirk’s 1959 Imitation of Life, Lana Turner’s character says at the beginning of her downfall that “I’m going up and up and up - and nobody’s going to pull

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<sup>27</sup> Bordwell, David. The Narration in the Fiction Film. 1985. p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> Burch, Noel. The Theory of Film Practice. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1981.

<sup>29</sup> Bordwell, David. The Narration in the Fiction Film. 1985. pp. 276-85.

me down!”, while the visual style (shot, angle) conveys different information. Here Sirk develops a figurative form, which creates tension between the dialogue and the style of the film. How are we to describe these thematic or figurative functions? The Bordwellian principles of narrative logic, time and space seem not to cover the wide array of functions or codes that any dramaturgical *and* stylistic element may have. To fill in the conceptual gap of the model, I will apply the Structuralist ideas of Roland Barthes and his typology of textual codes.

Narrative theory observes the interaction of syuzhet and fabula and style and fabula. Bordwell’s variant convincingly describes the flow of narration as it makes use of codes that create causal links between its elements and others that open up and close dramatic questions. Roland Barthes calls these the proairetic and the hermeneutic codes. Bordwell’s formalism fits Hollywood’s linear storytelling tradition precisely, where style is usually subordinated to the necessities of a non-contradictory fabula construction. Barthes’ work describes the more complex connotative codes that show how thematic elements enter the processes of narration. As the codes of S/Z display, the contribution of the stylistic elements cannot be reduced to establishing causal links or creating dramatic questions, i.e. the proairetic and the hermeneutic codes. The semantic, symbolic and referential codes show that textual units, which include stylistic elements, often serve as devices that fulfill figurative or thematic functions. This aspect is crucial for analyzing the gradual shifts of visual style, and more specifically the norms governing the development of camera movements.

The main goal of the project is analyzing the development of different artists’ norms. By adapting the typology of the Barthesian codes, a specific form of progression

can be brought to surface: in the hands of the auteurs analyzed, complex textual codes build on an interaction of less complex ones and their cultural context. The following chapters apply a comparative methodology: they contrast different films where the guiding norms of camera movement undergo significant changes within an auteurs work. The trajectory of this development will be analyzed in the continuum of normative and figurative codes, which represent a form of gradual progression by their differing reliance on denotative or connotative meaning.

This pattern of stylistic development extends David Bordwell's problem-solution model. In On the History of Film Style the author argues that every stylistic innovation is an answer to an arising artistic problem.<sup>30</sup> No matter whether the solution reproduces or discards the reigning standards, it maintains a connection with its preceding norms. The four options of the artist when relating his/her work to the tradition are replication, amplifying, synthesizing and rejection of past artistic practices. Bordwell argues that even the rejection of the tradition connects to it in a negative way. This study takes the idea of gradual progression and applies it to the range of normative and figurative units. I argue that the latter codes generally are the results of an interaction between the existing textual units *and* the cultural background in which the progression occurs.

What are, then, the norms that the artists of this project use or discard? Chapter One analyzes how the norms of camera movement in the cinema of attraction<sup>31</sup> change into normative codes in Giovanni Pastrone's Cabiria. In the former, the camera movement did not fulfill a function in altering fabula material, but Cabiria assigns the proairetic code to the tracking shot. Here the tracking-in movement of the camera

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<sup>30</sup> Bordwell, David. On the History of Film Style. 1997. p. 149-152.

<sup>31</sup> Which are present even much later in Griffith's Intolerance.

causally links the events of the film by revealing the motivations of the characters mirrored on their faces. The norm that Pastrone works against, or rejects, is that of the moving camera utilized as a spectacular technique without fabula-altering functions. With Cabiria, the director transfers a subjectivity that places the actors' and actresses' at the center of the film's dramatic interest from the terrain of editing to that of camera movement. Surprisingly, this shift occurs in a film that has been praised by critics for its lavish, epic sets and spectacularly staged action scenes.<sup>32</sup>

The arch of my project traces the relation between normative and figurative textual codes through the prism of camera movement. Cabiria shows how the technique of camera movement was assigned a systematic narrative function that I describe as normative or denotative unit. While Chapters Two, Three and Four argue that the figurative element results from an interaction of the normative background and socio-cultural norms, the first case study on Pastrone's film does not emphasize the contextual elements instrumental in the development of the proairetic and hermeneutic codes. Of course it would be difficult to argue that the visual style of the film was not influenced by cultural factors. However, in Pastrone's case, the broader cultural context is less important for the purposes of the current study (tracing the expansion of the camera movement's codes from denotative to connotative) than the fact that the film revolutionarily assigns a well-defined, systematic-textual function to the tracking frame. Pastrone's film creates a normative basis, on which later figurative-connotative functions were built.

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<sup>32</sup> Bowser, Eileen. The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915. Berkeley: University of California Press: 1994. Bordwell, David. Film History. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002. Salt, Barry. Film Style & Technology: History & Analysis. London: Starword, 1992.



In Chapter Two, the analysis turns toward the camera's point-of-view techniques, and how they comment on the characters framed by the camera. The theme of the Doppelgänger—a ghost-double of a living person—was fairly common in German literature starting in the Romantic period, which founds its way to silent films like Der Student von Prag. (1913) While camera movements in the first years of German Expressionist cinema were not that common, the period of Kammerspielfilm made heavy use of the mobile, “unchained camera.”<sup>33</sup> The norm of the mobile point-of-view technique—a proairetic or hermeneutic code in itself, since it constantly poses the question about the subject of the shot—is transformed into a symbolic code in Murnau's films. Instead of connecting the mobile point-of-view shots to specific diegetic characters, the director assigns a function to the unchained camera that is not filled in by filmic figures. The formal device becomes a commentator in the film that sets up binary relations in between diegetic and non-diegetic “characters.” The notion of the invisible sidekick to the protagonist disappears in Murnau's American film Sunrise. This supports the idea that the Doppelgänger had a local cultural significance for German viewers, but meant little to American producers or audiences, who were less accustomed to non-diegetic uses of the point-of-view shot combined with the traveling movement. More importantly, the disappearance of the camera-doppelgänger as a symbolic device shows that for the American audiences its normative use was not established. For the German viewers, however, the longstanding literary tradition of the doppelgänger provides a link between the normative and the symbolic functions.

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<sup>33</sup> Eisner, Lotte. The Haunted Screen. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1969.

After Chapter Two, the project jumps across several decades and investigates two films of Jancsó Miklós. This move seems to skip several directors in whose works the movement of the camera played a critical role (Preminger, Hitchcock, etc.). It would be difficult to argue against the idea that filmmakers in the 1940s and 1950s used the mobile frame as a significant storytelling device. The goal of this project, however, is not to offer a general model for the stylistic progress of the tracking shot. I investigate one possible methodology that dissects the intrinsic artistic norms of film-auteurs to see how their own shifting norms correlate with larger cultural-historical contexts. Starting with close textual analysis, the project intends to map out how general cultural trends can impact the aesthetic devices of artists. Therefore, the wide gap in the chronology of this project does not significantly influence its central claim: in the selected auteurs' work, thematic functions presuppose normative textual units in various ways.

In Jancsó's case, the norms in question target the function of specific camera movements. The focus of the chapter is closely related to that of the Murnau study: what is the narrative function of the camera movement if the subject of the mobility is not a diegetic character? With Murnau, the narrative function of the mobile frame changed from a normative code into a figurative code. In Jancsó's films, the camera movements lose their symbolic functions as well. The tracking shots cannot be interpreted as having a local (even symbolic) textual function. Much rather, the entire structure of the film creates a *semantic web* that allows the spectator to make sense of the back-and-forth tracking movements. After departing from the aesthetic heritage of the Italian Neorealist movement and its figurative "camera presence," Jancsó moves towards complex semantic and referential codes in his usage of the tracking camera. By tracing the director's

narrative/stylistic codes to his contemporary films, it becomes easier to discern the direction in which his established norms rearrange. This analysis allows the historian to base her statements on how these norms are related to the historical changes. The thematic evaluation of Jancsó's films is grounded in a close interpretation of his aesthetic norms.

In Chapter Four, the project turns towards two contemporary Asian directors, Tran Anh Hung and Wong Kar-Wai. The background norm for an analysis of their work is intensified continuity.<sup>34</sup> In his article of the same title, Bordwell states that one of the trademarks of contemporary international visual style is the constantly moving camera. How have Tran and Wong modified an international norm that can be detected in their visual styles as well? The horizontal mobility in the two directors' works—depicting changing family relations in the Eastern domestic—provides the opportunity to observe the shifting role of the tracking movement. Here the different symbolic-semantic-referential functions of the mobile frame express the filmmakers' evaluations of the traditional domestic sphere in an increasingly global context. Once again, the stylistic analysis allows for a better-grounded critical evaluation of the four films' cultural aspects. By investigating how the norms for moving the camera have influenced the figurative devices in the consecutive films, the filmmakers' depiction of the interaction of global and the local becomes visible. The chapter argues that the filmmakers' reaction to the changing environment can be detected on the level of style. This correlation shows how the conceptual tools of symbolic, semantic and referential codes help the historian to examine the details of the rearranging norms of the artist. What this project sets out to

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<sup>34</sup> Bordwell, David. "Intensified Continuity." *Film Quarterly*. Spring 2002. Vol. 55. No. 3. 16-28.

achieve is to provide a formalist basis on which a more culturally informed analysis can base its observations.

What are the advantages of a film history that focuses on the progression of very specific stylistic norms? How is this type of stylistic history provide other insights than other accounts of artistic processes? This project tries to avoid the theoretical consequences of a teleological approach to film style. By adapting a problem-solution model advocated by Bordwell,<sup>35</sup> the study stays away from the historical quagmire that the teleological model of the succession of artists and techniques represents. In his study On the History of Film Style, Bordwell claims that previous models or programs of film history dealt with style as a continuous progression towards “perfection” through new techniques. According to his own model, the techniques have always been at the disposal of the artists; what changed is how they use the existing devices.<sup>36</sup> For different artistic paradigms, then, the same techniques exist as different devices. The ruling norms of the paradigm govern the function of these devices (which this project will investigate with Barthes’s typology of the narrative functions).

There are several advantages in treating stylistic progress as an answer to a set of problems: (1) it allows the historian to focus on particular aspects of film style; (2) it breaks with the teleological models; and (3) it leaves room for possibility that several trends coexist at the same time.<sup>37</sup> However, the problem-solution model regards the “problem” as an immanent artistic question, a question of how to express certain information on a specific channel. Applied to the example to camera movement, the

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<sup>35</sup> Bordwell, David. On the History of Film Style. 1997.

<sup>36</sup> Among other techniques, Bordwell uses the example of Melies and editing to show that the commonplace of the French director minimizing cutting does not stand. In The Trip to the Moon, editing does play an important part, but it does not follow the preconceived schemas of its function.

<sup>37</sup> Bordwell, David. On the History of Film Style. 1997. p. 150

technique of the tracking-in camera of Pastrone is an answer to a stylistic problem, i.e. how to convey the emotions of the characters to the spectators. But it is also a phenomenon that is not independent from the newly discovered capacity for character subjectivity in the cinema, which is a broader problem than an immanent stylistic issue. The ability to connect emotions and characters to forward the story has been extensively analyzed in the work of D. W. Griffith.<sup>38</sup> In his work, editing was the tool that played the role of assigning states of minds to figures in the story. The fact that editing in Griffith's work and camera movement in Pastrone's fulfills a similar narrative function<sup>39</sup> and that they develop at about the same time points to a larger artistic shift than just the problem of editing or camera movement. The notion of character subjectivity in plot-formation was an addition to pre-1910s films that moves cinema toward narrative integration from the practices of the cinema of attraction. As my study argues, the 1910s is the period where the moving camera first fulfills proairetic or hermeneutic narrative functions: for the schemas of camera movement, this decade sees the formation of the normative functions.

The development of the norms more complex than the first two Barthesian codes shows that the figurative or thematic norms guiding the mobile frame cannot be explained by referring to internal narrative factors alone. From Chapter Two on, the case studies of this project will investigate this question: how do the figurative or thematic norms of the moving camera expand from normative or less complex figurative uses? These figurative elements show a correlation with cultural trends that surround their

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<sup>38</sup> Gunning, Tom. *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991. Jesniowski, Joyce E. *Thinking in Pictures: Dramatic Structure in D. W. Griffith's Biograph Films*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. Bowser, Eileen *Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915*. New York, Scribner's, 1990.

<sup>39</sup> The proairetic code [ACT]

birth. Without the established schemes, the “added” function of a symbolic, semantic or a referential code would be not visible at all: the idea of the camera-doppelganger in F. W. Murnau, the figurative tracking shots of Jancsó Miklós or the horizontally moving frames of Tran Anh Hung or Wong Kar-Wai carry functions that are the products of existing stylistic norms influenced by cultural forces specific in each case.

This study works with the assumption that research taking the bottom-up route exploring the details of the paradigmatic stylistic changes and working their way toward more general conclusion can result in historical claims that do not describe filmic expression as an isolated phenomenon with immanent narrative problems. These problems are manifestations of cultural-historical trends that have a significant effect on the developing artistic norms. According to Bordwell, cultural studies suggested that “[t]he proper way to understand style was not to limit one’s understanding to the films, the makers, the technology and the institutions of filmmaking and exhibition. The best explanations, many began to argue, would give primacy to a broader culture in which the films were made, and used.”<sup>40</sup> Calling the approach the “history of vision,” Bordwell refers to Walter Benjamin and his famous formulation on the collective, historically determined ways of perception.<sup>41</sup> While Bordwell dismisses the top-down method that defines a certain historical vision and cites random examples to support it later, it seems that in On the History of Film Style he admits the influence of culture on style: “[m]y criticisms of history-of-vision accounts do not show that cultural explanations cannot supply persuasive answers to some questions.”<sup>42</sup> However, Bordwell insists that “[f]or the

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<sup>40</sup> Bordwell, David. On the History of Film Style. 1997. p. 141.

<sup>41</sup> Benjamin, Walter. Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility. 1937. In.: Selected Writings. Cambridge, Massachusetts . : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996

<sup>42</sup> Bordwell, David. On the History of Film Style. 1997, p.149.

most part (...) the ideas of modernity, postmodernity, and history of vision have informed the historiography of film style in vague and problematic ways.”<sup>43</sup> My project does not attempt to operate with general terms like modernity or postmodernity. Much rather, it establishes *one possible* connecting point among several that is instrumental in the normative-figurative dynamic of stylistic norms. A bottom-up research program, progressing towards observations connecting style and history from the detailed analyses of cinematic devices seems a productive method to connect what often remains separated in film studies: observations of larger cultural trends and the minute, close analysis of cinematic texts.

With the help of the concept of gradual shift between normative and figurative schemas, this study argues that the problem-solution model is helpful, inasmuch it allows the historian to discover the formal aspects of the historical-artistic correlations. While I fully agree with the formalist argument that stylistic change is best analyzed using the bottom-up inquiry to investigate ongoing artistic trends, these shifts in style can be connected to (or interpreted in their relations to) other signifying systems, such as cultural, historical or political frameworks.

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<sup>43</sup> Bordwell, David. On the History of Film Style. 1997, 149.

## Chapter One

### **DRAMATIZING MOVEMENT:**

The traveling camera during the years towards the feature film

Visual compositions during the years that contemporary scholarship came to call the *cinema of transition* contain multiple trends that seem to contradict each other. These tendencies at once show the intensification of expressive techniques but also follow the more conservative rules of composing for narrative purposes, where intelligibility is more important than stylistic innovation. This chapter attempts to unpack these several trends to be able to situate a stylistic device, the traveling shot, among these currents.

The traveling shot gains significance in the light of its relative rareness: although technically possible from the very beginnings of the moving image, filmmakers resisted using it for many years. It became a tool that is used more often in the spectacle-driven films of cinema of attractions, especially in the chase film, but seems gradually to become rare during the transitory years only to reemerge again around 1913 for a short period. What led to the disappearance of the traveling shot? Under what circumstances did it return to the toolbox of the filmmaker?

This project works with the assumption that the developments in narrative framework and stylistic systems are responsible for the usage of the traveling shot. Technological difficulties, however, can only account for the resistance of filmmakers to mobile framing partially. Scholarship on camera movement has typically focused on



pans, which are much easier to find in the period in question. This chapter will trace the development of the usage of the traveling shots (tracking and crane shots) focusing on the question: what role did the technique fulfill in the compositions of the filmmakers? What information was communicated with the traveling camera? What is the narrative role of traveling shot for the filmmakers of the transitory years?

This chapter focuses on the formation of *normative function* of the traveling shot. Before Pastrone, the tracking frame was mostly used as a device the function of which was not closely related to altering the fabula. Rather it was part of the language of the “cinema of attraction” that emphasized the mobility within the new medium. With Cabiria, the technique is assigned a systematic task that can be described as a proairetic function within the Barthesian typology. By moving in on the faces of the characters, Pastrone could display the emotions that causally linked the actions of his players. The formation of this methodical narrative function becomes a norm in the Italian epic that is set against the earlier, spectacular purpose of the moving frame in the cinema of attraction. This normative function forms a basis, on which later filmmakers can progressively build other norms, or alternatively figurative codes. The overall goal of this project is to show that the normative codes interacting with local cultural motifs in the use of specific stylistic elements give rise to the figurative uses of the same techniques. The present chapter shows how the tracking mobile frame acquired a solid normative basis in terms of its narrative function. Later chapters show how this normative basis provides a backdrop that other artists use to move on towards the creation of more complex figurative codes. Logically, the existence of the figurative codes presupposes the normative functions. The first step in this progression is the creation of the systematic

normative codes. I argue that it was Pastrone's 1913 film that assigned this systematic narrative function to the tracking camera.

Of course the trends are influenced by larger cultural currents, of which the Italian director and his film forms an organic part. Pastrone's film shows how the tradition of the cinema of attraction is used as a horizon for the norms that are renewed according to the needs of narrative cinema. The moving camera does not only focus on the spectacular aspects of the film, but also contributes to the economy of storytelling. Typically, in the cinema of attraction the camera moved because it followed a mobile character. In the Italian epic, the traveling frame moves on stationary characters. This difference becomes a crucial step in assigning narrative, storytelling functions to filmic elements that hereto have been used as elements of spectacle-driven style.

In Cabiria, the camera movements still serve the purpose of following moving characters or situating the scenes among the spectacular sets, but they also start to focus the attention of the viewer towards the crucial narrative information in each scene. Pastrone's film fits the goals of this project because it can locate the co-existence of two trends on a very accurate, specific stylistic level: camera movements as a spectacle and camera movement as a storytelling element. Cabiria allows the historian to locate a film where the formation of the methodical narrative function becomes visible. It is not the mobility of the composition that stands at the forefront, but rather the expressivity of character emotions. Pastrone achieves this by tracking closer to his characters.

## I. Early cinema and mobile framings

The focus of this chapter, the cinema of transition, is a phase that leads from the cinema of attractions to films of narrative integration. Recent scholarship has shown that clear-cut boundaries cannot be detected between these phases, making the cinema of transition a phase where multiple tendencies coexist.<sup>44</sup> Early cinema (ca. until 1906) establishes a framework, however, where the narratives focus on dramatic vignettes rather than a coherent series of events. Here the dynamism, moving objects, and car chases, as spectacles are more important than the connections between the events presented. And whether we agree with Tom Gunning<sup>45</sup>, who sees this tendency as a part of a larger cultural trend of modernization and a heightened pace of urban life; or whether we doubt that the modernity thesis has much historical relevance in our descriptions of the films of the period,<sup>46</sup> remains of little significance for the purposes of analyzing the narrative role of mobile framing. It is enough to note that the visual style of the films in question is supported regularly by camera movements that quickly became part of the language of early film. Most scholars agree that the emergence of early camera movements is the result of a very specific filmic function: keeping the characters of the scene or objects in the frame.

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<sup>44</sup> Several essays in American Cinema's Transitional Era suggest that the even the term 'cinema of attractions' is a theoretical construct that does not necessarily help the historian to define what makes early film different from the transitional film.

<sup>45</sup> Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde"; in Early Film ed. Elsaesser, Thomas and Adam Barker. London. British Film Institute, 1989.

<sup>46</sup> Keil, Charlie. Early American Cinema in Transition Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001.

According to Kevin Brownlow, it was the Lumière cameramen who invented the traveling shot itself.<sup>47</sup> Here they have mounted a camera on a train in 1896 when leaving Jerusalem. During the early years of filmmaking, the movement of the camera often only meant that it was mounted on a moving vehicle. The shots recorded from trains were called “phantom rides.”



1.1 Lumière tracking shot from 1896. Title unknown

Also, supposedly the first surviving crane shot was an “actuality” produced by the Lumière-company. This is a shot of the old Trocadero in Paris filmed from the moving lift in the Eiffel Tower.

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<sup>47</sup> Cinema Europe. Pt. 1. Image Entertainment, 2000 (Film title unknown)



1.2 Lumière crane shot going up on the Eiffel Tower from 1896. Title unknown

Barry Salt tells a slightly different story about the conception of the tracking camera movement. In this version, the Lumière cinematographers put a camera in a gondola to film Le Grand Canal à Venise in 1897.

Whoever actually recorded the first tracking shot is of little historical importance. Artists and craftsmen claiming to have been the first in executing any kind of technique are a sure sign of the procedure playing an important part in vocabulary of the filmmakers. The traveling shot spread quickly: a year after the Lumière traveling shot in the Jerusalem or the Venice film “there were a number of films shot from moving trains (...) made by English film-makers and French as well (...) Those films shot straight forward from in front of a railway engine were usually specifically referred to as ‘phantom rides.’”<sup>48</sup> Of course many restraints were imposed on the artists by the available technology itself. The easiest way for filmmakers to record mobile shots was simply to put the cameras on a moving vehicle, since during the early days the cameras were fastened directly to the tripods. Although not available in general sale for a few more

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<sup>48</sup> Salt, Barry. Film Style & Technology: History and Analysis. London: Starword, 1992. p. 32.

years, English cameraman “R. W. Paul had the first real panning head made for a tripod, so that he could cover the passing procession of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in one uninterrupted shot.”<sup>49</sup> According to Salt, the device was rarely used before 1900.

Early cinema used camera movements as compositional devices that utilize the technique for various purposes. Gartenberg’s work on camera movement at Edison and Biograph between 1900-1906 shows that, contrary to the belief of the static camera, the period made use of pans and occasionally dolly shots for both sensational and also dramatic purposes. Most of these mobile shots can be explained with the fascination and the ability of early filmmakers to follow racing trains, cars, horses or running characters. In a sense, the fascination of the audiences with a moving train of the Lumière-brothers in Arrival of train at La Ciotat Station from 1895 is mirrored here with the camera movement: objects or characters move indeed, but the camera moves with them! The actualities of the period mostly used the mobile framings to follow a race or a chase or practically any speeding object.

However, camera movements in this period are not entirely limited to these simple dynamic uses of the technique. Gartenberg lists several examples where the mobile frame has a narrative function of revealing character information otherwise not explained. In Hooligan in Jail (Biograph, 1903) there is a long shot of a prisoner seated at a table in his cell. When a guard brings him his food, the man starts eating, and his fascination with the food is communicated by his facial expression. The camera tracks closer to the prisoner so that the viewer can observe his face from a closer perspective.

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<sup>49</sup> Salt, Barry. Film Style & Technology: History and Analysis. London: Starword, 1992. p. 32.



### 1.3 Tracking shot in Hooligan in Jail

In this scene, the filmmaker could have used a different technique, for example a cut-in, and show a close-up of the man face. This would also have been a novelty for the times since close-ups fairly very rare during the early 1900s. But instead of cutting, the uninterrupted movement preserves the unity of the scene and effectively conveys the mental state of the character to the viewer. The scene shows that the camera movement functions as a Barthesian proairetic code in this early film: it displays emotions that in turn function as causal connections between story elements. The technique was not really noticed or picked up by any other filmmakers or studios with a very few exceptions, and “[t]hese films, the last of which was made in 1904, seem to have had no progeny, and concluded the matter of tracking on static scenes for the next several years.”<sup>50</sup> Salt points out an aspect of the Hooligan that will become very important for the classification of mobile framings: the fact that the movement occurs on a stationary character. As I will show later, one central aspect of the narrative development of tracking shots will be the film arresting the movement of the characters in the scene.

<sup>50</sup> Salt, Barry. Film Style & Technology: History and Analysis. London: Starword, 1992.p. 47.

From the very rare usage of the tracking shots it seems safe to assume that such uses of camera movement did not form a tendency in the early years. The majority of mobile framings were pans, and they fulfilled the purpose of focusing the attention of the viewer on the central element of the composition. Occasionally, tracking shots were employed, but the narrative function of these elements was usually limited to reframing.

## II. Camera Movement in Transition

During the years of transition (ca. from 1906 to 1915), the development of the function of camera movements surprisingly comes to a halt. The number of mobile shots does not decrease, and they become part of the visual vocabulary of film, but there is little experimentation or progress in their narrative motivation. According to Gartenberg,

[a] systematic viewing of Biograph, Edison, Vitagraph and of Pathé, Hepworth and other foreign productions revealed that the evolution of camera movement in 1907-1908 was contrary to what I had anticipated would develop on the basis of the 1900-1906 films. Panning did not become a more restricted and more controlled device with its dramatic and aesthetic impact increased, nor was there a greater sense of expansiveness and freedom created through extensive camera movement.<sup>51</sup>

As opposed to editing, for example, which develops rapidly with the works of D. W. Griffith in the period, the pans and traveling shots are still used for reframing mostly. As Bowser points out, “[a]ny camera movement, that was employed between 1908 and 1912 remained unobtrusive, with the camera shifting only slightly on occasion to keep

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<sup>51</sup> Gartenberg, Jon. “Camera Movement In Edison and Biograph Films, 1900-1906” *Cinema Journal* 19, 2 (Spring, 1980) p. 14.



significant action in the center of the shot.”<sup>52</sup> Similar description is given by Keil, who remarks that “[t]ypical deployment of camera movement followed (...) unstated restrictions, meaning conventional usage restricted itself to keeping pertinent narrative action in the frame.”<sup>53</sup> In the latter formulation, camera movement becomes a device that can anticipate narrative events. Accordingly, Keil allows that sometimes the camera moves to make room for a character who will enter the frame a few seconds later. However, even this anticipatory function remains within the bounds of the centering role.

Both the numerous pans and traveling shots remain within the realms of the sensational in the period. In European or American cinema, during the late 1900s and early 1910s there are several tracking shots that were filmed from a moving vehicle of some kind. These show no radical break with the mobile framings of the cinema of attractions. The French serial Zigomar vs. Nick Carter from 1912 includes several chase scenes where the cars are photographed from an automobile that is being pursued. However, the tracking shots of the chase film continue the technique that Salt calls ‘phantom rides.’ In a 1911 Danish film A Dead Man’s Child or the 1912 French production Railway of Death, the camera is placed in the top of a train car. As soon as the car passes under a bridge, we see the hero jumping onto the train. In all of these films, the speed and the direction of the camera movement of course is limited by the speed and the direction of the movement of the vehicle on which it is mounted. At this time dolly shots with carts constructed specifically for moving the camera are extremely rare, although they exist, as we have seen in Hooligan in Jail.

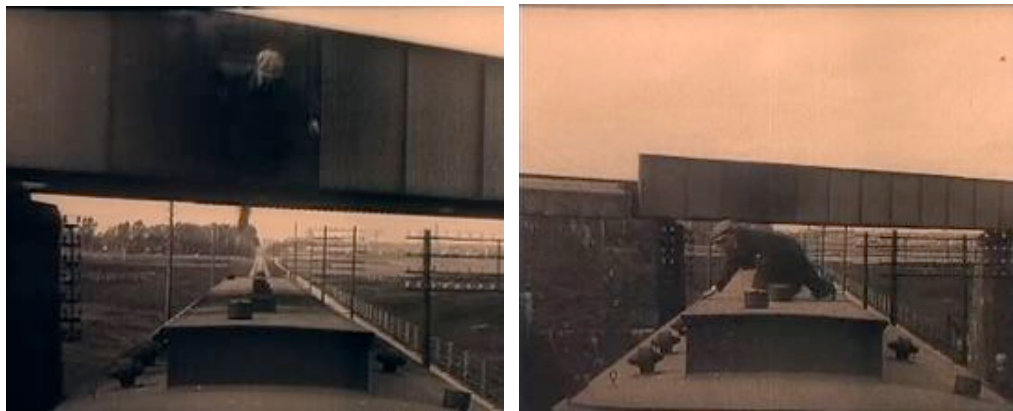
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<sup>52</sup> Bowser, Eileen. The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915. New York: Scribner, 1994.p. 249.

<sup>53</sup> Keil, Charlie. Early American Cinema in Transition Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001. p. 159.



1.4 Camera on a car in Zigomar vs. Nick Carter



1.5 Camera on the train in A Dead Man's Child

The lack of the development in the narrative function of camera movement becomes even more surprising when one looks at the few mobile framings of the times that gave the technique a crucial narrative role. An interesting use of the traveling shot can be seen a few years later in Benjamin Christensen's Night of Revenge, a Danish film from 1915. Here the movement is completely freed from the restraints of a vehicle, and the movement contains crucial information for the viewer. The film features a girl who is alone in a mansion, fearing an intruder. The viewer suspects that somebody is already

observing her when we see her through a keyhole-shaped mask frantically trying to close all doors of the house. We understand that this already is a subjective shot from the burglar's perspective. Christensen sets up Barthes' hermeneutic code, as it foregrounds the question about the subject position of the shots. The narration here apparently is very communicative, and the mask shot foreshadows the events to take place later. At the end of the shot the keyhole mask is closed in from the left, suggesting that the girl is imprisoned and there is little hope for her to escape. A cut takes the viewer then to a full shot of the girl in her bedroom trying to lock the door, the last line of her defense. At this point the camera starts slowly to track out. The imprisonment theme becomes explicit since the retreating camera sadistically reveals the bars of the large glass door behind which the girl is still trying to save herself. Finally the intruder slides into the frame as well; he makes his move and breaks into the house. The hermeneutic code is closed: the subject of the point-of-view shot became visible.





1.6 The tracking in towards the window in Night of Revenge

These innovative uses of tracking shots can be found in American films as well. Bowser cites a 1913 American Film Company production, The Trail of Cards. Here the camera follows a horseback chase after kidnappers. The function of the shot here is similar to what the mobile framing achieves in Hooligan in Jail: whereas in the latter film the traveling camera magnifies the character's face, in The Trail of Cards the mobile shot focuses on an element of the action that becomes crucial for the development of the action. The victim is dropping cards to mark the route of the kidnappers and allow the hero to find the criminals. The camera movements function both as a proairetic and a hermeneutic code: it allows for the pursuit to take place by providing cues, and sets up a dramatic question whether the victim will be rescued or not. Here Bowser mentions that the filmmakers must have been so intrigued with the tracking shot that "they did not consider using a close-up to show the cards being dropped, although this might have made the event clearer to the spectator."<sup>54</sup> Probably the close-up would have made the events more intelligible, but the tracking shot in Trail of Cards experiments with the

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<sup>54</sup> Bowser, Eileen. The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915. New York: Scribner, 1994.p. 250.

mobile framing because it does not interrupt the events unfolding through editing. This aspect of the shot might have been more crucial to director Gilbert P. Hamilton.

It seems that during the cinema of transition, there exist camera movements that continue the tradition of the attractions, but at the same time we see directors who use camera movement as a narratively motivated device (Night of Revenge or Trail of Cards). This multiplicity of trends begs the question: why did the linear development of the dramatic or narrative role of tracking shots come to a relative halt around 1906-1908?

Keil poses a similar question in Early Cinema in Transition about mobile framings: “[i]f reframing became the primary function of the pan, why do filmmakers abandon other possible uses?”<sup>55</sup> He locates three possible answers. The first explains the problem with the technical limitations of the times that prevented the filmmakers from using mobile framings more freely. This thesis goes back to Barry Salt and Eileen Bowser’s writings. As Keil points out, this answer cannot account for the relative abandonment of the experimentation with mobile shots. Camera movements already existed in the years between 1900-1906: Gartenberg’s examples show that in the cinema of attractions tracks and pans could be executed.

In the second explanation, editing takes over the role of pans. The formation of the rules on continuity editing contributed to being able to convey information with functional equivalents of the camera movement. The more frequent use of close-ups fulfilled the role of bringing new compositional elements into the screen, and thus pans were not necessary. Possibly they seemed old-fashioned to filmmakers as well. Again Bowser provides this explanation for the dilemma of the camera movement. Keil shows

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<sup>55</sup> Keil, Charlie. Early American Cinema in Transition Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001. p. 160-161.

that an industry wide consensus did not exist on editing taking over the role and function of camera movement. Also, this argument is based too much on the development of one filmmaker, D. W. Griffith.

Keil's analysis shows that the most persuasive answer to the relative decline in the role of mobile framings comes from Kristin Thompson. According to this version, the "[a]esthetic norms of the times have opposed the employment of extensive pans or tracks both because they might result in spectatorial distraction and because they 'would call attention to the frame itself, rather than the action within it'."<sup>56</sup> If we accept this version, then it seems that for the pans and tracks to be not distracting, filmmakers had to find ways to incorporate them as storytelling devices that are organic parts of the syuzhet of the film. In other words, find uses for the camera movement that contribute to the economy of storytelling; ones that are not so redundant in terms of the information contained in the shots. Instead of an excessive and fortuitous stylistic role, camera movements have to become organic and systematic elements of the style that delivers narrative information. Can this shift be explained by using the framework of the cinema of transition? What are the implications of such a change when one focuses on the two reigning narrative systems around the cinema of transition: how did the camera movement of the attraction-era become incorporated into the cinema of narrative integration?

In Keil's work the analyses of pans and tracks of the period mix. So that this chapter can be more analytic about tracking shots alone and to distinguish between several different camera movements, different types of tracking have to be separated.

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<sup>56</sup> Keil, Charlie. Early American Cinema in Transition Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001. p. 161. Thompson, Kristin. "The International Exploration of Cinematic Expressivity" in. The Silent Cinema Reader eds. Lee Grieveson –Peter Krämer. New York: Routledge, 2004.p. 254.

When Barry Salt speaks of the overtly flaunted nature of the mobile framing, he makes an important distinction between two types of tracking shots:

I think that filmmakers in the silent period, and to some extent later, made a distinction between those tracking shots that followed people around in some way (...) and on the other hand those tracking shots which moved the camera relative to a fixed scene. Some filmmakers have undoubtedly gone on record as condemning the latter variety as drawing attention to the technique of filming.<sup>57</sup>

There are several similar opinions that come from different directors in different eras. Alfred Hitchcock, for example, speaks to Bogdanovich of a very similar distinction many years later. According to the master of suspense, “[t]here are two kinds of moving cameras: the camera that moves *with* figures, and therefore should not be observed because the eye should be on the figure; and the moving of the camera on a static figure.”<sup>58</sup> However, if one looks at the tracking shots of early cinema, it becomes clear that the preferred type was the *movement with the figures*. As already mentioned, the chases and races so popular were all following (i.e. filming) the vehicles from another vehicle. This still leaves the question about the specific function of these shots open, but it seems that the characters driving those vehicles were less important than the fact that they were moving. The importance of a chase scene is definitely not the facial expression of the chaser or the chased, nor their refined gestures; rather movement in itself becomes central. Early filmmakers did not attempt to focus on the drama unfolding between the pursuer and the pursued, but rather on sheer physical joy of the speeding car and/or trains. On the other hand, few filmmakers started to use camera movement in their work that conveyed narrative information, which was not communicated on any other channel of the syuzhet.

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<sup>57</sup> Salt, Barry. *Film Style & Technology: History and Analysis*. London: Starword, 1992. p. 82.

<sup>58</sup> Bogdanovich, Peter. *Who The Devil Made It*. New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1997. p. 517-518.

The motivations for the technique of camera movement that began to change during the cinema of transition show how norms coexist for several years. This parallelism in the function of the device guaranteed a progressive development allowing the innovation to emerge on the stable basis. Providing comprehensibility for the audiences and stylistic continuity for the filmmakers, the norms of the traveling shot display the changing function in Giovanni Pastrone's film. Cabiria repeats certain aspects of the spectacular and at the same time invents normative narrative functions for the tracking camera. What becomes spectacular with Pastrone is the face and the upper body of the actors and actresses. In the character-driven film, the actions of the figures (proairetic codes) are the driving force behind the narrative. The camera movements in Cabiria lead over from the mostly spectacle-centered mobile frames of early cinema towards a cohesively integrated function of the tracking shot into the systems of the syuzhet. The device of the tracking camera investigated through the conceptual lens of the forming normative function allows for the establishing of concrete connections between the textual level of the film and larger historical trends.

The arch of my project traces the relation between normative and figurative textual codes through the prism of camera movement. Cabiria shows how the technique of camera movement was assigned a systematic narrative function that I describe as normative or denotative unit. While Chapters Two, Three and Four argue that the figurative element results from an interaction of the normative background and socio-cultural norms, the first case study on Pastrone's film does not emphasize the contextual elements instrumental in the development of the proairetic and hermeneutic codes. Of course it would be difficult to argue that the visual style of the film was not influenced by



cultural factors. However, in Pastrone's case, the broader cultural context is less important for the purposes of the current study (tracing the expansion of the camera movement's codes from denotative to connotative) than the fact that the film revolutionarily assigns a well-defined, systematic-textual function to the tracking frame. Pastrone's film creates a normative basis, on which later figurative-connotative functions were built.

### **III. Pastrone's Cabiria: New Uses of the Tracking Shot**

Around the years that scholars came to call the cinema of transition, filmmakers had to find narrative uses for the camera movement if they wanted to incorporate movement into the language of the newly emerging narrative systems. This hesitation about the new uses of the technique might explain why, as Gartenberg observes, there is little experimentation with mobile shots after 1906. This chapter proposes that the movements on a fixed scene will provide this new normative narrative function, where the movement does not follow anyone but lyrically describes the psychological condition of the characters. When there is no movement in a shot except for the movement of the camera, the viewer's attention is forced towards the drama of the characters. The movement here revolves around the internal states of the figures in the scene. The first filmmaker who systematically recognized the significance of camera movement on stationary characters is Italian director Giovanni Pastrone.



### 1.7 Giovanni Pastrone

His name is mentioned in every account on the history of early camera movement. However, scholars have not paid enough attention to how and why Pastrone uses the moving camera, and most importantly tracking shots. The consensus on Pastrone's fluid style is that he used tracking shots diagonally to settings to reveal their 3-dimensionality. Most scholars writing on early film style echo this opinion. According to Bowser,

[o]n 1 June 1914 the big Italian spectacle film by Pastrone, *CABIRIA*, made a sensational debut at the Knickerboxer Theater in New York. The fluid camera movements in this film gave a three-dimensional depth and solidity to the enormous sets that were constructed for it, and they brought scenes forward to the spectator by traveling into the depth of the shot (...) [T]he traveling-camera style of *CABIRIA* appeared so unusual to the industry that they dubbed it the "Cabiria-movement."<sup>59</sup>

Undoubtedly several of Pastrone's tracking shots seem to put in the foreground the huge sets that were built up for the film. The Italian film industry during the mid 1910s had an affinity for historical epics, out of which *Cabiria* was one of the most expensive. Salt states that "[a]t the time, Pastrone stated that his intention was to create a 'three-dimensional' effect in the photography to show off the vast solid sets of his film, and for this reason his tracking shots were made moving inwards on a diagonal to his

<sup>59</sup> Bowser, Eileen. *The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915*. New York: Scribner, 1994. p. 251.

sets.”<sup>60</sup> Without questioning the relevance of the ‘three-dimensionality thesis,’ this chapter proposes an alternative account on how Pastrone’s tracking shot introduced a new narrative role for the tracking camera movements.

To begin to see what the narrative importance of the tracking style in Cabiria is, we have to pay close attention to the actors’ and actresses’ performances in the film. Several camera movements start with a long shot showing a group of characters. At these points, we are interested to see what will happen to the figures, and the camera starts to track in so the spectator gets a better view. The movement typically stops when the camera has reached the full-shot proximity. In these moments, the actors/actresses express crucial narrative information with facial gestures. As soon as the emotional outburst so typical for silent era acting has fulfilled its function (i.e., communicated the psychological condition of the character to the viewers), the camera slowly starts to track back. The retreating camera thus tells the viewer that this segment of the film is over and forces her to situate the characters in the spatial structure of the scene: the actors become part of the 3-dimensional setting again. The camera approximates the theatrical technique where actors and actresses come forward to the foreground of the stage, deliver their line and retreat, but the important difference is that the characters remain static. It is the camera, or by analogy, the nosey viewer, who moves in on the scene to see how the characters behave in the given situation.

To use Roland Barthes’ terminology, in the camera movements of the cinema of attraction there is no recognizable syuzhet-altering function in the tracking shots. However, Pastrone’s tracking shots reveal a *proairetic* function: by making the internal

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<sup>60</sup> Salt, Barry. Film Style & Technology: History and Analysis. London: Starword, 1992. p. 127.

psychological states of the figures readable for the viewer, elements of the fabula become causally connected. These links between the actions and events allows the film to form a coherent dramatic structure. The larger trend of the emerging narrative cinema that uses character subjectivity to connect its episodes can be detected in the changing function of the stylistic devices it uses.

To speak of Cabiria as a film that developed a whole new style of camera movement is not an overstatement. A quantitative assessment of the mobile framings shows that Pastrone uses the tracking shot as a central element of his style. In the 125 minutes long film, there are 52 tracking shots.<sup>61</sup> This number stands out by far from other films of the mid 1910s, especially from the attraction-oriented camera movements of the chase films that do not even use any type of mobile shots in other than action scenes. Cabiria's camera movements are numerous even proportionately: there is a tracking shot roughly every two-and-a-half minutes.

Although many of the traveling shots indeed seem to serve the purpose of showing off the spectacular sets, a close look at the function of the tracking shots reveals a much more important task as well: focusing the viewer's attention on a dramatically important story element. The first track-in of the film [1]<sup>62</sup> starts with a long shot of a group of characters in a palace. We see six servants with animals and large trays of food in the foreground. The depth of shot is first of all guaranteed by the movement of the two central characters, who come to the foreground of the composition. At this point, however, the camera remains stationary. The arrangement of figures in the frame is very sophisticated: on a terrace one level up in the right top corner of the shot there is a

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<sup>61</sup> See Appendix for a comprehensive list of the tracking shots.

<sup>62</sup> The numbers refer to the Appendix's list of the tracking shots.

character polishing the railings, which gives the composition a spectacular depth-of-field. When the slow track-in starts, we see even more servants in the halls of the palace distributed evenly towards the background. The two main characters in the shot, who catch the attention of the viewer by their relative proximity and dynamic body gestures, turn away from each other at the start of the camera movement. They seem to be searching for something. Towards the end of the camera movement, when the size of their bodies occupies at least three times more screen surface than in the beginning, the man turns to the woman, and they agree to look for Cabiria to show her a lamb.



### 1.8 Cabiria: The track-in emphasizes character gesture

At this early point of the film the spectator has not seen Cabiria yet. However, an insert immediately after this first track-in introduces her, establishing her central role for

the rest of the film. In the shot, the tracking in foregrounds the characters as they deliver the information that is dramatically the most crucial. Through the mobile frame, the dramatically important information becomes foregrounded, allowing the spectator to recognize that the gesture of the characters as narratively relevant.

The idyllic atmosphere of the film is over very soon. A catastrophe hits the palace as the volcano Etna erupts. Frantically everyone is trying to escape the burning palace. Pastrone's moving camera conveys the sense of chaos with de-centered compositions that focus, once again, on the performances of the actors and actresses. Five trapped servants in a burning room are looking for an exit. As the characters run around, a piece of the collapsed ceiling reveals an opening in the floor. The obvious way of moving the camera would be a track-in towards the opening to underline its significance, but Pastrone wants the viewer to see how the characters react to the fact that they are saved by hidden stairway. The diagonal track-in [2] shifts the opening to the right side of the frame, and moves in closer towards the servants who cathartically celebrate the stairway, by jumping around it. Clearly the reframing function of the camera movement is preserved here, but the new focus of interest is not the physical center or the compositional dominant. Rather the drama of the characters is brought forward and literally staged for easier comprehension to the spectator. Pastrone here does not move the camera to accentuate the spectacular sets but to underline the characters' reactions to the turn in the course of the events.

The sudden reversal in the fate of the servants continues: as they submerge in the hidden stairway, they discover piles of gold. Running out of the frame, they greedily try to put as much treasure into their pockets as possible and suddenly forget about the

dangerous situation they are in. The viewer, however, does not know what caught the attention of the servants until the slow parallel tracking shot [3] reveals it. The vacuum created by the figures gathering around the treasure is filled in by the nurse Croessa, who has saved Cabiria from the flames. Two more tracking shots [4-5] repeat the pattern of camera movement [2], when another crumbling column opens up the walls of the palace, allowing the characters eventually to escape. In each of these shots, the drama exists in the characters' reactions to the events. This reaction is rendered visible by the camera traveling in on the characters.

As the group of servants with Cabiria sits around on a beach examining the stolen goods, they discover a ring. Pastrone indexes the importance of the ring with a close-up, and a cut takes us to a full shot of Croessa putting it away in her pocket. Here the camera tracks out [6] from a medium shot of her figure to a full shot of the group.



1.9 Cabiria: Track out signaling the end of a story segment

The editing and the tracking out very efficiently reminds the viewer that the topic of the ring will play a crucial role later on in the film, but for now Pastrone leaves this element of the story in the background, which is signaled by physically distancing the viewer from Croessa's figure.

The two stylistic ways of bracketing a story segment (tracking in and tracking out) are combined in the fifteenth minute of the film by a camera movement [7]. In the scene Croessa and Cabiria, having been captured by Phoenician pirates and sold on the marketplace of Carthage, are offered to Karthalo, a high priest, who buys Cabiria as an offering to Moloch, the god of bronze. Croessa begs the priest to buy her too, so the two can stay together. Starting with a long shot, the camera slowly tracks closer to the woman and the child. When the priest examines Cabiria, Croessa puts her arm around the little girl, refusing to leave her to her fate. At this point, the viewer is in a full shot proximity to the two central characters. Once the priest agrees to buy the nurse as well, the camera tracks back on the exact same path that it took in the first part of the shot.



1.10 Cabiria: The camera moves in on the characters to enlarge their faces during the peak moments



The focal information of the scene is Croessa's protective behavior. Narratively, this is expressed by the 29-second long shot that includes two symmetrical camera movements. The gesture of the nurse was brought to the foreground by the track in. As soon as it is clear that the two will stay together, the intensity of the scene lessens with the camera moving out from the characters. The proairetic code of the camera movements provides a explanation for the turn of characters' faiths.

We see that in none of the examples above has Pastrone moved the central characters during the mobile shots nor have these track-ins been used to emphasize the sets. The difference between camera movements with the characters (the typical technique of the early cinema of attraction) and the camera movement on stationary characters (Pastrone's style) is that our attention is not diverted by the movement itself but rather stays focused on the drama unfolding. In that regard, the camera movement seems to underline the expressive, dramatic acting of the characters, which in turn provides a motivation link between their actions [ACT.] The stylistic element serves as an intensifying device that supports the performances of the cast. Since the speed of the movements is slow, the tracking shots are not flaunted, but the director uses them as very communicative techniques always underlining the central, most crucial information in the shot. We can see this in how camera movement [6] conveys information. The composition of the mobile shot makes it hard for the viewer to miss the point, that the full importance of the ring is not reveled yet. Pastrone creates a very long gap here that will be closed only toward the very end of the film.

Narratively, Pastrone also uses the camera movement to separate story segments from each other. The camera moving in introduces the figures and the tracking out closes

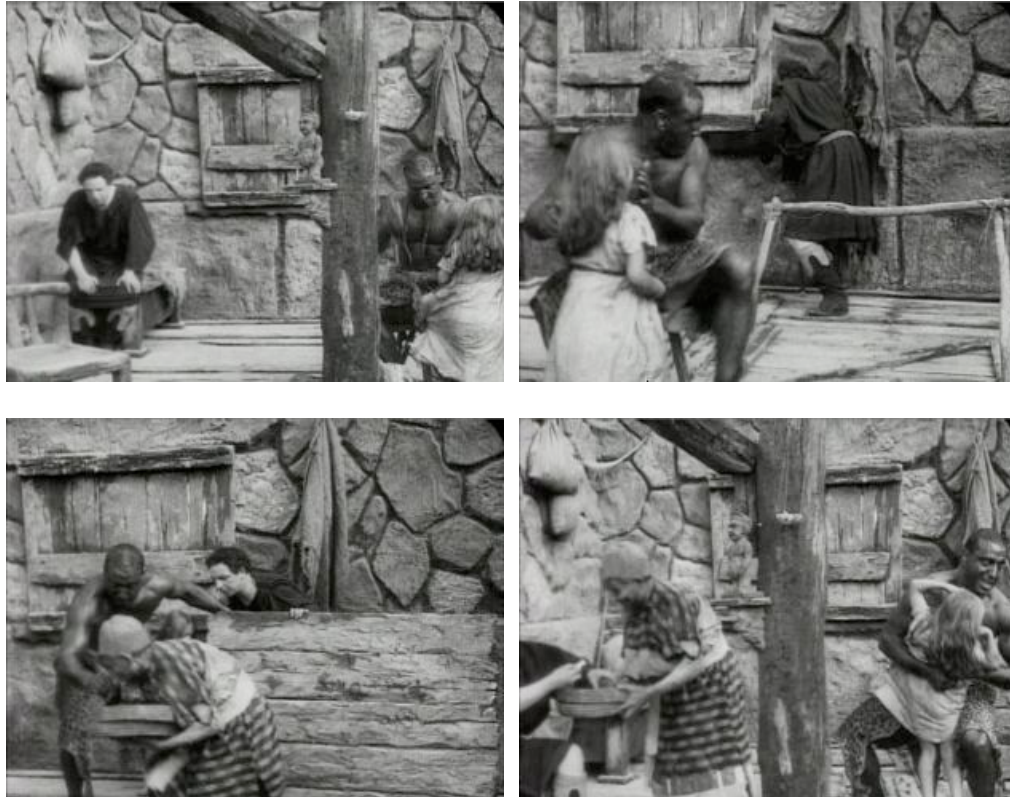
off the section in question. Salt points out that the technique of ending a story with the withdrawing camera has been already used by Griffith in A Girl and her Trust in 1912.<sup>63</sup> However, Pastrone develops the function of the retreating camera by using it to signal ebbs and tides of tension *within* the story.

The approaching and retreating camera movement develops into a distinctive stylistic technique in Pastrone's hands. He uses tracking in to focus the attention of the viewer on a part of the composition that will become narratively important and pulls the camera back when he wants to signal the end of the specific story segment. In the thirty-seventh minute, the tracking with the characters is combined with movement on stationary characters. We see Fulvius and Maciste hiding out with Cabiria in a room of the Striped Monkey Inn. The room itself is divided into two parts by a spar. On the left we see Fulvius waking up; on the opposite side Maciste fixes Cabiria's clothes. The shot remains static for twenty-three seconds. As Fulvius gets up from the bed and starts to walk towards Maciste and the girl, the camera slowly starts to track in [17] diagonally to the right. The spar that divided the room into two parts shifts out of view, and all the characters are grouped together. However, the right part of the frame is not occupied by any of them, and soon the owner of the Inn, Bodastoret, shows up through a drop door with some food on a tray. Once the owner has climbed up the stairs with the plates, the camera starts to move back on the same path where it earlier tracked in. Again the composition is divided into two separate parts, with Fulvius and Bodastoret in the left and Maciste and Cabiria on the right.

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<sup>63</sup> Salt, Barry. Film Style & Technology: History and Analysis. London: Starword, 1992. p. 127.

The track-in here moves us closer to the entering character and the camera movement anticipates his arrival. As opposed to anticipatory pans that reframe the compositions for entering new characters<sup>64</sup>, Pastrone's traveling shot magnifies the size of arriving figure and thereby signaling his importance in the survival of the protagonists: the innkeeper brings food for the hiding trio.



1.11 Cabiria: Maciste's and Cabiria's figure appears much larger for better visibility

The camera movement centers on the act of the refugees getting some food. In the scene it is Maciste and Cabiria who remain stationary, and the figure of Fulvius and Bodastoret provide the connection spatially between the two parts of the frame by their

<sup>64</sup> Described by Keil, Charlie. Early American Cinema in Transition Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001.

parallel movements. Undoubtedly it is the protective gesture of Maciste that stands at the core of the scene, which is in its entire length is more than 76 seconds long. In this shot the *movement with the characters* is combined with the *movement on stationary characters*. The dominant both visually and intrinsically still remain the two stationary characters: the moving figures are far less important than the stationary ones. While the few steps of Fulvius provide a connecting momentum between the two parts of the frame, the significance of what he does is not crucial. It is Maciste who opens the drop door and lets Bodastoret up the stairs with the food, holding Cabiria in his arms the whole time through. While Fulvius and Bodastoret step in and out of the frame, turning occasionally their backs to the camera, the viewer has much time to linger on Maciste and Cabiria, who remain in the initial frontal position and do not move. Finally the withdrawing track shows the abating pressure among the hiding characters. The director manipulates the viewer's attention throughout the scene by the movements of the camera: the mobile frame allows the spectator to focus on specific elements in the narrative.

The three examples [7, 17, 21] can be regarded as the most sophisticated uses of Pastrone's fluid visual style. On one hand he emphasizes the drama of the characters by emphasizing their subjectivity and motivations, but also separates story units from one another with the help of the tracking shots. The communicative nature of the shots underlines and intensifies the performances without having to overact every emotion contained in the parts. Although these performances still seem hopelessly stagy for the contemporary viewer, Pastrone reduces the expressiveness of the acting style when the camera movement is added to the compositions. Therefore, the mobile shots are functional equivalents of acting; but they also liberate the silent film from its burden of

having to overact the emotions of the actors or actresses. Overall, the body gestures of the actors and actresses play a less important role in the mobile shots: here facial expressions take over. In terms of their performance, the actors and actresses increasingly become only faces in the traveling shots.

As already mentioned, overall there are fifty-three camera movements in the entire film. Out of this number, there are more *movements on static figures* than *movements with the figures* (thirty of the former<sup>65</sup> and twenty-three of the latter)<sup>66</sup>. It seems that even in a quantitative assessment, the camera movements on static figures outweigh the shots where the movement follows the moving characters in the tradition of the cinema of attractions. Pastrone recognized the dramatic effect of the tracking shot and makes a deliberate effort to record the scene with moving camera wherever Cabiria's fate takes a sudden turn. The intimacy of the full shots after the track-ins takes us very close to the title character and also maintains the unity of space and time within one take that does not divert the attention of the spectator from the unfolding events.

The list of the tracking shots in the Appendix also enables the examination of the widely accepted claim that Pastrone's movements serve the purpose of showing off with the huge and spectacular sets that were constructed for the film. According to this thesis, the tracking shots—parallel or diagonal to the frontal side of the set elements—reveal them as 3-dimensional constructs. This technique gives the audiences a more realistic feel about the setting, since most films of the period used painted sets where it was all too obvious that flat 2-dimensional backgrounds were being used. The criterion applied here

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<sup>65</sup> [1], [2], [4], [6], [7], [12], [15], [17], [18], [19], [21], [22], [23], [24], [25], [28], [31], [36], [37], [39], [40], [41], [45], [46], [48], [49], [50], [51], [52], [53].

<sup>66</sup> [3], [5], [8], [9], [10], [11], [13], [14], [16], [20], [26], [27], [29], [30], [32], [33], [34], [35], [38], [42], [43], [44], [47].

to examine the 3-dimensionality thesis is whether the sets include several discrete elements that are not equally close to the camera: the spatial relations between the multi-part sets are unequivocally revealed by the tracking movement (i.e. if there is a tracking movement on a painted 2-dimensional set, the flatness of it is revealed instantly.)

The camera movements of the film show that the overwhelming majority of the camera movements indeed take place in front of sets that consist of multiple parts. Out of the fifty-three tracking shots, forty-one reveal significant distances between the set elements in depth<sup>67</sup>, and only twelve that take place in front of flat backgrounds<sup>68</sup>.

Therefore, the 3-dimensionality thesis seems proven. However, this explanation interprets Pastrone's camera movements as a technique that does not have a significant narrative function. To show off with the sets designed would be part of a filmic framework that goes along the concept of the spectacular, or the cinema of attraction. But Pastrone's moving camera, as this analysis has shown, also reveals narrative elements, which serve the progression and comprehensibility of the narrative by moving in on the actors or actresses to make their motivations, emotions (i.e. psychology) readable for the spectator.

Interestingly, from the many action scenes of the film, *none* are being recorded with a moving camera. The battle scenes are captured with stationary shots. In the many chasing scenes, the camera does not move. If all Pastrone wanted to achieve by moving the camera was to show off with the spectacular sets and emphasize attraction, these would be the mobile compositions! The mobility in the film exists not to enhance the dynamism of the fights or battles, but to focus on the human drama unfolding, which creates the proairetic code in the text. By assigning this function to the tracking shot,

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<sup>67</sup> [1], [3], [4], [5], [7], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20], [21], [23], [24], [25], [26], [27], [28], [29], [30], [31], [32], [33], [34], [35], [36], [37], [38], [39], [40], [41], [42], [43], [44], [48].

<sup>68</sup> [2], [6], [8], [22], [45], [46], [47], [49], [50], [51], [52], [53].

Pastrone created a new visual style that has not been used systematically by filmmakers for many more years.

In Cabiria, Pastrone assigns a new function to the mobile shot: the director methodically shows how with the track-ins the dramatic importance of character action or character subjectivity can be emphasized. After the information is conveyed, the tracking out camera signals the end of the microelement in the story. While the 3-dimensionality thesis about Pastrone's camera movements seems true, this notion as an explanation for the function of camera movement does not take into account that it indicates a return to the attraction. According to the historical concept of cinema of transition, during the early 1910s at least two cinematic trends coexisted: the film of attraction and the newly emerging narrative films. Pastrone's film builds on the older idea of combining mobility with the spectacular, but at the same time he approaches the characters with his camera to render crucial information readable for viewer by purely visual means.

The director's innovations show how the functions of the tracking camera move towards the proairetic narrative role in Cabiria. However, he does not entirely interrupt the role the mobile frame played in the films of the early 1910s but rather builds on it: the traveling camera in Pastrone's hands focuses on the spectacular as well, but the emphasis has shifted. In Cabiria the most "spectacular" elements of the film become the actors and the actresses. Instead of visual dominants that grounded the typical camera movements of the times, Pastrone concentrates on intrinsic elements of the story, the emotions of the characters and their subjectivity. The significance of the film for the entire project lies in its transitional nature: Pastrone rearranges the ruling compositional norms of the times from the "spectacular" towards the proairetic normative. His stylistic innovations are

based on existing practices. Having recognized how he can incorporate these norms into a new filmic framework, the early narrative feature-length film, his work provides a link between two filmic paradigms.

#### IV. Camera Movement and Intolerance: back to the Spectacular

In the last section of this chapter, I will examine another widely accepted idea about the connection between the visual style of Cabiria and D. W. Griffith's Intolerance focusing on the role camera movements. I will use the same categories of movement with the character and movement on stationary characters, and movements on spectacular set elements or movements in front of a flat, painted background.

One of the most grandiose American film productions of the 1910s was D. W. Griffith's Intolerance from 1916. Made two years after Pastrone's film, Griffith reportedly was deeply impressed by Cabiria, which made him actually rewrite many of his plans for his own historical epic. According to the introduction to the film on the Kino Video release, Cabiria's "impact has reverberated throughout the history of cinema. It has been said that when he saw *Cabiria*, D. W. Griffith was so overwhelmed that he decided to turn *The Mother and the Law*, then in production into *Intolerance*."<sup>69</sup> Bowser cites a story that goes back to Lionel Barrymore who went to see Cabiria with Griffith, "who

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<sup>69</sup> Cabiria, (Kino Video, 2000) 0:00:30.



remarked, ‘I wonder how they do that goddam thing?’”<sup>70</sup> The thematic similarities between the two productions hide different stylistic and compositional strategies.

For Intolerance’s Babylonian sequence, Griffith wanted to include camera movements that linger on the dramatic sets and make it clear to the viewer that the backdrop to the sequences was not a flat, 2-dimensional painted scenery. He had to construct a crane with the help of which the camera team can move vertically on the Babylonian walls and track in at the same time. Huck Wortman, in charge of the sets in Intolerance, constructed a 150-feet high crane, which “was mounted on six sets of four-wheeled railroad-car trucks and had an elevator in the center.”<sup>71</sup> Director Allan Dwan’s story is slightly different about how the problem of the dolly-crane shots was solved on the set. Dwan recalls that Griffith had him come in to help them to construct a dolly that had an elevator on it.<sup>72</sup> Whatever notion Griffith developed after seeing Pastrone’s film, a close look at the camera movements reveals a very important difference between the two historical epics’ mobile framings.

Intolerance’s four different episodes are interwoven in a parallel editing structure. The concept of intolerance is represented in four different historical periods, and “[t]he symbolic bridging device that interconnects and links together the various stories is the recurring cameo shot of Mae Marsh, his greatest star, as Eternal Motherhood.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Bowser, Eileen. The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915. New York: Scribner, 1994. p. 251. Citation from the Lionel Barrymore file, Braverman Papers, in D. W. Griffith Papers, Museum of Modern Art Film Study Center, undated (1940s).

<sup>71</sup> Bitzer, Billy. His Story Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973. p. 135.

<sup>72</sup> Brownlow, Kevin. The Parade’s Gone By... Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. p. 100-101.

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.filmsite.org/into.html>



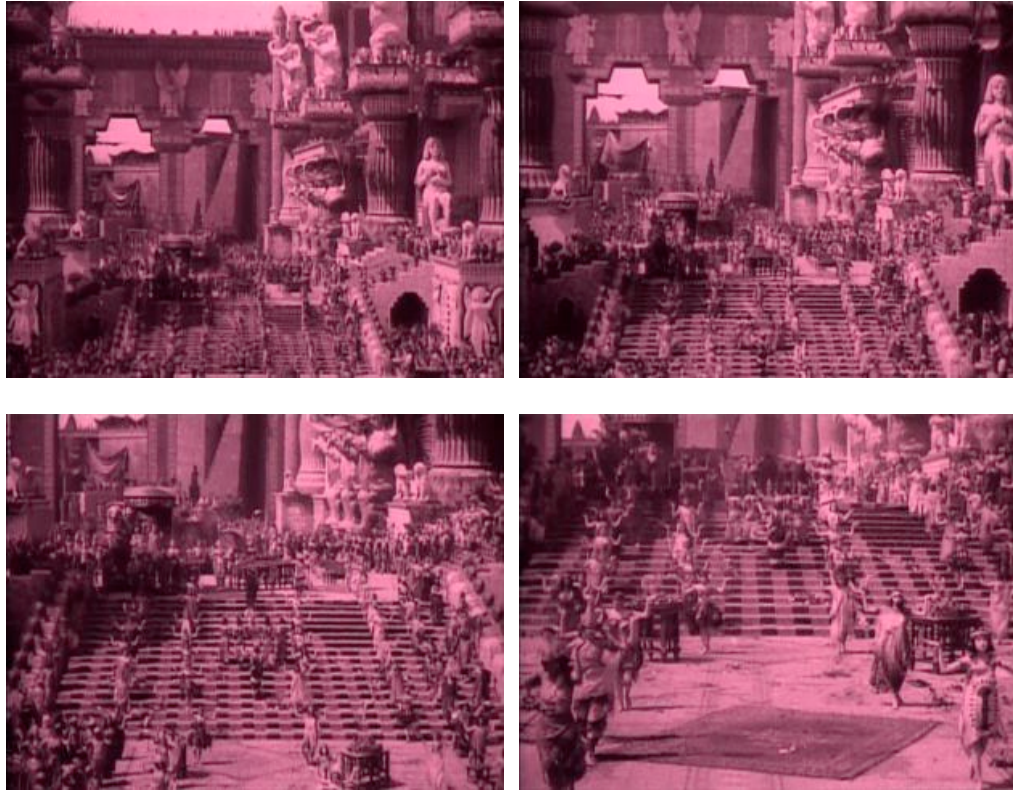
### 1.12 The poster for Intolerance

The different periods are distinguished by different colored tints, but visually the Babylonian episode does not stand out merely because of its tint. The camera movements that occur relatively often in the Babylonian sequence are practically nonexistent in any of the three other episodes. Aside from a few pans and tilts, which all serve the purpose of reframing, there is only one instance in the rest of the film where the mobile frame is used for dramatic purposes: this is the chase sequence at the end of the contemporary episode where the Dear One (Lillian Gish) and the Governor are racing with cars and trains to get to the scene of the execution to save Jenkins. Here a very powerful sense of urgency is conveyed by the speeding vehicles and the sustained tracking shots that follow train and the car.

The tracking shots and the crane shots in the Babylonian episode follow a very similar pattern. Out of the twenty-one mobile shots in this episode, there is none where the camera moves on stationary characters. Seven of the camera movements are the crane shots<sup>74</sup> that were accomplished using the famous dolly-crane.

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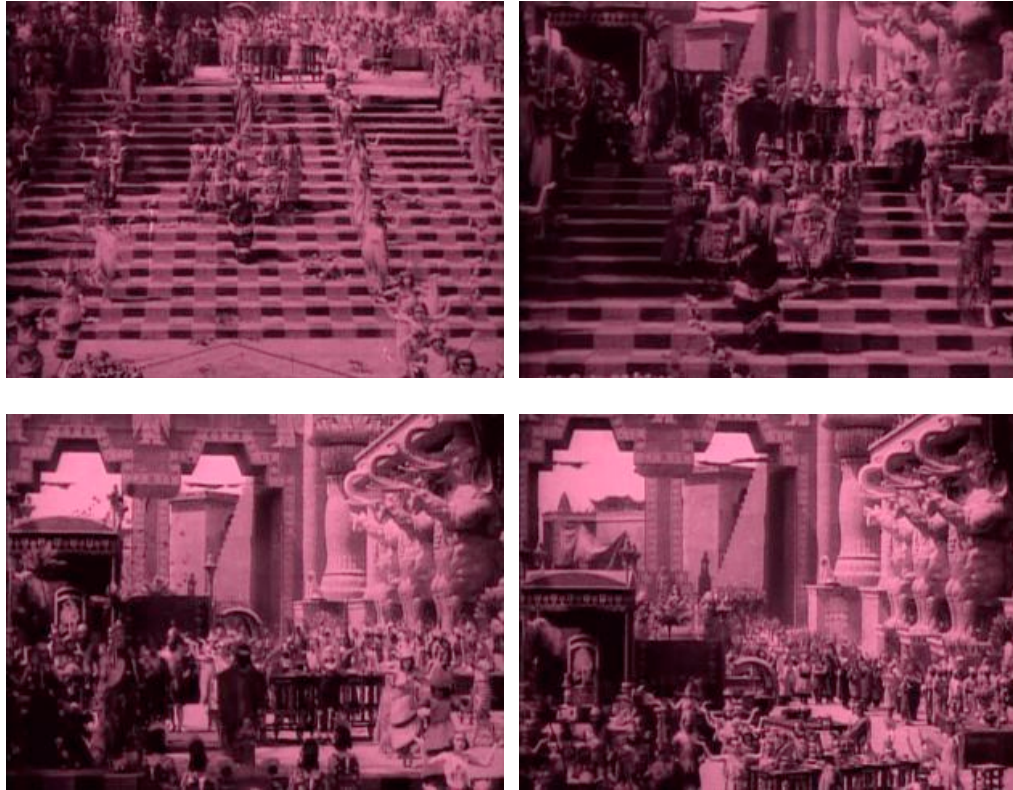
<sup>74</sup> [5], [7], [8], [9], [18], [19].



1.13 Intolerance: Crane shot moving on the huge sets

Here the descending camera also tracks in. The huge sets reveal themselves as real, multi-part 3-dimensional structures. But the camera movement does not exist at this point of the Griffith film to focus our attention on any of the characters: as soon as the camera approaches the dancers on the ground (as can be seen in the fourth frame of 1.14), a quick cut takes the viewer to a two-shot of Belshazzar and his lover.

A few seconds later the camera continues the descending movement, but it stops and starts to rise up above the heads of the dancers.



1.14 Intolerance: In the crane shots, the viewer cannot see facial expressions

Again, the tracking in is combined with a descending crane movement. The interaction between the structures of the set and the slow movements of the dancers makes the shot spectacular, which works best from the long shot distance framing the groups of characters within the same space. The figures are moving, and the proximity between camera and actors and actresses does not allow for the viewer to observe the psychology of the characters.

The remaining camera movements of the film usually follow moving characters in between the sets at the gates of the Babylonian wall<sup>75</sup>, go after Belshazzar who is proceeding between the priests during the ceremonies,<sup>76</sup> travel parallel with the dancers<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> [1], [2].

<sup>76</sup> [3], [4], [6].

or follow racing chariots<sup>78</sup>. The crane shots or the tracking shots on the moving characters do not exist to allow the spectator to observe the motivations or emotions of the characters of the film. Griffith's use of the mobile frame utilizes the technique, it seems, solely to show off the huge and spectacular 3-dimensional sets that were built for the film. As this chapter showed, Pastrone's camera movements also expose the depth of the compositions. But more importantly, they reveal mental states, motivations or attitudes of the characters by taking the camera close to the scenes, usually to a full shot proximity and by remaining with the figures and allowing them some time to express themselves by typical silent-era gestures.

Although Griffith's film came two-and-a-half years after Cabiria, in terms of the economy of its storytelling, the traveling shot's use of functional equivalents does not exploit the possibilities that Pastrone recognized. The huge sets of Babylon signal a return to the usage of the camera movement as spectacular. The 3-dimensionality thesis about the Italian epic interprets Pastrone's mobile visual style from the grounds of the much more widely seen Intolerance. This tweaks the viewer's understanding of the traveling shot's function in Cabiria toward an option that Griffith embraced. In terms of narrative motivation, however, the traveling shots in the Italian film today seems more progressive since on top the aspect of the spectacular, it assigns a dramatic function to camera movements that communicate important story information to the viewer. Thus camera movement becomes a proairetic element in syuzhet alteration.

This project focuses on the relation between normative and figurative uses of the same stylistic elements. A central term in this framework is the notion of *innovation*,

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<sup>77</sup> [10], [11], [12], [20].

<sup>78</sup> [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [21].

which this chapter traced from the cinema of attraction toward the years of transition. According to the hypothesis of the project, figurative codes occur in a context where the basis of normative codes allows the new function of the stylistic element become visible. This chapter showed how the initial normative usage of the tracking camera was developed by Pastrone, which set him apart from typical practice during the cinema of attractions.

Cinema, as many other art forms, has multiple means to express the same information. As Erwin Panofski puts it, the *principle of co-expressibility* guarantees that a piece of information can be articulated on many different levels<sup>79</sup>. Accordingly, the advent of sound did not revolutionize cinematic storytelling, but rather gave filmmakers another channel to convey story material. Co-expressibility provides a basis on which stylistic development can occur: the moving camera can carry new functions since its traditional function (revealing the spectacular) is expressed by other techniques (costumes, sets, etc.). This chapter showed how the traveling shot in Cabiria repeats what the cinema of attraction has achieved in terms of mobility (reveal the spectacular) but also revolutionizes the function of the tracking movement by connecting it with revelations of character psychology: the approaching and retreating camera frames units of the story at the center of which stands the expression of crucial narrative information. Following the logic of easy readability of psychological traits, Pastrone moves the camera in his film on stationary characters instead of following moving characters. This forces the viewer's attention toward the drama by eliminating the distracting aspect of character movement.

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<sup>79</sup> Panoski, Erwin. "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures" Bulletin of the Department of Art and Archeology. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1934.

By the time Pastrone re-contextualizes camera movement in 1913, it already has several assigned functions. In the process of the innovation, these previous norms play an important part as contrasting elements: they render the new norms more visible and emphasize their new role. Pastrone's new norm for camera movement thus becomes more intelligible, but it also underlines that the mobile shots are motivated compositionally. The traveling shot in Cabiria becomes a proairetic code, a causally functioning storytelling device.

## Chapter Two

### **THE UNCHAINED CAMERA:**

#### Murnau and the Mobile Frame

Throughout the 1920s, a large number of European auteur filmmakers left the continent for Hollywood. The American film industry at the time paid close attention to the artistic trends on the old continent and tried to lure several artists to come to work in California. At the same time, the commercial success of several European films made the studios try to replicate them on the American market. But, probably equally importantly, Hollywood film moguls tried to connect the cultural capital that names like Ernst Lubitsch or Victor Sjöström possessed with their own studios' reputation.

The migration of the European filmmakers to Hollywood is a story that includes a few successes that are easily outnumbered by the artistic and commercial "failures." According to Graham Petrie, "[f]or every Alfred Hitchcock or Milos Forman, there are perhaps dozens who sink into oblivion after one or two films, or who return, frustrated and disillusioned, to resume their work in the homelands."<sup>80</sup> To judge successes and failures of directors is a very delicate job. However, it seems safe to assume that at least some émigré filmmakers, who were usually imported for their artistic merits, left a strong stylistic mark on the American artistic milieu that embraced them, independently from their commercial failure or success.

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<sup>80</sup> Petrie, Graham. Hollywood Destinies. European Directors in America 1922-1931. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002. p. IX.



Accordingly, this chapter will focus on two pivotal films of F. W. Murnau, himself an émigré in America. The first of the two, The Last Laugh (1924), was made at Ufa in Germany, and the second, Sunrise (1927), for Fox in Hollywood. The chapter will examine how the shifting normative and figurative codes have influenced the narrative functions of the moving camera. In Murnau's 1924 film, the camera techniques develop from mobile point-of-view shots of the camera as a character toward tracking shots that outline a nondiegetic observer, or the camera as an author. This position remains unfilled across The Last Laugh: there is no character whose presence would justify the movements as diegetic. The shifts between the different positions of the camera are not explained to the viewer. In Sunrise the tactics of camera movements change, and the director carefully constructs mobile shots the status of which made clear to the viewer. However, these changing norms that guide camera movement are connected to the local cultural context within which the director works.

The chapter relies on the notion of the *Doppelgänger*, which originates in literature and philosophy. This idea of the protagonist's or subject's split personality has a rich tradition that cuts across Romanticism. In 19<sup>th</sup> century German culture, however, this theme can be found in a wide variety of cultural artifact than spans from literature to the visual arts. The chapter argues that the theme of the *Doppelgänger* served as a background norm for visual tactics in The Last Laugh. For German audiences, the idea of a "ghostly double" had a tradition that already surfaced in film. As Schlüpmann points out, "*The Student of Prague* reworks the *Doppelgänger* motif, one of the major preoccupations of German romantic literature from Ludwig Tieck to Heinrich Heine."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Schlüpmann, Heide. "The first German art film: The Student of Prague (1913)." In Rentschler, Eric (Ed.). German Film and Literature: Adaptation and Transformations. New York: Methuen, 1986. p.11.

This existing motif allowed for Murnau's camera movements to be read as expressions of the Doppelgänger's presence. The figurative use of the tracking frame in The Last Laugh is based on a normative element: the enigma about the identity of the Doppelgänger, which is a Barthesian hermeneutic function. After this code is established, the director abandons it and moves toward a referential-semantic use of the tracking frame, which becomes apparent via the non-diegetic camera movements. The central argument of this project posits that figurative stylistic functions are based on an interaction of normative uses of the same devices and multiple cultural factors. Sunrise serves as a "negative" case after The Last Laugh: without the Doppelgänger motif, the normative narrative functions of Sunrise do not give rise to more connotative, figurative units.

From numerous cultural factors influencing the formations of style, I will use the idea of the Doppelgänger-motif and the broader concept of the *Umwelt*<sup>82</sup>, as two examples. Murnau's case highlights the normative-figurative dynamic explicitly: when working in Hollywood, he abandons the idea of the non-diegetic, authorial camera, since the motif of the Doppelgänger does not have a rich tradition in American culture as it has in Germany since Romanticism. In Sunrise, the majority of the tracking shots are either clearly attached to diegetic characters or does not belong to any characters at all (and therefore loses its status as point-of-view structure). Without the background of the Doppelgänger motif, the figurative stylistic element is not grounded in an existing cultural norm. Therefore, Murnau's camera movements resort to the techniques that are normatively justifiable. In Sunrise, the figuratively motivated mobile frames of The Last Laugh return to (1) the normatively guided point-of-view tracking shot or (2) function as

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<sup>82</sup> The concept of the *Umwelt* functions as a broad background motif that encompasses much of the films during the German Expressionist era. The *Umwelt* consists of the exteriorization of the character's inner psychological dispositions that are projected onto their environment.

objective-descriptive tracking shots. Consequently, the following case study presents a reversed example of my project's central argument. The gradually established figurative camera movements from The Last Laugh do not continue in Sunrise, where the background motif of the Doppelgänger is not part of cultural consciousness.

What are the major differences between the ways camera movement as a storytelling device was used in the two films in question? This project assumes that the examination of the development of one element in visual style, the traveling shot, across two different national industries, will result in a clearer picture about how the interaction with other cultural and industrial contexts influenced artists and their personal style. The overall plan of this project addresses *normative and figurative* elements in the development of stylistic techniques. I argue that the development of figurative stylistic codes is based on a gradual shift from the established normative elements and their surrounding cultural context. In this section, I show that the figurative element of the non-diegetic double's tracking shot presupposes the existence of the Doppelgänger tradition as a normative background. Without it, the figurative is not based on a norm that allows for the connotative meaning to arise.

In her monograph on Murnau, Lotte Eisner reaches a conclusion about the role of the camera that points out the central relation between the porter's character and mobility of the camera. "Lupu Pick's *entfesselte Kamera* (...) gave Murnau (...) the possibility of finding visual counterparts to the most intimate reactions of the soul (...)"<sup>83</sup> Eisner's argument has become an uncontested thesis about the camera's functions in The Last Laugh. Accordingly,

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<sup>83</sup> Eisner, Lotte. Murnau. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973. p. 155.

[T]he world as it is seen by the porter is within his grasp and in proportion to him: those people who devoutly salute his uniform, the shrews who revile the degraded man by their monstrous laughter, the insensitive manager, the phantom merry-makers who order taxis and dine copiously. They only exist around him, anonymous and abstract, giving relief to his tragedy, seen through his eyes, the camera from time to time indeed ceasing to explore his actions, and become subjective.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, Petrie claims that

[The] combination of subjectivity and objectivity allows us to see all facets of the doorman: his initial pompous self-satisfaction, his deflation, his pathetic attempts to delude others (...) [A]ll of these are seen both from the perspective of others and from within the man himself, so that we are moved steadily toward understanding and sympathy for the human being originally concealed inside the uniform.<sup>85</sup>

What the literature on Murnau's visual style fails to explore is how the camera achieves this goal. The shifting narrative tactics of the film show that Murnau not only composes the camera into the fabula, but also uses this opportunity to display the originating narrating instance of the diegetic world: his own power as the crafter of the film. Murnau's camera movements use the camera-character structure to allow the entrance of the artist into his own text.

## I. The Doppelgänger Motif

German romanticist literature and idealist philosophy share an interest in the crisis of foundations of the Self. Much of the creative and theoretical writings from the 18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Eisner, Lotte. Murnau. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.p. 155.

<sup>85</sup> Petrie, Graham. Hollywood Destinies. European Directors in America 1922-1931. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002. pp. 89-90.

century revolve around the ontological/epistemological relations of the perceiving subject and the perceived object world. As a philosophical movement, German Idealism attempted to bridge rationalism and empiricism. The former intellectual movement held that knowledge could be attained by reason alone, while the latter held that knowledge could be attained by the sense alone. Idealist philosophy and specifically Immanuel Kant attempted to connect these position by claiming that we come to know of facts by the senses (empiricism) but are able to conceptually categorize them though reason (rationalism).

This problem lead to questions about the philosophical grounding of the Self. What is connection between the senses and pure reason? Two influential thinkers of German Idealism, Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte cannot a priori explain the status of self-consciousness. Andrew J. Webber points out that “[w]hile Kant recognizes the logical necessity of the idealistic subject, he finds that any attempts to ground it are turned in circles.”<sup>86</sup> In his Critique of Pure Reason from 1781, Kant calls the numerical identity of the subject a *paralogism* (logical phallacy) of rational psychology and argues that it cannot be upheld.<sup>87</sup> For Fichte, the question about the foundations of the self also proves essential in The Science of Knowing.<sup>88</sup> As he puts it, the theoretical foundations of epistemology, the Self, can be defined only with regard to the other: “[t]he self is posited, asserts a position for itself, only with regard to the ‘Nicht-Ich’ or other.”<sup>89</sup> However, if

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<sup>86</sup> Webber, Andrew J. The Doppelgänger. Double Vision in German Literature. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. p. 27.

<sup>87</sup> Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>88</sup> Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. The Science of Knowing. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.

<sup>89</sup> Webber, Andrew J. The Doppelgänger. Double Vision in German Literature New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. p. 29.

the Self can be only defined with regard to an Other, it loses its a priori nature and transcendental: the Self is split.

The speculative topics of the Idealist thinkers return in German Romanticist literature as well. This connection shows that the crisis of the subjectivity was a widespread phenomenon in German culture after the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Among several other 19<sup>th</sup> century writers, E. T. A. Hoffmann (Der Sandmann), Heinrich Kleist (Amphitryon), Franz Werfel (Mirrorman), Jean Paul (Siebenkäs) or Hofmansthal (Andreas) used protagonists who are host subjects of Doppelgänger's. According to Webber, the Doppelgänger of these writers can be described along a series of premises. First, the phenomenon is predominantly a visual compulsion related to seeing. The Doppelgänger shocks the subject because the subject glances it, but not seeing the Doppelgänger does not mean that the subject has gotten rid of it. The Doppelgänger also operates on the level of language as characters verbalize its emergence, and thus the phenomenon becomes a performance. With the redundancy of its returns and disappearances, the Doppelgänger is characterized by repetition. The Doppelgänger is a split in the Self, and the Other becomes an active agent, which reveals itself in the power-play between the ego and the alter ego. The struggle appears in a form of displacement, directed at the host, who is usually a male subject.<sup>90</sup>

The Doppelgänger theme appears in German film in 1913 with Stellan Rye's The Student of Prague and can be traced to several other German films of the Expressionist era (for example, Wiene's Caligari or Lang's Metropolis). For Lotte Eisner, the motif is a continuation of the literary topics: "(...) German cinema is a development of German

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<sup>90</sup> Webber, Andrew J. The Doppelgänger. Double Vision in German Literature, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. p. 2-5.

Romanticism, and that modern technique [cinema] merely lends visible form to Romantic fancies.”<sup>91</sup> Kracauer sees the Doppelgänger as an expression of socio-historical realities. Cinema’s recourse to romantic motifs is for him a sign of political reactionism of the middle classes that coincides with the collapse of the German Empire.<sup>92</sup>

The recurring phenomenon of the double arises in a theoretical form with Kant and Fichte, and weaves later through Romanticist literature to reemerge in film. What matters for the purposes of this project is the presence of the Doppelgänger motif: it is an existent textual code in German culture. As such, it has a normative function, which serves as a backdrop for the figurative codes of Murnau’s camera movements. The mobile frames in The Last Laugh rely on the Doppelgänger motif so that the traveling camera can appear as double to the protagonist, functioning throughout the film as a semantic, figurative code.

## **II. Camera movement re-emerging: the mobile frame before Murnau**

According to Barry Salt, at the beginning of the 1920s the camera movements that were already in use in the mid-1910s practically disappeared.<sup>93</sup> Filmmakers restrained themselves to parallel tracking shots that included movements with the objects/subjects photographed. As the previous chapter showed, Giovanni Pastrone in his 1913 Cabiria used the tracking shot on stationary characters to make the drama of the characters more

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<sup>91</sup> Eisner, Lotte. The Haunted Screen. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.

<sup>92</sup> Kracauer, Siegfried. From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1947. p.30.

<sup>93</sup> Salt, Barry. Film Style & Technology: History & Analysis. London: Starword, 157.

expressive, so the movement with characters can be regarded in narrative sense as a throwback: the facial gestures, which become expressive in tracking shots on stationary characters cannot be observed in parallel tracking shots.

However, Marcel L'Herbier's 1923 film L'Argent starts a new trend of moving the camera, and several French Impressionist filmmakers picked up the forgotten technique. As Salt remarks,

[I]n France, there were a number of films made in 1923 by the most advanced film-makers which included one or two tracking shots moving with respect to a quasi-static scene, and amongst these I will mention *Au secours* (Abel Gance), *l'Auberge rouge* (Jean Epstein) and *l'Inondation* (Louis Delluc), but at the moment it seems that the really influential line of development comes from the German cinema, and Lupu Pick's *Sylvester*.<sup>94</sup>

Other critics also foreground the role of the French filmmakers in revisiting a more fluid visual style, the return of which later became associated with the German Expressionists. According to David Bordwell,

Despite the [French] Impressionist films' limited circulation abroad, they influenced other filmmakers (...) [T]he freely moving camera used to convey a character's perceptual experience was quickly picked up by German filmmakers, who popularized this technique and usually have gotten credit for inventing it.<sup>95</sup>

The crucial element in this development seems to be the perceptual character of the camera movement. Both the French and the German films that Salt mentions use the mobile shot as a descriptive element of character psychology.

Most commentators agree that the first phase of German Expressionism, the tradition of the *Kammerspielfilm* re-introduced the technique of camera movement. Lupu Pick, the Romanian born filmmaker working in Germany, directed Shattered (originally

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<sup>94</sup> Salt, Barry. Film Style & Technology: History & Analysis. London: Starword p.157.

<sup>95</sup> Bordwell, David. Film History, New York: McGraw-Hill. 1994, p.99.



Scherben, 1921) and Sylvester (aka New Year's Eve, 1924), in which he, based on Carl Mayer's scripts, created an atmosphere where the moving camera took over the role of establishing the milieu surrounding the characters. Pick was supposed to continue the series of the nuanced psychological studies with a third film. However, "[a] disagreement between Pick and Mayer put an end to their plan to form a trilogy of *Kammerspielfilme*, a kind of triptych with *Scherben* and *Sylvester* as the flanking panels of *The Last Laugh*."<sup>96</sup> For the latter film, F. W. Murnau was picked as a director, who had already worked with Mayer on several films before.

Behind the films of Pick and The Last Laugh, Carl Mayer's scripts provide the artistic connection. Mayer included in his scripts concrete instruction about the visual compositions of the shots. The two influential studies on German Expressionism, Siegfried Kracauer's From Caligari to Hitler<sup>97</sup> and Lotte Eisner's The Haunted Screen, agree that pictorial expression of the atmosphere of the *Kammerspielfilm*-trilogy was influenced strongly by Mayer's vision. However, Murnau entering the production of The Last Laugh changed the role of camera movements when compared to Pick's films. Whereas Pick used camera movement to create the already mentioned symbolic atmosphere around the characters, "[u]nder Murnau, the moving camera is never used merely decoratively or symbolically. Consequently every movement, even when his joy at having 'unchained' the camera is apparent, has a precise, clearly-defined aim."<sup>98</sup> This 'aim' is of central interest for this project, which focuses on the narrative function of mobile framing.

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<sup>96</sup> Eisner, Lotte. The Haunted Screen. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.p. 207.

<sup>97</sup> Kracauer, Siegfried. From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film. Princeton University Press. 2004.

<sup>98</sup> Eisner, Lotte. The Haunted Screen. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. p. 213.

This chapter cuts across two different national industries: the two films analyzed are German and American. The question about the development of style across two different industrial backgrounds and filmmaking traditions this chapter sets out to investigate locates the major stylistic differences—through the lens of the moving camera—in artistic development, and adjustment to narrative norms and strategies that the two national cinemas foreground.

### III. The Last Laugh: the participating camera

Murnau's visual style relies heavily on camera movements to create an impression of character psychology. In order to situate the function of the mobile framing in his style, it seems helpful to investigate the notion of *Umwelt* since it played a central part in the art of both Carl Mayer and Lupu Pick, who shot the two predecessors to The Last Laugh, the Kammerspielfilms Shattered and Sylvester. The *Umwelt* is an important cultural reference in most German films of the period. It helps to understand the general aim behind the stylistic strategies of the directors. However, it does not directly influence the specific norms at work like that of the Doppelgänger motif, which had a straight impact on the ways the camera moved in Murnau's German film. Whereas the *Umwelt* is a general cultural reference encompassing the trend in German Expressionism to articulate information by exteriorizing the inner feelings of the characters and projecting them to their surrounding, the Doppelgänger functions as a cultural code that directly impacts the norms for camera movement.

Thus, the tradition of the Kammerspielfilm is a psychological approach to telling stories. Here a large part of the drama does not unfold as a part of the action but rather filters through the interaction between the characters and their surroundings. In this sense, the sets, the props become characters themselves, and they come to life highlighting important aspects of the actors' and actresses' figures. To assign meaning to the objects and in general to the surrounding of the characters, the films use stark symbolism. This allowed Mayer, Pick and Murnau to use few, if any, explanatory titles. But the acting style is also overtly stylized, and the characters become one-dimensional representations of a central idea hinting at their personalities. Very often they perform like robots who merely react to a configuration of facts that seems predetermined by their surrounding. In the Kammerspielfilm, the drama is contained in the environment—which is what the German word *Umwelt* means—and the characters of the stories can't really change the course of the action. As Eisner puts it, “[e]very emotional reaction becomes significantly ponderous, as if the characters were not accustomed to expressing themselves.”<sup>99</sup> In this sense, the interdependence of characters and surrounding makes the course of the action seem predetermined.

In the Kammerspielfilm, the *Umwelt* seems to include the motivational force behind the events, since the characters are simple reflections of the surrounding.

According to Pick's scenario editor Ernst Angel,

The Umwelt (...) is interpolated (...) as accessory rhythm, in or out of tempo, as a symbol reinforcing and amplifying the given facts of the drama: it is introduced in such a manner that in places, at certain decisive moments, the action is apparently halted and can only continue passively, almost secretively, by means of intensification of the *Umwelt*, which is not really independent, so to speak, and which withdraws as the action is taken up again.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Eisner, Lotte. *The Haunted Screen*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. 182.

<sup>100</sup> Eisner, Lotte. *The Haunted Screen*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. p. 188.

It seems that the characters are continuations of their physical surroundings, almost organically connected to it. Narratively, the *Umwelt* serves to fill in the blanks of the characters' personalities: visual style is the means by which this surrounding comes to life and serves as a motivational explanation of character action.

As Eisner puts it, “[f]or Mayer, this mobility of the camera-unit ought to heighten the impression the spectator gets from the *Umwelt*, for it tells him that he is being shown a particular world.”<sup>101</sup> But this world is not just an innocent backdrop to the characters' action. According to Mayer, “[t]he movements of the camera, by a continual shift in depth and height around the events taking place, should convey the vertigo human beings experience when trying to come to terms with their environment.”<sup>102</sup> The fluid visual style and the camera movements thus become elements of style that expresses what the passive characters are unable to.



## 2.1 Lupu Pick, and Carl Mayer with Murnau

<sup>101</sup> Eisner, Lotte. The Haunted Screen, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.. p. 191.

<sup>102</sup> Eisner, Lotte. The Haunted Screen, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.. p. 191.

Murnau in The Last Laugh continues the Kammerspielfilm-tradition in a much more systematic way and transforms the *Umwelt* into a “character” of the film with physical attributes that serves as a psychological double to the protagonist, the porter played by Emil Jannings.

The significance of The Last Laugh in terms of its revolutionary fluid style is pointed out by most commentators on the film. Salt declares that “[i]t was *Der letzte Mann* that really caught the attention of other filmmakers, and led to a very widespread interest in using the mobile camera again.”<sup>103</sup> How the camera movements, most significantly the traveling shots, constitute this “psychological double” to Jannings’ character is not discussed by the literature analyzing the film. In the following, I will address the question of how Murnau uses the traveling shots to transform Jannings’ intentionally flat and one-dimensional figure into a complex narrative study of character psychology.

Murnau’s tracking shots imitate the movements of a real flesh-and-blood personality who seems to be present through the entire film: this personality is a psychological twin of the protagonist of the film. Initially, the film sets up this double as a character of the film. Once the existence of this double is established, the director quickly abandons it to use it as a basis for more authorial technique. This is the point where the movement from the normative technique (the established hermeneutic code interacting with the code of the *Doppelgänger*) toward the figurative (authorial camera movements mirroring character psychology) can be detected. Significantly, the director

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<sup>103</sup> Salt, Barry. Film Style & Technology: History & Analysis. London: Starword, 1992. p. 157.

does not diegetically explain the shifts between the different camera positions. The motif of the *Doppelgänger*, which has a rich tradition in German culture, helps the viewer to interpret the unaccounted switches between the camera as a character, and the camera as an authorial device.

The phantom double to the porter's character played by Jannings carries the task of expressing what the titles could have communicated to the spectators: emotions, reactions and states of mind. However, Murnau was determined not use verbal explanations (i.e. titles) in the film. The visual way of giving depth to the character of the porter partially stems from the concepts of the *Umwelt* and the *Doppelgänger* that the director brought to life with the mobile camera. The looming, impersonal *Umwelt*, the creation which Carl Mayer developed in Pick's *Kammerspielfilms*, becomes in Murnau's hands an ever-present but invisible extension of the artists' flaunted presence that significantly deepens the viewer's impressions of Jannings' figure. The connection between the physical location of the camera and that of the actor within the shot is always determined by how the spatial relation expresses the inner, psychological world of the porter. In other words, the camera becomes the Other to the Self of the protagonist. This chapter will trace how the mobile camera uses the notion of the camera-character as a basis for latter omniscient narrative tactics that become self-conscious displays of the artists' command over his material.

The camera movements in the beginning of the film (1) establish a physical-optical connection between Jannings and the camera by traveling up to the figure of the porter. This will establish a normative (hermeneutic) base, which the director can expand by moving toward the figurative functions. It seems that for a while in the film, the notion

of the camera-character is continued where the (2) traveling shots are attached to diegetic characters of the narrative. However, this connection later is abandoned, and the anthropomorphic camera gives way to an omniscient camera that flaunts the director's ability to express character psychology without relying on any diegetic figure's visual point-of-view. Accordingly, the traveling shots later (3) fill in a nondiegetic point-of-view looking at Jannings mirroring his psychological condition, (4) imitate a nondiegetic point-of-view looking at Jannings by providing a contrast to his psychological condition and (5) serve as a mobile device that visualizes the perception of the protagonist. The latter three options are not justified as visions of anyone in the diegetic world. The camera-character in the course of the film gives way to a camera-author: a figurative trope. In The Last Laugh, Murnau does not explain how the shifts between these several camera positions occur: the switched are not accounted for diegetically. However, the existing motif of the Doppelgänger, the Other to the Self, is woven into the style of the film, which continues a prevailing tradition of German Expressionism and thus helps the viewer to see the authorial camera movements as an expression of the Doppelgänger's presence.

Murnau's narration becomes increasingly flaunted as the film progresses. The camera-character's shift toward the camera-author illustrates the film's reliance on the referential-semantic code's figurative form. Roland Barthes defines the referential textual code as the one that points to cultural knowledge or a tradition that is commonly shared.<sup>104</sup> The director flaunting his capability to display character emotion simply by camera movement would not be comprehensible without the rich tradition of the actual

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<sup>104</sup> Barthes, Roland, S/Z. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974, p. 16-18.

split personalities of romantic protagonists. The referential code is based on the normative motif of the Doppelgänger, which in turn is woven through the texture of the film as a recurring semantic unit.

The Last Laugh begins with a mobile shot [1]<sup>105</sup> that in visual terms establishes the connection between the porter and the camera. According to widespread convention in narrative film, the characters in the beginning of the story are frequently introduced with the camera moving in closer on them (or cutting to a closer shot). In the opening shot of the film, Murnau makes full use of this convention but also modifies it by giving a physical presence to the camera that “walks up” to Jannings’ character, the porter, who, at this early point of the film, is still in full command of the operations at the entrance of the Hotel Atlantic.

The descending elevator opens up the film with a view of the elegant lobby of the hotel, and several guests walk across the shot. In the composition the camera, which slides downwards behind the bars of the elevator shaft in a crane-like movement, gives the impression of constraint.




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<sup>105</sup> The numbers refer to the Appendix that gives a full list of the tracking camera movements in The Last Laugh and Sunrise.





### 2.2 The Last Laugh: The descending elevator

Once the elevator's movement stops, the camera literally seems to burst out of into the lobby with the door opening. Here, going against all rules of the invisibility of the style, Murnau will literally acknowledge the presence of the camera-character by making the bellboy salute it.



### 2.3 The Last Laugh: The bellboy salutes to the camera

As the camera is out in the lobby, it immediately approaches the porter in a slow frontal tracking shot [2] moving towards the revolving door, behind which the busy porter is seen for the first time. He escorts guests in the pouring rain with an umbrella to

their cars and takes care of their luggage. The mobile frame establishes a direct connection that Murnau will continue throughout the entire film: first of all, the saluting bellboy motif is repeated when the camera arrives to the revolving door. Not only is once again this presence of the humanized mobile camera acknowledged by the gesture of the bellboy, but at the very same moment the porter himself turns around, to “greet” the camera that just arrived by looking right back towards it. Early on in the film, the director establishes the presence of an invisible observer inside the diegetic world of the film. At this point, the crisis in the porter’s life is not yet visible; therefore the camera movements create a harmony between the subject and his double.



2.4 The Last Laugh: During a tracking shot, both the bellboy and the porter “greet” the arriving camera

The idea behind Murnau’s humanized camera is explained by the director himself in a note from 1922 or 1923 that Lotte Eisner found, which is quoted in the biography of the director. Contemplating the possibilities of unlimited camera movement, Murnau explains that

[o]nly with this essential instrument shall we be able to recognize the new possibilities, including one of the most promising, the ‘architectural’ film. What I refer to is the *fluid architecture of bodies with blood in their veins moving through mobile space* [italics mine]; the interplay of lines rising, falling, disappearing; the encounter of surfaces, stimulation and its opposite, calm: construction and collapse; the formation and destruction of a hitherto almost unsuspected life; all this adds up to a symphony made up of the harmony of bodies and the rhythm of space; the *play of pure movement*, vigorous and abundant. All this we shall be able to create when the camera has at last been de-materialized.<sup>106</sup>

Here the director clearly goes beyond the Mayerian idea of the *Umwelt* that was visualized in Lupu Pick’s work. The notion of the architectural film is the mutual interaction of the lines and surfaces of the sets with that of human bodies as they move through space. The emphasis here is on the idea that the camera is not merely an instrument, the function of which is the mechanical recording of events. Rather, according to Murnau, it has to be utilized as a living, organic instrument, which in the process gets de-instrumentalized, or in the director’s words, de-materialized. Clearly these thoughts foreshadow the shift from the camera as a participator towards the camera as the continuation of the author in the world of the film: it becomes a semi-diegetic character that plays the part of giving depth to other characters’ personalities in the film.

Murnau establishes the camera as a character (or a Doppelgänger) that has a physical presence once more early on in the film, and again through movement. So far, the tracking shots still function as a normative-hermeneutic device, which keeps the viewer guessing about the subject of the shot. This time, the camera is attached to a diegetic character in the film whose point-of-view does not justify what the camera sees. The morning when the porter returns to work, he walks up to the entrance of the hotel just to spot the new man hired for his former position. The switch is beautifully visualized by

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<sup>106</sup> Eisner, Lotte. Murnau. University of California Press. 1973. p. 84.

a circling handheld shot [3] in the revolving door as the old and the new porters switch places: Jannings walks into the hotel and the new porter steps out. Murnau combines the medium shot of the protagonist from the de-materialized camera's position (which overlaps with the new porter's location) with that of Jannings' point-of-view shots. While the camera movement's rhythm establishes the two characters as two figures who circle around each other as if they were just about to fight, the new porter does not even look at his adversary: the camera does it for him. Here the camera takes over the role of reacting in a conflict that has just emerged: the initial balance between the porter and his double begins to fade. The estranged and shocked Jannings' humiliation becomes more powerful by the ignorance that his successor shows. This feeling is emphasized to the viewer by the last segment of the circling shot that cuts back to the startled protagonist. Each of the three segments of the circling handheld shot is exactly three seconds long, so the physical symmetry of movements in the revolving door is mirrored in the temporal structure of the scene.





2.5 The Last Laugh: The camera is attached to the new porter, but he ignores Jannings

Capturing the moving reflections of the lights of the lobby and also the new porter's own reflection in the window pane makes this double-play with the old and the new porters even more intriguing. For a moment, the viewer can entertain the question: which characters or reflections are real, and which are their doubles or Doppelgänger? The camera here follows the new porter through the revolving door, but that person seems fully unaware of this. Murnau plays with justifying the camera's position with a real character of the film, but also showing us that very same character as a disinterested outsider to the event. Here the shift from the camera-character toward the omniscient authorial camera starts to surface. The positioning of the camera (which in itself shows a simple point-of-view structure) starts to foreshadow the fall of the porter: it can be interpreted as Jannings' recognition of his own situation; he has been replaced. The camera is looking back at him from the opposite side of the revolving door, and the circling movement expresses the change in spatial terms. To use Murnau's own words, "all this adds up to a symphony made up of the harmony of bodies and the rhythm of

space.”<sup>107</sup> Positioning Karl Freund’s mobile camera as a de-materialized recording tool by using elements of the mise-en-scene to point out its very presence, the director disrupts the transparency of the style of his own film. This disruption allows him to create a double play with the diegetic reality or un-reality of the camera as a participant. As two-fold as this technique is, it introduces a groundbreaking method to let style and the performances of the characters interact.

Again the notion of a Doppelgänger moves into the foreground. The initial idea of the camera-character connection sets up the normative, hermeneutic code: who is the character the position of whom the camera occupies? Are we witnessing the porter’s life from the point-of-view of a story participant? Murnau composed the shots in this part of the film so that this enigma is set up: the tracking shots imitate the motions of a real character. Thus the director creates a normative basis, on which the later, figurative tracking shots can build on. Not filling in the subject position in these early tracking shots also evokes in the spectator the motif of the Doppelgänger, that of the split Self. The hermeneutic code interacting with the cultural norm allows for a gradual shift towards more authorial strategies of camera movement.

The increasing omniscience of the camera is demonstrated in The Last Laugh in several different ways. Not only can the camera occupy any diegetic figure’s position at any time to reflect back on the protagonist, but it also freely moves across objects like a ghost in ways that normal characters would not be able to. Murnau gradually leaves behind the already established idea of the camera as a character in the diegesis and moves toward the figurative trope of a camera-author without explaining how the shifts between

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<sup>107</sup> Eisner, Lotte. Murnau. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1973. p. 84.

the different positions occur. In a slow forward tracking [4] shot during the conversation scene between Jannings and the manager of the hotel when the former is assigned to his new position, the camera floats across a glass door that frames the figure of the degraded porter. This movement connects the prison bar-like metal frames in the glass door with the porter's psychological condition: the shot makes the viewer feel like she is visiting a prisoner. The mobile frame creates a rhythm that expresses a concrete exteriorized psychological condition.

But this de-materialized omniscient camera movement can also remind us that it has the power to display human attributes, which speaks of its unrestricted nature. After Jannings has to take off the porter's spectacular coat, his body seems crushed without the protective and authoritarian uniform. To emphasize this change, the camera slowly tracks out, [5] making the screen surface he occupies smaller. However, this movement is combined with a slow tilt down: the porter looks down at his own body as if he were naked without the uniform. As Jannings lifts his head again, the movement is echoed with a tilt up. The composition here imitates the characters' own train of thought by moving the head of the camera in the same way as the protagonist's head moves, but the tracking out camera also disconnects the movement from Jannings' own perception and rather shows him from an outside observer's point-of-view.

Murnau also plays with the speed of his camera movements and uses this parameter of his style as an expressive device. Here the tracking movement's pace and the speed of the protagonist's movement create a contrast that the director utilizes. After an ill-fated attempt to prove that he is fit for the job of the porter, a maid escorts Jannings to the lavatories. The actor uses his body to show his degradation: his body posture

changes significantly as he is assigned to the humiliating job in the restroom. But the speed of his movements changes significantly as well. He seems to crawl slowly along the floor of the hotel between the on-looking employees, following the maid. She realizes this and even turns around briefly just to see whether the old man is still behind her. Here the camera tracks forward [7] parallel to the hotel corridor after the two characters, starting from behind Jannings. As if the camera were impatient, the slowness of the two becomes too much to bear, and it passes by them on the left. Thus the maid and Jannings slide out of the frame on the right side, and the tracking advances to a corner to reveal a large cupboard that contains the appropriate clothing for the protagonist's new job: a plain white frock and some towels he will have to take down with him to the cloakroom. For Jannings' character, obviously everything that brings him further away from his glorious former job becomes a source of embarrassment. Accordingly, the quick camera movement on one hand emphasizes the slowness in the movements of the protagonist, but also underlines another stage in the downfall of the porter's fate. It is as if the camera were a character next to Jannings, and the contrasts or differences between their movements is used to create a rhythm by comparing speeds and making visible the protagonist's situation. With the phantom-like camera, all these aspects of porter's transformation become more expressive.

According to the Barthesian typology, the camera here creates a semantic code: it builds the larger theme of the porter's humiliation by weaving it all the way through the story. As this code moves into the foreground, Murnau starts to shift from a camera character towards the camera author in a non-flaunted manner. The camera becomes a tool in the hands of the filmmaker that will provide the spectator with authorial



comments. Thereby, the director gives the viewer a fuller understanding of the psychological nuances in the porter's story: the camera movements function as the director's Doppelgänger within the text of the film. The shift from the normative camera-character towards this figurative, semantic trope is not made explicit at all. On the contrary; Murnau plays with the techniques by overlapping the two functions.

This becomes apparent when Jannings steals back his uniform from the manager's office. As his stooped figure carefully sneaks over the main lobby of the hotel with the uniform, he is trying not to wake up the bellboys and the receptionists at the counter. Immediately as he exits the manager's office, he stops for a second to look around and starts to walk towards the entrance. However, Murnau's impatient camera starts to track [9] very quickly towards the counter with the sleeping employees of the hotel. Once again, Jannings slides out of the frame on the right, since the camera is much faster than he is. As the tracking shot has framed the counter with the unaware receptionists, it suddenly stops to allow the protagonist to catch up with his phantom camera.





2.6 The Last Laugh: The track passes by Jannings who later sneaks through the frame

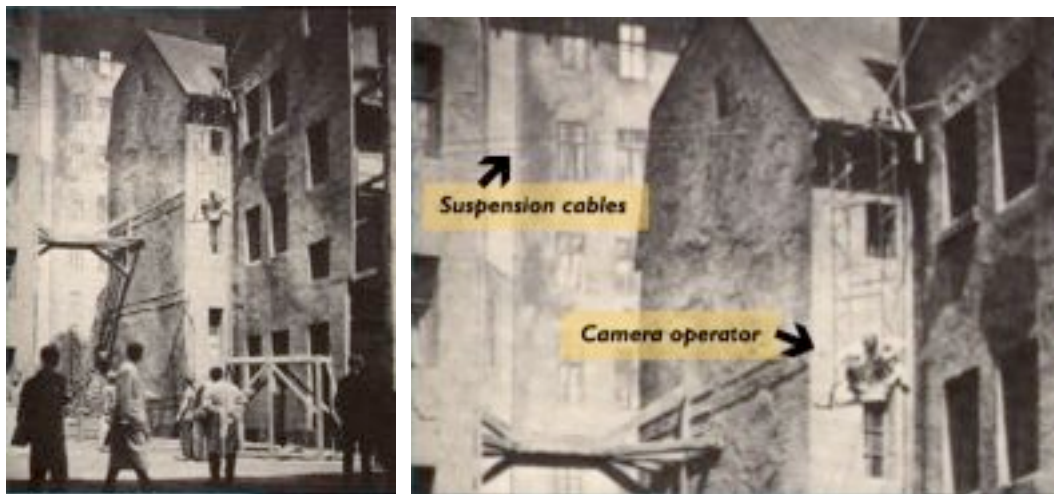
The camera's speed here becomes a tool that is used similarly to the previous example in which it emphasized the tragic slowness of the broken Jannings character, but here it creates a dramatically different effect in the spectator. The quickly moving camera-double produces a rhythm telling the viewer that Jannings needs to get out of the hotel lobby quickly so that he is not caught stealing the coat. His movements are again too slow in contrast with the camera's speed, but not out of dramatic necessity. The tension here arises out of our perception of the mobile camera being a sidekick to Jannings. Consequently, the camera (and the viewer) is trying to leave the scene as quickly as possible, but the protagonist moves slower, so the tracking shot slows down and then comes to a complete stop to allow the porter literally to sneak through the frame as a thief. Here the contrast between the two different speeds establishes a rhythm that allows Murnau to suggest to the viewer that the camera is indeed is a participant in the action. As this example shows, the position of the camera can be normatively interpreted as that of a character whose identity the viewer is unaware of, but it becomes increasingly clear that the director is not interested in answering the hermeneutic Barthesian question

(which character is behind those camera movements). Much rather, the tracking shots allow Murnau to insert his own persona as an artist in the text. This shift allows the mobile frames to create the semantic code: that of the authorial camera expressing character psychology through figurative stylistic elements.

The famous wedding party sequence of The Last Laugh contains four camera movements within two and a half minutes that all bring to the foreground the role of the active camera in conveying psychological conditions through posing in the role of Jannings' perceptual double: the omniscient authorial device here does not move the camera to create a contrast to the protagonist but to express how he wants to think of himself. At his daughter's wedding, the former porter gets drunk. The expressive acting here does not leave any doubt about the protagonist's condition: the movements, the gestures communicate his state of mind. What is new in Murnau's representation of the former porter's actions and impressions is how the camera movement expresses his perceptions. In earlier cases, we have seen that the camera movement can be a sidekick of the porter urging him to move quicker or can be an impartial observer looking at the degraded porter's "naked" body without his uniform, or can even be attached to other characters of the film without them being aware of it. The narrative vantage point is in constant flux. In the wedding party sequence, the camera takes over the visualization of Jannings' perception.

The first camera movement of the mentioned sequence is probably the most famous and best documented mobile framing of the film. Here the drunk Jannings hears the sound of the trumpet from the street below. His unreal perception is amplified by a quick tracking shot [11] that moves from the instrument, the trumpet, on street level to

the window on the second floor. A cut then reveals Jannings in the window watching the musicians. The shot imitates the eyeline-match in a point-of-view shot with an impossible movement of the subject. The tracking shot was realized by suspending a cable between the street level and the window above on the set and putting the camera on a platform hanging from the cable. Here Murnau visualized how a sudden outburst of sound travels across space towards the protagonist's altered mind. Posing as the protagonist's own perception, the mobile camera expresses here the intensity of the trumpet's sounds.



2.7 The camera suspended from a cable records the traveling sound of the instrument

This movement probably more effectively than any other tracking shot of the film exemplifies how the camera, independently from Jannings but still connected to him, serves as a double to the protagonist. The traveling sound in the composition connects the drunk porter to what and, more importantly, how he perceives.



## 2.8 The Last Laugh: The filmic synaesthesia is created by mixing the visual and auditive channel

Murnau composes a filmic synaesthesia: sound expressed by visuals mixes two sensory channels. The sensory experience is defined in terms of another sense, the synthesis of visual and auditive material. Needless to say, the remarkable aspect of this filmic trope is the fact that it is realized within a silent film.

The camera-as-Jannings'-perception concept continues with a shot where Murnau and Freund put the drunk protagonist on one end of a swing and the camera on the other. Here the circling movement [12] rhymes with the revolving door's path earlier in the film. The swing itself turns towards the left and the right. The camera is literally Jannings' double "sitting" on the opposite end of the swing. This movement is repeated

in a slightly different format: as a point-of-view shot of the porter. Here the omniscient camera-phantom becomes invisible. As opposed to the swing shots in *Variety*,<sup>108</sup> where the movement is a pure attraction, here Murnau flaunts his ability to establish a point-of-view structure and with a simple cut to interrupt it immediately. The director uses the “illogical” cut in the middle of a dream to show off with the omnipotent camera. The connection between the movement of the swing-shot in the wedding party scene and the revolving door is reinforced when Jannings falls asleep. He sees a dream about the revolving door that plays such a powerful symbolic role in the film by visualizing the reversal of his fate from a respectable porter to a cloakroom attendant. But the dream unfolds in an ironic way, since in the tracking shot [13] towards the revolving door—bathed in surreal light coming from inside the building—Jannings sees himself at the entrance of the hotel at his old post. This connects two elements of the dream: his posing at the entrance and later his returning home from the job in the most spectacular way. The author, once again via camera movement, connects two separate points of the fabula. The figurative element moves to the foreground: the theme of the fantastic, glorious return surfaces thus creating a semantic sub-code woven through the text of the film: in his dream the protagonist still fantasizes about returning to the hotel. Thus, the author’s manipulative presence is embodied in the tracking shots.

In the second part of his dream, he returns to his apartment block: a dissolve takes him from the entrance of the hotel to his home. He holds a heavy piece of luggage up in the air proving that he is still capable of taking care of his old job. Murnau uses a double exposure to copy the revolving door on the shot showing the court of his apartment block.

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<sup>108</sup> Dir.: Dupont, Ewald André, 1925.

As the 71-seconds-long handheld shot [14] starts, Jannings' point-of-view changes into that of the participating camera-phantom, providing a concrete visual connection for a couple of seconds between the two. Murnau quickly reestablishes the camera-character function here.



2.9 The Last Laugh: Jannings' point-of-view becomes that of the camera as the walks through the revolving door

But the protagonist's' and the camera's ways soon part. Jannings puts on his porter-show to the amusement of his neighbors, in which the camera-double acts like a circus announcer following Jannings and drawing the onlookers' attention to his act.

After Jannings walks through the revolving door, he finds himself in the middle of a dinner, which is a dream-equivalent of his daughter's wedding party, this time taking place in the courtyard of the apartment block. The shot is slightly out-of-focus reminding the viewer that she is still in the protagonist's dream. The handheld camera rocks in all possible directions, thus imitating the point-of-view of a very real (possibly also drunk) companion of Jannings walking with him around the court. The camera looks around at the crowd, which includes characters from both realms of the porter's life. The wedding guests include not only his neighbors but also very fine-dressed ladies and gentlemen, who are undoubtedly not living in the same complex with him but are rather from the hotel. The camera here connects the gazes of the on-looking crowd with Jannings's act by completing two circles that start and end with the protagonist. As irregular as the rocking movement of the handheld shot is, these connections are established twice in perfect symmetry. After the camera has completed a circle around the cheering guests and has returned to the protagonist in a full shot, it starts over and repeats the full cycle once again. In both moments Jannings can be seen in a full shot with the heavy luggage still in his hands up in the air; he is in the center of the frame with the wedding crowd around him. Then he tosses the luggage up in the air, he bows and salutes the guests. When he catches the luggage and continues the show, the second circle of the handheld shot starts. Here the mobile frame carries a function that clearly goes beyond the idea of the normative camera-character: the director freely switches back and forth between different camera positions without referencing the status of the shots. On the basis of the *Doppelgänger* motif, the frequent shifts result in the notion of a figurative camera-author, who omnisciently connects specific parts of the narration, mirrors the psychological and



even the physiological condition of the porter and also exteriorizes his desires. At the core of the Doppelgänger motif stands the characteristic that this double can show up any time at any place. Romantic literature favored this theme because it foregrounded the incalculable nature of the Doppelgänger. Murnau taps into this convention, since his camera repeats the erratic behavior of the literary double-ancestor: like the Doppelgänger's, the status of his mobile shots cannot be predicted at all.



2.10 The Last Laugh: The camera, as a circus announcer, completes two circles around the porter's act

It is apparent that the mobile camera in Murnau's film functions first as a double to the Jannings' character and later transforms into an authorial instance that displays the

artist's omniscient control over his material. This progress is signified by the changing narrative functions of the traveling shot. First, the normative tactic of the mobile camera (1) establishes a physical-optical connection between the two by traveling up to the figure of the porter, or (2) it is attached to diegetic characters of the film. Both of these techniques function as hermeneutic codes in the film: they set up the question about the subject of the tracking frames. After this *enigma* is thoroughly established, the director moves on to more functionally more complex forms of the tracking shot. The mobile frame thus figuratively imitates (3) a nondiegetic point-of-view looking at Jannings mirroring his psychological condition, (4) or a nondiegetic point-of-view by providing a contrast to his psychological condition and (5) serves as a mobile device that visually exteriorizes the perception of the protagonist. The remaining camera movements of the film can be classified according to these functions.<sup>109</sup>

Apparently, the camera-as-a-character in Murnau's film fulfills different functions in narrative terms. However, a central aim for the director seems to have been the displaying of several different narrative tactics in one film: the narrator's position throughout the entire film is in flux. By using the mobile camera as a device that constantly comments on the events unfolding, the verbal explanatory titles are not necessary for the audience's understanding of the plot. This technique connects The Last Laugh with the Kammerspielfilm-tradition: "[a]s in *Sylvester* and *Scherben*, the absence of titles gives rise to a succession of shots in which the action progresses by purely visual means."<sup>110</sup> But the nonverbal conveying of information is much more complex in The Last Laugh than in Pick's films. The process in which a humanized, anthropomorphic

<sup>109</sup> (1): [1], [2] (2): [3], [21] (3): [4], [5], [6], [8], [13], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20], [21], [24], [26], [29], [30] (4): [7], [9], [14], [22], [23], [25], [27], [28] (5): [10], [11], [12].

<sup>110</sup> Eisner, 1969: 207.

camera changes into an omniscient narrative device shows that, for Murnau, the camera is not just a character in the text. Much rather, the device is the author's stand-in in the text, that in Barthes typology is a semantic code woven through the text of the film. The director shows how the tracking camera's status can change even within one scene from normative to figurative (like in the wedding scene): if the culturally prevalent motif of the Doppelgänger supports the recurrent shift of the camera's position, the audience will pick up the traces left by the author and constructs a semantic code. This latter code in turn proves to be the double of the omniscient storyteller, Murnau. This analysis on the different forms of connections established by visual means between the porter and the camera explored the concrete patterns of the relations between the camera-phantom and the protagonist.

In exteriorizing the porter's psychology, Murnau picks up the tradition of the Doppelgänger and uses it to express very subjective mental states. In The Last Laugh, the German filmmaker experiments with narrative tactics that establish a certain subjectivity of an invisible, nonetheless diegetic character occupying the POV of the mobile shots only to disrupt it in the course of the film. This introduces a development allowing the viewer to interpret the later expressive camera movements as ones that are based on subjectivity. However, this subjectivity has a dissolved origin, which creates a very flaunted and omniscient narration so typical for the Kammerspielfilm and its continuation in Murnau's work. The norms of the film can be interpreted as ones that follow a certain intrinsic logic: only the establishing of the camera's character status allows for an interruption of the mentioned position. The film moves toward a more and more figurative usage of the moving camera: the norms of the tracking frame abandon the

camera-character connection set up initially and move toward a referential-semantic Doppelgänger, which becomes the omniscient personality of the director himself. Murnau's interruption of the camera-character position is based on the introduction of an artistic norm, which is gradually modified in the course of The Last Laugh and via the Doppelgänger motif becomes a self-conscious figurative expression. Like the Romanticist notion of the unpredictable double that appears and disappears suddenly, Murnau's figurative camera movements constantly shift their position to create a visual equivalent of the originally literary Doppelgänger.

#### **IV. Sunrise: camera movement integrated**

In the following, I will apply these categories to Murnau's first American film, Sunrise (1927) to see what type of connections exist between the two films and whether there are continuities in regard of the visualization of inner mental states of the characters. The remainder of the chapter also sets out to investigate the question about the traveling shot's integration into the narrative structure of Sunrise.

Murnau's work bears important stylistic marks that are apparent in his early work, but with his 1924 film it became evident for the American filmmaking community that his ability to express character psychology via purely visual means was unprecedented. Despite the very common resistance of both American audiences and critics to European films that are often described as "morbid and depressing," studios had eventually reached

the conclusion that “the easiest way to meet foreign challenge was to appropriate the services of the major talents responsible for it (...)”<sup>111</sup>

Murnau himself accepted William Fox’s offer to come to Hollywood in 1926, after completing Faust at Ufa. Interestingly, he did not bring with himself his long-time artistic partner, cinematographer Karl Freund, with whom he worked on the majority of his German films, just as on The Last Laugh. Freund, however, was to move to Hollywood himself a few years later. In his first American film, Sunrise, Murnau collaborated with Charles Rosher and Karl Struss. Rosher had studied the German Expressionistic style at Ufa for a year, which explains Murnau’s confidence in bringing him in. Struss had been a camera operator in at least one film that was shot by Rosher in Hollywood,<sup>112</sup> and the two had a very productive working relationship. On Sunrise, though, Rosher was ill for several weeks when shooting began, so during a large part of the film’s shooting Struss was the actual director of photography.<sup>113</sup> According to John Bailey, the majority of the most famous shots of the film, like the long traveling shot in the marsh or the tram ride to the city, were actually conceived and executed by Struss.

When Murnau signed a contract with William Fox in 1926, the conditions were more than favorable for him to make a film for the American studio. According to Petrie “[t]he terms of the contract appear to have been remarkably generous, with Murnau being given completely free hand in the selection of the subject (...)”<sup>114</sup> Fox promised no interference and more than enough funding and “[Murnau] was monarch of all he

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<sup>111</sup> Petrie, Graham. Hollywood Destinies. European Directors in America 1922-1931. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, p. 11.

<sup>112</sup> Rosher suggested Struss to Murnau for Sparrows (1926). The two cameramen knew each other from a 1912 project entitled Bermuda: Nature’s Fairyland where Rosher provided some footage to Struss.

<sup>113</sup> John Bailey’s commentary on the Criterion’s Sunrise recounts the working relationship of Rosher and Struss.

<sup>114</sup> Petrie, Graham. Hollywood Destinies. European Directors in America 1922-1931. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, p. 91.

surveyed, and it was as absolute dictator, with more than ample money at his disposal, that he began the preparatory work for *Sunrise*.<sup>115</sup> Fox speculated that Murnau's American film would allow him to recast Fox as a studio that produces prestige films.

Although financially not a successful film in America, The Last Laugh was a huge critical hit. This factor was crucial for Fox. He hoped that he could turn the German filmmaker's critical success into a financial hit. The trade press raved about the Murnau's arrival: "F. W. Murnau, famous German director, has just arrived in Hollywood with a great fanfare of trumpets. The film colony is wining him and dining him (...)"<sup>116</sup> Fox's strategy was to build on the cultural capital that the director's name possessed. He used the press to introduce the German director to the filmmaking community, and he pointed out that Murnau will be able to continue his artistic work in America. Even the director echoed this opinion: "I accepted the offer to Hollywood because I think one can always learn and because America gives me the opportunity to develop my artistic aims."<sup>117</sup> For Fox Sunrise was to be a sign of future A-productions with big name artists.

If one compares the visual style of The Last Laugh and Sunrise, it is apparent that both films include a large number of camera movements. "In *Sunrise*, as in *The Last Laugh*, Murnau was primarily concerned with devising methods to achieve what he had called 'photographing thought' (...)" As he told McCall's Magazine, "To me the camera represents the eye of a person, through whose mind one is watching the events of the screen. It must follow characters at times to difficult places (...)"<sup>118</sup> However, scholarly work on Murnau's oeuvre includes strong evaluative statements when putting the two

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<sup>115</sup> Eisner, Lotte. Murnau. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 168.

<sup>116</sup> Lane, Tamar. "The Last Laugh is on Hollywood" Motion Picture Magazine New York, November, 1926

<sup>117</sup> Eisner, Lotte. Murnau. p. 167.

<sup>118</sup> Quoted in Petrie, Graham. Hollywood Destinies. European Directors in America 1922-1931. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002. p. 94.

films side by side. According to Petrie “[i]n many respects, *Sunrise* goes beyond *The Last Laugh* in presenting thought and emotion visually (...)”<sup>119</sup> Lotte Eisner goes much further claiming that *Sunrise* “is Murnau’s most powerful and advanced film, far surpassing *The Last Laugh*.”<sup>120</sup> Neither of the two authors really elaborates on their claims what this superiority means. I suspect that they favor Murnau’s American film because the techniques he uses are less flaunted or visible. In the following I will apply the categories of camera-character and camera-author and visual externalization of psychological states to the mobile shots of *Sunrise* to see how the notion of “photographing thought” has changed in Murnau’s art between the two films.

The two films include almost the exact same number of tracking shots: in *The Last Laugh* there are thirty traveling shots, in *Sunrise*, thirty-two. Murnau’s fluid visual style, however, became much more integrated into the narrative of the film. In *The Last Laugh*, the camera movements draw attention to themselves: they fulfill the role of the double to the protagonist or a camera that personifies the author himself. Murnau often moves back and forth between the two positions of the camera without providing any diegetic justification. In *Sunrise*, Murnau seems to try to rationalize the movements of the camera with diegetic characters’ points-of-view, which, obviously, still function as descriptions of the characters’ states of mind. Traveling shots in the director’s latter film also play with in-shot shifts of camera-character and camera-author. This ambiguity is continued by connecting the point-of-view of the camera to a character in the lengthy tracking shots. Finally, however, the shifts are explained to the viewer by mise-en-scene or character movement. The camera’s position ultimately turns out to be that of a diegetic

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<sup>119</sup> Petrie, Graham. *Hollywood Destinies. European Directors in America 1922-1931*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002. p. 94.

<sup>120</sup> Eisner, Lotte. *Murnau*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973. p. 168.

character. This allows the techniques to be better integrated into the structures of the narrative. The normative use of the director's camera movements did not develop toward figurative techniques like in The Last Laugh. Murnau's artistic development between the two films in question shows a smoother assimilation of his authorial camera movements into a narrative style that is becoming increasingly readable. The director's innovations become integral elements of a storytelling technique that is preferred by Hollywood.

Just as important is the status of the Doppelgänger motif, which is a culturally specific formation surfacing predominantly in continental (mostly German) philosophy and art. In American culture the intellectual context did not facilitate the interaction between camera movement and the Doppelgänger motif. On one hand, the figurative function of the tracking shots in The Last Laugh could not be transferred to a different cultural milieu. On the other hand, classical Hollywood style tended to justify stylistic innovation in terms of character subjectivity. As my analysis shows, Sunrise refrains from the notion of the camera-author and "justifies" the subject position of the tracking shots finally with a diegetic character. This shift is important for the overall purposes of the current study. The goal of this project is to show how the figurative, more connotative stylistic/textual units are based on the interaction of normative codes and the larger cultural context surrounding the texts. Sunrise serves as a "negative" case after The Last Laugh: without the Doppelgänger motif, the narrative functions of Sunrise's camera movements do not switch freely back and forth between distinct camera positions but rather anchor the techniques to diegetic characters. The semantic, auto-referential code of the camera-author gives place to a more modest narration in Sunrise.



While in general this chapter will argue that Murnau integrates style and narrative in Sunrise more seamlessly, probably the two most flaunted (and famous) camera movements take place at the beginning of the film. Significantly, the shots here establish and abandon a camera-character connection several times. The status of the mobile compositions here is thus ambiguous. These two camera movements—similarly to the strategies in The Last Laugh—flaunt the filmmaker's ability to manipulate the camera's and the spectator's point-of-view. As I will point out, Murnau abandons this strategy after the tramride-shot, and overall the film will adopt clear camera-character connections or drop the point-of-view structure all together. The ambiguity of Murnau's camera movements in Sunrise initially repeats the shifts of this previous German film. The marsh scene and the tram-ride to the city play with the viewers' schemas. Who is the subject of these mobile shots? While in the marsh-scene the status of the tracking frame continues to be ambiguous, this remains the only shot in the film where the changes between camera-character and camera author are not diegetically explained. The semantic auto-referential code of the omniscient narrator disappears after the marsh scene. Although Murnau played with the idea of the unaccounted position changes with regard to camera movements, he retrospectively connected these mobile frames to diegetic characters or composed purely descriptive, non-point-of-view shots. Although there are several codes in Sunrise that fulfill figurative functions (i.e. serve as symbolic, semantic or referential units), the shots freely shifting between camera-character and camera-author come to a halt (except in the marsh scene). In the following, I will investigate the possible reasons for these changes.

The marsh scene consists of one long tracking movement [3] that leads up to the rendezvous of the City Woman and the Man in the marsh. Here Murnau combines the

camera-character technique with incredibly complex movements that follow the protagonist. The composition opens with the camera following the Man from behind, keeping him at the center of the shot as he slowly crosses a small bridge. However, the physically unrestrained nature of the movement is shown here at the beginning since the camera does not cross the creek over the bridge but smoothly glides over the water two feet to the right. According to John Bailey's commentary of the film,<sup>121</sup> this shot was recorded at the Fox studio with the camera suspended from the ceiling and the camera put on a platform.<sup>122</sup>



2.11 Sunrise: The Man walks through the marsh with the omniscient camera following

As soon as he crosses the bridge, the Man turns to the right and walks through the bushes with the camera right behind him. After passing a few limbs, he takes a left and the camera here continues the forward tracking movement, keeping the character in the frame in a parallel movement showing him in profile.

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<sup>121</sup> Sunrise. DVD. 2003.

<sup>122</sup> Karl Struss' camera was used here, which was an automatic Bell & Howell. The camera did not have to be cranked allowing Struss to follow the action and pan the camera while it was moved on the suspension.



2.12 Sunrise: The camera follows the husband through the marsh

The composition seems disorienting in terms of direction since the Man first walks frame-right and then a few seconds later frame-left. But the continuous movement connects the two phases of the walk, and the disorienting effect of the shot is not foregrounded. Rather the complexity of the movements and the camera's hiding under the limbs shooting the figure through the bushes and the trees from a few steps behind him creates a semantic code about the Man's guilty conscience. Significantly, up to this point we never see his face as he progresses to the meeting with the City Woman. The camera occupies a position that seems to sneak up on the Man. The physically unrestrained camera moves as if it wanted to prevent the Man from his own actions.

As the Man arrives up to a fence and climbs over it, Murnau once again demonstrates that for his camera the physical world does not set up any limitations: it seamlessly glides over the barrier. This allows the camera some time to move past the Man and get in front of him. Here the character for the first time looks directly into the lens of the camera. His dark figure stands out from the hazy but lighter background.



2.13 Sunrise: The character returns the look of the camera

His face remains in dark with only a small patch of light on the right part of his cheek, which effectively underlines the guilt of the Man. The camera movements convey the idea of curiosity: what is the Man about to do? Murnau early on in the film displays a non-diegetic camera position (camera-author) that flaunts the narration's ability to sneak

up on characters. Here the director repeats some of his techniques from The Last Laugh: creating direct authorial commentaries by the tracking frame.

A technique that Murnau developed in The Last Laugh is reversed in the scene. In the German film three years earlier, the switch from a subjective point-of-view shot of the porter walking through a revolving door changed to an objective exterior shot depicting him amidst the crowd.<sup>123</sup> In Sunrise the switch is reversed. As the character walks towards the camera, and after he is only a few feet away, the exterior camera-double lends its own point-of-view to the Man. The non-point-of-view shot becomes a subjective camera technique. This connection forces the viewer to feel the guilt of the character as the shot becomes a point-of-view shot, and the audience is visually united with the cheating Man. The camera that up to this point has only followed the Man from behind suddenly occupies a more subjective position. As the protagonist passes the camera frame-left, the camera pans 180° and continues in the same direction where the husband left to meet his lover. The shifting camera position (from camera-author to camera-character) amplifies the moral responsibilities of the Man to the viewer by putting her in the protagonist's position. As soon as the brief visual identification between camera and viewer has been established, Murnau disrupts it again: the camera movement that has been continuous for fifty-one seconds stops. The City Woman, anticipating the arrival of her lover, puts on some make-up, and a few seconds later the Man enters the frame from the left. The point-of-view shot that started with the Man walking up the camera after he climbed over the fence only lasted a few seconds. Murnau flexibly changes the status of the shots that are at the same time completely comprehensible to the

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<sup>123</sup> Camera movement [14] in The Last Laugh.

viewer. As complex as the composition is, it still works perfectly with the moral themes and exteriorization of the inner psychological conditions of the characters: the director sets up a local symbolic code that puts the viewer into the visual position of the guilty character to make her experience a moral position. In addition, the authorial switches between the positions of the camera (the semantic code of the manipulative artist) return. The marsh scene is similar to the wedding scene of The Last Laugh in that it does not explain how the point-of-view shots suddenly change into authorial commentaries. This aspect creates a strong connection between the visual strategies in the two films. Later in Sunrise, Murnau will abandon this tactic and resort to narratively better-integrated camera movements.

Murnau cuts across two camera positions in the marsh-scene: initially a physical flauntedness (able to move non-humanly) points to a camera-author entering the diegetic world (semantic code). Later the mobile shot smoothly changes into a character point-of-view that visually will anchor the traveling shot to the Man (symbolic code). This switch starts a scheme that will force the viewer later in the film to look for characters who fill in the position of the moving camera. In accord with classical Hollywood's narrative strategy, the film's strong narrative opening with flaunted techniques and a high degree of communicativeness changes into stylistic elements justified with diegetic characters.



2.14 Sunrise: The point-of-view shot ends when the Man enters the frame and the couple embraces

Narratively the shot combines two kinds of narrative roles for the moving camera. The camera-author mobile shot changes into a camera-character movement and finally back to the camera-author. In the beginning of the mobile composition, the camera imitates a non-character point-of-view looking at the Man mirroring his psychological condition. Later we see through the eyes of the Man, but he later steps into the frame, thus disrupting the point-of-view structure. This strategy is used throughout the The Last Laugh, and significantly returns in the beginning of Sunrise. However, the rest of the latter film will justify the mobile compositions retrospectively either (1) point-of-view shots or (2) descriptive, non-subjective compositions.

As the Man passes the frame to lend his point-of-view to the camera, the camera-character connection changes into one where the camera is attached to a diegetic character who is not aware that he lends his point-of-view to the camera-phantom. When the viewer discovers the City Woman on the shore of the lake, the camera leaves the Man who re-enters the frame. The diegetic camera character withdraws, and its point-of-view becomes non-character again. These elegant switches between different functions of the mobile framing seem to allow the viewer to enjoy multiple vantage points from which to contemplate the story. Although Murnau changes the camera's points-of-view so fluidly, and the shot is flaunted, the movement of the camera creates several opportunities for the viewer to enter the visual and also moral world of the film's protagonist by the quick switches in point-of-view and non-point-of-view shots. By sneaking up on the Man later occupying his visual position, not only is the audience able to judge the actions of the Man but also to see through his eyes. The tension is created by the gap that opens up when the viewer is not aware how the visual positions change. Murnau justifies every camera movement finally with a diegetic character, but this is not always apparent. *Momentary gaps* open up by seemingly ambiguous camera movements, which later all become anchored to a filmic character.

The second complex tracking shot of the film, the tram ride to the city, illustrates a complicated point-of-view technique. After the husband has tried to kill the Wife on the lake, their boat reaches the opposite shore of the water. She jumps out of the boat and runs away to the tram. The Man, running after her, barely reaches the same tramcar. The scene—through the forced perspective of the tram ride to the city—exteriorizes the emotional state of both characters. At this point of the story, their relationship is literally



and metaphorically on a track that has been laid down by the actions of the City Woman. The elements of the set are so close to the track that they prohibit any outlook on where the vehicle is going. Also the frequent curves of the tram tracks hide from the characters and the viewers what lies ahead. However, not much has been made of the recurring shifts in point-of-view during the entire tram ride sequence (which is one long tracking shot) that move between real characters who are part of the action and nondiegetic points-of-view occupying a neutral position.

The master shot for the mobile scene [12] is recorded from the middle compartment of the tramcar. Seemingly not the point-of-view any diegetic character, the shot frames the couple squeezed to the side of the car: the Wife's repulsive nonverbal gestures contrast the rhythm of the husband's body trying to reach through to her. The tram driver is in the far left with his back to the camera. His figure's position, which initially looks fairly unimportant, is suddenly accentuated by a cut to his point-of-view [13] showing the couple now frontally in a medium shot. Both characters' looks, directed towards the surface of the water, cue the viewer to recall the husband's attempted murder.

While both the Man and his Wife are within the frame, the background remains open without forcing the viewer's and the characters' gaze in any direction. The calmness of the wide vista with a sailboat on the lake, the gently rolling hills and some pine trees compositionally opposes the two characters' introverted body language. Still the natural backdrop to the situation allows some hope for reconciliation, which is about to disappear when the tracking shot continues with the Man's point-of-view shot of his Wife [14]. The forced perspective of the character/viewer begins here with the landscape becoming more menacing: the tram continues its way to the city in a narrow groove. The Wife's gaze is

directed down towards the bottom of the frame, suggesting that she is imprisoned by the actions of her husband. There is little free room for her to react here. Visually this emotion is expressed by the high angle medium shot, which unmistakably connects it to the husband, whose figure is slightly taller than hers standing next to her at the far right in the tram car.



2.15 Sunrise: Shifts in POV are combined with expressive background during the mobile shot

The closed composition is interrupted by the sudden appearance of the conductor [15]. His emergence is interesting in relation to the master shot of the film: what the viewer took to be a neutral shot from the couple taken from the middle compartment of the tram car turns out to be the conductor's point-of-view. The openness and natural calm

of the background in the master shot is now connected to a character probably just daydreaming and looking out of the window. The tension becomes too much for the Man to take: he cannot simply enjoy the view; the stakes are too high for him now. This recognition can be seen in the paranoid look the husband gives the conductor. Gradually letting the claustrophobia take over the atmosphere of the shot, the cut back to the Man's point-of-view takes us close to the Wife [16]. Now the natural landscape in the background is gone, and an industrial, urban setting starts to appear. The Wife refuses to return the Man's look, so the next cut showing the tram driver from behind [17] reveals the husband's frustration, as the car slaloms between the tight urban scene that signals their arrival to a different environment. Several coaches and speeding cars crossing the path of the tram visualize this change, connecting movement per se with the city theme. Whereas the movement of the tram car (and thus the tracking movement of the camera) started out smoothly in the idyllic rural scene, the shifting points-of-view during the entire ride to the city strengthens the theme of the arrival to the city and introduces the staccato rhythm by the jerky turns of the tram.





2.16 Sunrise: The shifts of POV and the rapidly changing background make the characters' situation appear hopeless

By cutting back to the master shot of the scene, Murnau signals the arrival of the tram to the city square [18]. By this time, we know the point-of-view is that of the conductor, whose presence and look “threatens” the couple even more.



2.17 Sunrise: The arrival to the city finishes with a return to the master shot that belongs to the conductor

Dramatized by Murnau's frequent point-of-view changes, the simple phantom-ride becomes similar to the marsh scene, where the camera enters the diegetic world and

withdraws again by filling in certain shots with a diegetic character's appearance. The entering conductor exemplifies the switch between two types of camera movements moving from a descriptive camera-author structure toward a camera-character connection. At first the camera does not seem to be attached to anyone. The viewer cannot find a single hint that would point to the presence of a character in the car off-frame. The entering conductor, however, will in hindsight change the status of the shot. In reverse the viewer realizes that throughout the shot the camera assumed the point-of-view of the conductor. As he steps into the frame, this subjectivity is revealed. The director playfully demonstrates his ability to change our perception of the status of the mobile frame twice in a single shot.

The camera movements and the editing in the tram ride scene in Sunrise only temporarily flaunt the director's manipulating role. By withholding the information about the presence of the tram conductor, the director adds a new character to the scene. This conductor, although compositionally unimportant, re-writes our comprehension of the scene by letting us know that our point-of-view belonged to a diegetic figure of the film. The couple's drama ceases to be a private one, since it unfolds in front of the conductor's eyes, as the viewer finds out in the course of the tram-ride. This way, the film introduces the city-theme and foreshadows that the crisis of the marriage is about to be confronted at a public place. Rewriting our initial perception of the rural/innocent-urban/guilty dichotomy, the city that thus far was associated with the seducer's character becomes a setting that starts to carry positive values in the diegesis. The busy urban setting will provide an opportunity for reconciliation in front of a large number of onlookers.

Appearing in the foreground of the tram-shot, the conductor's character foreshadows this turn in the story. More importantly, his appearance also signals changes narrative tactic.

Murnau shows that the dramatic switches of character- or non-character point-of-view that he developed in The Last Laugh can be combined in a single camera movement and be less visible at the same time than the original techniques were. Both of Murnau's films often switch between character- and non-character point-of-views, which this study referred to as techniques of camera-character and the camera-author. The major difference between the statuses of the camera movements in the two films lies in the director's "justification" of the mobile shots. Initially, the tram ride appears to be a camera-author technique, where the director comments on the events and the psychological states of the characters. Finally, however, the viewer finds out that the shot in fact was a point-of-view composition, the subject of which turns out to be the tram conductor. As he steps into the frame, his character movement in hindsight changes the status of the tracking shot from the descriptive *semantic* code, which via style communicates character psychology to the viewer, to a narratively better grounded simple point-of-view structure that connects story segments. In the end of the long scene, the director returns to the normative use of his mobile camera: what the audiences took to be a figurative expression of the couple's emotional struggle in fact was the vision of a by-stander. Without the supporting background norm of the Doppelgänger-tradition, the narrative status of the camera movements becomes much better grounded into the texture of the film by the shot returning to the conductor's point-of-view. Murnau "justifies" the camera movements by connecting them to a diegetic character within the films narrative.

It seems that with the lack of a cultural background norm the director has to “explain” his creative techniques as diegetic elements.

Whereas the two analyzed camera movements (the marsh-scene and the tram ride) include multiple shifts in the structure of the point-of-view shots, the other mobile framings of the film take place in the scene with the couple reconciling in the city. Movement in general is a characteristic of the urban universe versus the idyllic rural world. The jazz on the soundtrack underlines the vibrant atmosphere of the city. The city in Sunrise is also full of visual tricks (including double exposures, superimpositions and several other in-camera effects) that amplify the feeling of emotional chaos in the characters by the depiction of physical chaos. Petrie also points out that “the village, on the other hand, is static, timeless and peaceful.”<sup>124</sup> However, this static place has to be left to face the crisis of their marriage and to approach a solution.

The opposition between city and country—a symbolic Barthesian code—is also expressed on the level of the characters’ movements, since “[t]he Woman also imports movement into the village setting, the camera tracking with her as she sets out to lure the Husband (...) from the loving arms of his wife.”<sup>125</sup> The couple in the city appears helpless until the point where the Wife forgiving her Husband saves their relationship. This turning point is efficiently expressed by the changes in the camera movements used. In these compositions, the helplessness of the couple is expressed by the camera movement, which is a figurative code that in Barthes’s typology would qualify as a semantic unit. Importantly, however, these camera movements are clearly descriptive shots, where there

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<sup>124</sup> Petrie, Graham. Hollywood Destinies. European Directors in America 1922-1931. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002. p. 94.

<sup>125</sup> Petrie, Graham. Hollywood Destinies. European Directors in America 1922-1931. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002. p. 95.

are no switches between a camera-character and a camera-author: the status of the mobile frame is unambiguously descriptive-objective.

From their arrival to the city square, Murnau records the lost couple with energetic tracking shots that all have one thing in common: they are track-ins showing the Man and the Wife from behind.<sup>126</sup> Their relationship at this point of the film is fragile. The viewer cannot see their faces, and their body language expresses a basic introvertedness: with their backs stooped they walk around on the sidewalk as aliens. Murnau apparently likes to use the backs of his actors expressively: Jannings' back in The Last Laugh fulfilled the function of carrying the theme of degradation and isolation as well. In contrast, the technique in Sunrise remains a non-point-of-view technique. The equivocal status of the mobile frames from the German film gives place to a univocally grounded tracking technique.

In Sunrise the turning point in the church is followed by one of the most complicated trick shots of the film. The couple walks down a busy city street and finds themselves in the middle of a traffic jam [22]. After the Man and his Wife embrace and kiss, the tracking shots change into frontal track-outs that reveal their happiness [23]. The camera's position is not connected here to any character's point-of-view. However, the camera movement remains psychologically descriptive as it follows the couple throughout their entire stay in the city. While it is behind the couple, the relationship's prospects do not look bright. Once it shoots the two characters frontally, the viewer recognizes their chance for reconciliation. Murnau's camera movements still create figurative codes (semantic unit: creates the larger theme of character psychology, i.e.

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<sup>126</sup> [19], [20], [21], [22].



dispair, hope, etc.). However, he gives up the playfulness of The Last Laugh, where the viewer suspected a character behind the anthropomorphic mobile shots. Sunrise's objective tracking frames are better grounded in the invisible storytelling techniques of Hollywood but do not take the form of point-of-view structures.

The camera movements in the Luna park sequence of the film seem to suggest to the viewer a similar function of the moving camera with their extraordinary symmetry. As the couple enters the park, there is a long overhead crane shot that moves behind and above the heads of the crowd towards the entrance [24]: we do not see the faces. As the couple leaves the park, the same crane shots retreat focusing on the reconciled happy couple [29]: the camera focuses on the happy faces of the Man and his Wife. When they enter a restaurant in the park, the camera follows them up to a free table, and they head for the dance floor immediately [25]. Later when they leave the restaurant, the same tracking withdraws from the table [28], marking the end of narrative unit. The moving camera functions as a comment on the psychological states of the characters: it evokes a depressed impression by withholding the characters' faces and later suggests happiness by shooting the couple frontally. The camera's movements explain character psychology: this function can be described as figurative-semantic. However, this figurative information is expressed in unambiguous descriptive tracking shots. Without the widespread norm of the *Doppelgänger* that existed in 1920s German culture, the frequent and equivocal changes in the camera's position cannot create the figurative idea of the author who frequently switches between the camera's point-of-views, and is at the same time also part the diegetic world he created.

Two camera movements in Sunrise (the marsh-scene and the tram ride) display Murnau's ongoing affinity to compose mobile shots that reveal point-of-view changes and shifting camera-character and camera author connections. However, the majority of the tracking shots either (1) seems unattached to any diegetic character, but in hindsight the viewer finds out that they are attached to diegetic characters, or (2) does not belong to diegetic characters at all (and therefore loses its status as point-of-view structure). This in turn suggests that the major difference in the function of the mobile shots in The Last Laugh and Sunrise consists in the existence or the lack of diegetic justifications of these tracking shots: in the German film, the director does not explain how the camera can move from a camera-character suddenly to a camera-author. These recurrent switches are comprehensible on the ground of a rich Doppelgänger tradition. In Sunrise, however, at the end of each scene there is little ambiguity about whether a camera movement belongs to the vision of a character or not. The split personality of the protagonist who is "plagued" by a referential-figurative camera-double in the German film gives place to explicable motivations for the camera to move. This strategy undoubtedly fits better with the Classical Hollywood storytelling paradigm. However, the changes are also motivated by the lack of cultural background norm, in this case, the Doppelgänger motif, which in The Last Laugh has grounded the figurative techniques in a rich local tradition. The director's typical visual style transferred to a different cultural context resulted in a less figurative use of the tracking shot.

Narratively, the actions of the camera become well integrated into the narrative structure of the film. The camera movements are far less flaunted than in the German film. This can be seen in quantitative comparison of the function of the mobile

compositions: in Sunrise, there are nine camera movements with an assignable character point-of-view and twenty-one where the camera's position is not filled in by any character.<sup>127</sup>

The development of the function of Murnau's camera movement can be seen in their smoother integration into the classical narrative texture of Sunrise, but this also points to the culturally specific status of the Doppelgänger motif that grounds virtuoso figurative techniques in the local tradition. In The Last Laugh, the camera movements combined with frequent points-of-view shots are undoubtedly visible, serving the expression of character psychology by the camera-author. In Sunrise, Murnau finds innovative ways to move the camera and forces to viewer to try to explain the mobile shots within the story world. In the end, most camera movements reveal themselves as camera-character techniques (point-of-view structures), or non-subjective, descriptive camera movements.<sup>128</sup>

In this regard, the development of Murnau's style shows adaptations to the industrial background to his filmmaking. The fact that he makes The Last Laugh at Ufa in Berlin but Sunrise for Fox in Hollywood does still reveal itself in the narrative grounding of the camera movements. Less experimental and flaunted than the camera-phantom who seems to accompany Jannings throughout most of The Last Laugh, the camera in Sunrise achieves the exteriorization of the characters' inner feeling and psychology through

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<sup>127</sup> Subjective camera movements with character point-of-view: [3], [4], [5], [12], [13], [14], [16], [17], [18]. Neutral camera movements without character point-of-view: [1], [2], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [15], [19], [20], [21], [22], [23], [24], [25], [26], [27], [28], [29], [30], [31], [32].

<sup>128</sup> Eisner's and Petrie's evaluative claims about the superiority of Sunrise's visual style do not take into consideration the fact, that the Sunrise was produced in Hollywood, where the rules the classical paradigm of storytelling and narrative continuity stand at the center of filmmaking. Although Murnau had unprecedented creative control in Sunrise, his style shows smaller adjustments, which this chapter tried to show using the example of the narrative function of the mobile frame.

methods that less frequently interrupt the transparency of the narrative. Murnau seemed to perfect his artistic tools with an impressive authority throughout the two films analyzed here, reacting sensitively to the impulses of his cultural and industrial surrounding.

This analysis showed that the shifting normative and figurative functions of a specific stylistic device can be located within the work of a single director. Murnau's case reveals that the elements of his narrative tactics develop from film to film. The visible and flaunted experiments he executed with camera movement and subjectivity in The Last Laugh were precursors to a strategy that integrates these techniques organically into the narration of his American film, Sunrise. The German film, it seems, is not concerned with the explaining how the shifts in point-of-view (from the camera-character toward the camera-author) occur. Murnau's omniscience as a storyteller is barely hidden in the story of the hotel porter. However, on a micro-level, this analysis brought to surface another dynamic as far as the development of the camera movement as a storytelling device is concerned. For Murnau to be able to compose more authorial mobile shots, he has to start with a strong camera-character connection (like he did in The Last Laugh). Without this connection, the later expressionistic techniques might prove unintelligible. After this base is established, he is able to abandon it, since the viewer had enough time to establish its narrative significance: constructivism works not just on the level of the narrative tactics of the author but also on the level of the expectations of the viewer. Towards the end of The Last Laugh, the omniscient, freely ranging camera is not limited by any human characteristics: the director set up a strong camera-character connection in the beginning so that he can release it and guide the viewer to broader uses

of camera movement. The camera functions as a sidekick to Jannings' porter, and Murnau carries the idea so far that the obviously nondiegetic camera will act and react to what the protagonist does. These tactics interrupt the invisibility of style and create a visible intrusion of the director into the diegesis. Murnau, the director, becomes a Doppelgänger in his own film.

A few years later and in a different national film industry, Murnau is able to continue his visual mobility and fluidity. However, the classical Hollywood narrative does not tolerate such obvious violations of invisible storytelling as the ones he displayed in The Last Laugh. So Murnau readjusts his narrative strategies. In Sunrise there are still two shots that use the shifting point-of-view within a single scene or even a single shot. Here the director creates gaps that leave us in dark for several seconds or even minutes regarding who the subject of a certain composition was. In the end, though, the gaps prove to be only temporary, since the shot (the status of which was unclear) is explained by the showing up of a character: the retreating camera returns to a non-subjective, descriptive shot.

To be able to compose for Hollywood's dramatic unity, this chapter has argued that clear camera motivations are necessary. Murnau's experiments with the shifting point-of-view and camera movement in his expressionistic German film enabled him to continue making films that make heavy use of mobile framing, and that do *not* flaunt his command over his material or his artistic personality as much as in his earlier work. He adapted his style to the new expectations: the norms he created in his German film(s) allowed him to develop strategies of subjectivity in Sunrise that are just as playful but are less visible. The development between the compositional strategies of the two films in

focus of this chapter points out how artistic and industrial norms closely interact in the process of stylistic innovation. Murnau fine-tuned his figurative norms that in the end turned out to be comprehensible enough for a major Hollywood studio.

### Chapter Three

#### **FROM THE AESTHETICS OF GEOMETRY TOWARD THE FACE:**

##### Jancsó Miklós's changing mobile shots

Jancsó Miklós is a filmmaker whose career spans more than four decades. His oeuvre cuts across several stylistic trends and artistic movements. Looking at his films, one can discover nonetheless a remarkable degree of stylistic consistency. This is not to say that Jancsó's style has remained static. The interior norms of his art underwent significant changes as his artistic concepts shifted, but also the changing social and political circumstances left their mark on the director's work. This chapter will trace some aspects of the director's stylistic development to see how the stylistic-narrative norms of the "early Jancsó" have changed in his contemporary films. By looking at the tracking camera movement as a specific element of his style, this investigation will focus on the narrative function of the mobile frame. Accordingly, this chapter will attempt to answer the following question: what is the purpose of moving the camera in one of his early films from 1967 and a contemporary one in 1998, more than thirty years later? If the investigation can unearth how the mobile shot's function has developed within the director's distinctive style throughout thirty years, then Jancsó's changing narrative strategies can be analyzed in the light of a very specific stylistic element. In this chapter, I will show how Jancsó's style departing from a self-imposed heritage of the Neorealist aesthetics adapts codes of camera movement to the local cultural-historical-political situation. First during the 1960s and several decades later, in the late 1990s he creates

highly figurative textual units that use poetic forms of camera movement to express the director's views on political problems.

Jancsó's films usually use a non-communicative narrative strategy where the flaunted visual style reveals more information than the dialogue or the causal logic behind the characters' actions. In fact, he often declared in interviews that the visual conception of his films precedes the formation of the story itself. He talked to István Zsugán about preparing for The Red and the White a year before the completion of the film: "*Do you think scriptwriting is a visual art form?* For me it certainly is. The story of the film has not been outlined yet, but the shots, the movements and most importantly the entire inner rhythm of the film already exist in my head."<sup>129</sup> Critics certainly noticed the director's complicated visual style when his early films were shown in Hungary and abroad. Writings on Jancsó's early work point out the continuously moving camera.<sup>130</sup>

Jancsó's art is openly historical but only symbolically political in the sense that he is not taking sides in the conflicts that he depicts in the two films discussed here. This aspect of his film stems from the specific geographical-political circumstances under which he has been making films. In the East European countries that were under Soviet control during the 1960s, there were two options available for directors: either they went along with the Socialist forms of official art and produced propaganda-like films, or they had to invent a new language that had to find a delicate balance between "dissent and partial, reluctant approval of socialist ideals (...). Indeed, the need to find increasingly refined sophisticated methods of speaking out has come to be the greatest artistic challenge, and exploitation of the whole orchestra of cinematic means has become

<sup>129</sup> István Zsugán: "Csillagosok, katonák." Filmvilág 1966. p.6. translated by the author.

<sup>130</sup> Howard Thompson: "Filmfestival – Csillagosok, katonák." The New York Times 1968/09/21 and Penelope Houston: "Csillagosok, katonák" Sight and Sound, 1968, Summer.



characteristic of East Central European films.”<sup>131</sup> This artistic challenge often meant that although filmmakers passed moral judgments on the political events surrounding them, they could not directly depict these in their films. The political aspect of Andrzej Wajda or similarly Jancsó Miklós’s work can be traced back to the directors’ stylistic choices. While the films show a close connection between thought and form, the polemical views could only be articulated in poetic ways.

As Falkowska in her article “The ‘Political’ in the Films of Andrzej Wajda and Krzysztof Kieslowski”<sup>132</sup> points out, the term “political” is generally being applied indiscriminately to all levels of film analysis. First it is used as it applies to the process of interpreting any film, but it can also define a category through content of a motion picture as political (social problem film, ideological film, revolutionary film, etc.) Under the interpretative meanings of the term, she distinguishes between resistant readings that focus on film as a form of cultural exchange (like Mulvey’s famous analysis on gender and Classical Hollywood<sup>133</sup>), or post-structural interpretations that focus on film form. In the categorical uses of “political,” Falkowska differentiates between “opposition” films that confront a dominant ideology (Godard’s work), propaganda films that reinforce a certain ideology (Eisenstein’s *Potempkin*) and ones where the political can be located on the side of the audience. According to the author,

In the case of film interpreted as political by the audience, the concept “political” seems to be an empty vessel which is filled by semantic substance by audiences at a particular time of film viewing. The act of negotiating the film’s meaning

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<sup>131</sup> Bíró, Yvett, “Landscape after Battle: Films from “the Other Europe.”” *Daedalus* (Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences) Winter 1990, p. 162.

<sup>132</sup> Falkowska, Janina. “The “Political” in the Films of Andrzej Wajda and Krzysztof Kieslowski.” *Cinema Journal*, 34, No. 2. pp. 37-50.

<sup>133</sup> Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Screen* 16 (3). pp. 6-18.

becomes a continual process of accommodating and rejecting different ideological positions presented and not a process of instruction.<sup>134</sup>

As Falkowska concludes, the films in Eastern European cinemas were forced to be political in this last sense, since the opposition films were not tolerated and the propaganda film a form of official Socialist art that did not express any of the citizen's real experiences. By including their political position in the formal aspects of their films, Eastern European directors like Jancsó allowed the audiences to discover the political themselves which transformed the cinema into a site of collective covert resistance.

This chapter will show how, through his formal choices, Jancsó articulated critical statements that he adapted to the circumstances of the actual political milieu. The director's visual norms go back to a Neorealist aesthetics that favors the un-manipulated aspects of audio-visual texts. As the Italian directors during the 1940s turned toward a film style that concentrated on post-WWII historical events from a subjective perspective, they developed a language that preferred location shooting, non-professional actors and actresses. The themes of their films focused on "real" characters and situation that were invented but had the intention to resemble events that mirror everyday life. Their choices of concrete visual norms went back to their choice of themes: the Neorealist directors used long takes, composed for a large depth-of-field and preferred moving the camera to extensive editing. The camera movement in Neorealist cinema is mostly used in following tracking shots in the urban scenarios. In Paisà (1946) the tracking camera follows the drunk, staggering GI across the streets of Naples which allows the spectator to see the destruction of the city. Rossellini also uses the technique in Rome, Open City

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<sup>134</sup> Falkowska, Janina. "The 'Political' in the Films of Andrzej Wajda and Krzysztof Kieslowski." Cinema Journal. 34, No. 2. pp. 39.

(1945) where the function of the mobile frame is again the creation of an ontological connection between character and setting. According to Peter Bondanella's analysis on Germany Year Zero, the typical "[m]ovement in the work is a long—almost obsessively long—tracking shot following Edmund through the rubble and debris of the desolate city landscape."<sup>135</sup> DeSica also utilizes the tracking shot as a recurring element of his style. In The Bicycle Thief Ricci is introduced to the spectator in a tracking shot at the employment office and the film closes with a mobile frame of the father and his son at the soccer game. The technique surfaces in the film several times as in the "masterful sequence at Rome's open market where stolen items are resold to their victimized former owners: the almost endless tracking shot of countless bicycle parts, intercut with the shots of the anxious faces of Ricci or Bruno lends their efforts a meaninglessness (...)"<sup>136</sup> Neorealism's tracking shots in the urban settings seem to function as a symbolic code that places the individual in the desolate settings of the post-WWII Italian cities and points out the contradictions between the bleak location and the struggling characters. Although the tracking shot is probably not the most important element in the Neorealist aesthetic, it contributes to a "camera presence" that strives to create a uninterrupted spatial and temporal continuity.

French film theoretician and critic André Bazin opposes the Neorealist aesthetics to the films of the Soviet montage-filmmakers and concludes that the former fit better the physical and aesthetic characteristics of motion pictures for three reasons. First, depth-of-field, long takes, mobile camera and the elliptical narration bring the spectator into a closer relation with the image than the abstraction of editing. Second, the mental attitude

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<sup>135</sup> Bondanella, Peter. From Neorealism to the Present. Continuum, New York. 2001. p. 51.

<sup>136</sup> Bondanella, Peter. From Neorealism to the Present. Continuum, New York. 2001. p. 60.

of the spectator is more active since she can decide for herself on what parts of the composition she will focus, and finally the preserved unity of space and time encourages the ambiguity of expression.<sup>137</sup> This style fits with the artistic aims of the Neorealists to rather move the cameras as opposed to elaborate cutting in order to create the feeling of “realism” with regard to the sets, the characters, and their interactions.<sup>138</sup> Jancsó uses this tradition as a background: he creates situations that are much more stylized than Neorealist scenes or characters, but also aims at mirroring real, existing experiences in a condensed format. Besides the thematic similarities, there exist visual continuities, and the unity of space and time across the scenes is a central characteristic of Jancsó’s style as well. Neorealist aesthetic therefore is a reference point, against which his camera movements fulfill a different narrative function. For the Hungarian filmmaker, the “camera presence” as a figurative element does not suffice: in his films, the semantic code of the Neorealist tradition (camera presence) becomes a background for his own aesthetics. However, in contrast to the Neorealist style where camera-mobility had to depict a realistic situation and setting to the spectator, Jancsó’s mobile frames assign a conceptual function to the moving shots.

The aim of the Italian Neorealist filmmakers was to resist official history and present the viewer with a more personal vision of everyday life; the style they developed was a result of their political views. Hungarian cinema during the 1950s and 60s had similar goals. There exists one crucial difference, however: while the Italian cinema in the late 1940s and 50s openly commented on social circumstances, Hungarian filmmakers

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<sup>137</sup> Bazin, André. “Evolution of Editing Since Sound in Cinema.” In. Leo Brady & Marshall Cohen (Eds.) *Film Theory and Criticism*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>138</sup> Neorealism of course did not create “real” situations or depict “real” characters. What matters for the purposes of the current chapters is the fact that they aimed at crafting scenes the hint at existing social experiences.

expressed these opinions on the level of style. According to Czigany. “[i]f we accept the definition that early classic Soviet cinema was a cinema of political criticism and agitation, and neorealism was a cinema of political criticism and comment, then the new generation of Hungarian directors use the cinema (...) as a medium of sociopolitical *debate*.”<sup>139</sup> Agitation in the 1960s Hungarian film culture was possible in one form: official propaganda, which several filmmakers rejected. Therefore, sociopolitical debate in the new Hungarian cinema is closer to the goals of Neorealism that provides critical commentary. As Bíró remarks, “[f]rom the very outset filmmaking in this country [Hungary] has been susceptible to the influence of Italian neorealism. When they have been able to break free of the demands of Party orthodoxy and the crippling restraints of academicism, Hungarian filmmakers have been able to achieve genuine success in works inspired by everyday life.”<sup>140</sup> Jancsó’s art shows specific visual similarities with the Italian Neorealist movement: he uses a visual style that is dominated by long takes, large depth-of-field and a ceaselessly moving camera. However, he adapted their style to the local political and cultural necessities, while trying to find new ways to speak in order to circumvent government control. From the idea of a camera presence developed by the Neorealist directors (Barthesian symbolic-semantic codes that set up for the spectator the theme of a perceived continuous filmic space) Jancsó moves towards a technique that uses the movements for conceptual purposes. The purpose of his chapter is not so much to argue for a close resemblance between the two strategies of constructing a mobile

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<sup>139</sup> Czigany, Lorant. “Jancso Country. Miklos Jancso and the New Hungarian Cinema.” *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Autumn, 1972), p. 46.

<sup>140</sup> Bíró, Yvett. “Landscape after Battle: Films from ‘the Other Europe.’” *Daedalus* (Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences) Winter 1990. p. 168.

filmic space but to show how that the more complex, conceptual narrative codes of Jancsó depart from a tradition, which already assigned a figurative function to camera.

In the first part of the current chapter, I will show how the heritage of the norms of the Neorealist style (that serve as a point of normative departure), combined with the local cultural-political circumstances, gave rise to the symbolic, figurative meaning abundant in Jancsó's 1967 film The Red and the White (*Csillagosok, katonák*) through the specific device of the traveling camera. The dominant visual element of The Red and the White is the tracking camera moving back and forth between two politically opposite groups: the international Communist brigades and Czarist armies in the 1919 Soviet Civil War. I argue that this geometrical style refuses to take sides in the conflict and is rather interested in revealing the humanist aspects of the war—for a reason. In Jancsó's world, the lack of the private space (thus the inability of identification) originates in the rhythmical rigidity introduced by camera movements cutting across the frame. By refusing take sides, Jancsó was able to depict figurative political themes in the Socialist Hungary without jeopardizing his career as a filmmaker in the face of the state censors.

In Jancsó's contemporary films, the mobile compositions acquire a similar function: they compare different character types. In The Lord's Lantern in Budapest (1998), however, the type, the speed and the direction of the movements change. The opposites and contrasts of Jancsó's early binary style change into an *aesthetic of the face* where the mobile, handheld shots are anchored to the figures' faces in the corners of the compositions. By entering the subjective, private space of the characters, the director disrupts his cold, impersonal style so typical for his 1960s films. I situate the changes in Jancsó's current visual techniques in the political milieu of contemporary Hungary,

where there is no need anymore to speak in historical parables. The lack of political restraints in Jancsó's latest films causes his narratives to explore figuratively how the impersonal public sphere gave place to a more subjective, personal arena where he identifies surprisingly similar conflicts and character types as he did in his early films. I conclude that his shift is clearly reflected in the changing use of his camera movements.

As different as the director's new style is, some aspects of his new films remain similar: the practices of the long shots and the constantly moving camera are virtually untouched. Functionally, the parameters of the movements change to reflect the new political-cultural situation that Jancsó satirizes. This project's goal is to show how normative uses of a specific stylistic device interact with cultural-historical circumstances and give rise to figurative narrative elements. In this chapter, I will show how Jancsó's style, departing from a normative Neorealist aesthetics, adapts codes of camera movement to the local cultural-historical-political situation. First during the 1960s and several decades later, in the late 1990s he creates highly figurative textual units that use the camera movement to express the director's views on the political problems. These figurative codes are in turn based on an interaction of the normative basis of the Neorealist tradition and the political realities of the times around the production of the respective films. Roland Barthes described textual codes that range from the proairetic, and hermeneutic toward the symbolic, the semantic and the referential. This project adapts this continuum and argues that more complex textual codes (figurative) are built on an interaction of less complex codes (normative) and their cultural-political milieu. Jancsó's textual units first build on the Neorealist strategies for visual composition and manipulates them to fit the restraints of expression in the Hungarian Communist-type

oppression of the 1960s. Later I move on to show how his own earlier codes prove to be normative in the formation of his contemporary figurative techniques. This section's methodology allows for a comparative analysis of Jancsó's conceptual uses of the tracking camera in The Red and the White and The Lord's Lantern in Budapest.

### **I. Geometrical Duality: Camera Movement in The Red and the White**

Jancsó was already a recognizable author when his 1967 film was exhibited. His earlier films all dealt with historical topics, a tradition he continued in The Red and the White. The film revolves around the 1919 Civil War in Russia. After the 1918 Revolution, the Soviet forces defended the new regime from foreign intervention and foreign-backed White (counter-revolutionary) forces. International volunteer regiments backed the Soviet army. The film is the story of the opposing forces on one of the fronts where Hungarian volunteers had joined the defense. Most of the story takes place in and around an abandoned monastery used by each side—when it captured the position—as a field hospital and garrison.

Critics noted Jancsó's distinct visual style and his abstract, conceptual narrative techniques revolving mostly around political themes. Variety neatly sums up the international critical consensus on the Hungarian filmmaker and underlines the visual aspects of the director's work from a distinctively socio-historical aspect:

The *Internationalists* [aka *The Red and the White*] is a merciless film. It is as merciless as the necessity which activates history. With this lack of pathos, Jancsó's new work seems to differ from any pic on a similar topic. There is no stirring spectacularity in it. His dialogues are limited to military commands. His



technique, supported by the outstanding camera work of Tamás Somló, organically serves this object. The camera moves without ceasing (...) This continuous movement and the continuity of internal cutting, creates a strong tension.<sup>141</sup>

Interestingly, most writings about Jancsó remain on the same level of precision. One has to wait until 1984 to see an in-depth analysis of the stylistic-narrative strategies of the early Jancsó. As Bordwell remarks, “[e]very critic who writes on a Jancsó film is tempted to count the shots, plot the camera gyrations (...) Yet I know of no attempt to show how Jancsó’s style works, especially in narrational terms.”<sup>142</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to do what Bordwell mentions: to account for one stylistic element, the camera movement in narrational terms.

The lack of systematic stylistic-narrative analyses on Jancsó even in Hungarian is striking. Most books or articles<sup>143</sup> retell the story of his films and give literary interpretations of the films’ fabulas. An insightful and creative (although non-comprehensive) writing on the director’s use of symbols and techniques is Elemér Hankiss’ “Motif and meaning in Jancsó’s films.”<sup>144</sup> It is Hankiss who first outlines the visual duality created by Jancsó in several early films. As he points out, “large majority of the compositions reveals two poles, and between these two poles the films constantly create a duality: that of the oppressors and the oppressed. In most shots or sequences the oppressors are present: they come or go, show up or march to a beat, ride around on horses or just approach the oppressed.”<sup>145</sup> The division of the frame by Jancsó into two

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<sup>141</sup> Csillagosok, katonák. “Variety” 1967/11/22.

<sup>142</sup> Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.p. 130.

<sup>143</sup> See bibliography.

<sup>144</sup> Hankiss, Elemér. “Motif and meaning in Jancsó’s films” (*Filmkultúra*, 1972/2)

<sup>145</sup> Hankiss, Elemér. “Motif and meaning in Jancsó’s films” (*Filmkultúra*, 1972/2)

areas thus is picked up by Hankiss, who goes on to specify how this duality actually is composed:

Not only does the dual presence of the two camps divide every frame in two, but also the different types of movements specific for each. It is easy to recognize that the mobility of the two parties is sharply, geometrically different, often completely oppositional. Frequently the contrast is the result of the circular movements of one group and the linear movements of the other. (...) Often this contrast results from the opposition of moving or nonmoving characters.<sup>146</sup>

The choreography of the characters moving across Jancsó's frame points out the duality or tension between the opposing groups by visual means. The duality described by Hankiss is thus a very important aspect of Jancsó's visual strategies.

What Hankiss does not notice is a similar duality created by the camera movement. His description is limited to character movement and choreography. However, the type, the speed or the direction of the movements also complicates the camera's movements, which are just as elaborate as the characters' dynamics. If one takes into account that the dualism in Jancsó's compositions can also be expressed by the *contrasts between different camera movements* used in the depiction of the oppressor/oppressed, the dualism in question appears much more complex than in Hankiss's description. This dichotomy can take several forms: (1) a group of characters depicted in circular tracking shots, the other in linear; (2) some figures are recorded with a back and forth traveling camera, while others in a continuous linear movement or (3) the moving camera can be attached closely to the characters, but it can also objectively shoot at them from some distance.

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<sup>146</sup> Hankiss, Elemér. "Motif and meaning in Jancsó's films" (*Filmkultúra*, 1972/2)

This complexity can be taken even further by investigating the *contrast between character movement and camera movement*. A linearly moving group of characters can be recorded with a static or moving camera. If the camera moves, the tracking shot can move in a linear direction, and so mirror the movements of the characters, or it can move on a circular path, thus creating a contrast between the character's and camera's movement. As the following analysis will show, Jancsó uses these types of contrasts several times in systematic ways. Accordingly, when characters are moving along a linear line or a group of characters marches in a line, the camera often signals the proximity of the opposite group with the circular movement. In a similar fashion, when the characters dance in a circle or walk around on an oval line, the camera tends to counter this mobility with a linear tracking shot to express the contrast of different geometrical forms.

The mobile camera in Jancsó's films is significantly different from the Neorealist mobile frame in Paisà (1946) for example. In Rossellini's film, the mobile camera follows characters through the scenes and creates a "presence." The main goal of the technique here is to preserve a continuity of space and time that results in a seemingly unmediated visual style. Maintaining a close, uninterrupted connection between the visual point-of-view of the spectators and the filmic characters, the "personal" will dominate the perception of the viewer: the style situates the characters in the story. Jancsó will use this narrative function as a normative point of departure, or a code that he develops further. In the complex camera movements of The Red and the White, the constant mobility does not fulfill the function of creating a "presence," as in Neorealism, but to produce highly conceptual, figurative codes. These semantic-referential codes follow from an interaction of a normative basis and the historical-political situation in

which they were created. These function as a humanistic critique aimed at the official political course indirectly. Jancsó does not offer a point of attack to the censors by including events in the narrative that explicitly criticize the system. However, his visual style will take over that function. The first part of this chapter will attempt to unpack these stylistic-political commentaries in The Red and the White.

Jancsó builds up the complexity of the camera movements gradually. In the very first scene of the film, the camera tracks back and forth between two groups of soldiers. At this point, the viewer does not even know which group of soldiers is the Reds and which is the Whites. We find out several minutes later when the men on horses reveal their identity. In the first scene, three Red soldiers are fleeing across an open field divided by a creek. The Reds are encircled by the riding Whites, which causes them to run back and forth looking for an escape. In the beginning of the scene, the camera tracks left [1] with the Reds, but this simple scheme is soon interrupted and the camera simply travels in both directions between the two parties without being motivated by character movement. This suggests that Jancsó is comparing the two sides with each other: the shot evokes the impression as if the camera were hesitating over whom to follow.



3.1 The Red and the White: The tracking shot follows the Reds' retreat but later is attached to the riding Whites' moves

Here the traveling camera simply creates a duality by moving back and forth between the two groups. Although the soldiers from both parties are moving as well, it seems that the mobility of the camera do not really follow the figures. They change directions so often that the spectator is confused about which side the soldiers belong to. As soon as this question in the viewer is established, Jancsó underlines it by not unequivocally attaching the camera to any of the two groups. The camera movement here functions as a symbolic code in the Barthesian typology: it creates a comparison between the two sides. The unmistakable presence of the camera (normative background) preserves the continuity of space, but also creates a figurative code that sets against each other two groups of soldiers. Although the viewer does not know anything about the conflict, the visual technique anonymously compares them.



3.2 The Red and the White: The right-left track is followed by the left-right track

At the end of the scene, the Red in the white shirt is killed in the water. His being shot is foreshadowed by the closed form set of figures. Jancsó established a formal technique here that he will apply numerous times throughout the film. During the quick tracking shots moving in both directions, the spectator has the impression of losing the overview. Which soldier is with the Reds? Which soldiers is a White? Here the contrast, or to use Hankiss' word, duality of the conflict is established through the constantly changing *directions* of the camera's movement. The traveling shot equates between the Reds and the Whites: Jancsó confuses the viewer about his characters' identity by applying a figurative, symbolic technique to the representation of the armed conflict.

The path of the movement can complicate the tension in the conflict as well. While in the previous example the direction of the camera movement (left-right/right-left) created a contrast, Jancsó also uses the other parameters of the mobile frame to achieve the same effect. In addition to the directions of linear mobility, the circular path of the camera creates another level of contrast. The Red who has escaped the Whites in the first scene arrives at the monastery next to the river. Jancsó creates uncertainty through the different paths of the camera movements: the soldier does not know what forces control the monastery. This impression is evoked though the parallel tracking of the camera [2] that changes into a circular path while the soldier is running towards it. The director's refusal to explain which of the two opposing forces control the site leads the spectator to pay attention to the stylistic channels of the film for more information: she is looking for the figurative element to convey fabula information. With the camera moving linearly and later on the circular path, the character's figure and relative size

within the frame changes. Observing the composition, the spectator cannot make out the face of the character. The combination of “facelessness” and the flaunted contrast in the type of the camera movement will prove central for the director, who tries to stay away from psychological descriptions of his characters. The two dissimilar paths show that the geometrical shapes also serve the formal goals of the filmmaker: to detach the actual conflict from its actual consequences (is the monastery a friendly or hostile site for the soldier?) or historical references and rather make the spectator contemplate the relation of the chaser and the chased, the oppressor and the oppressed. This latter aspect of the conflict can be read as a visual commentary on the 1919 Russian Civil War, the 1967 Hungarian political situation, or even much broader as a humanist approach to any conflict. So far both examples revealed compositions that differentiated between two dissimilar camera movements. In the first, Jancsó reverses the direction of tracking shot. In the second, the contrast between linear and circular tracking moves creates uncertainty in the viewer about who controls the monastery. However, the director complicates the duality of different camera moves with the duality achieved through *contrast between camera and character movement*. The rigid geometry of the mobile frames will lead to the creation of figurative codes.

Comparing or contrasting the different paths of movements becomes crucial when the Red soldier reaches the monastery and finds friendly Red forces inside. He changes clothes, which he ruined during his flight in the river. Meanwhile the scene shows arrested Whites taking off their uniforms. The Reds are preparing to execute the captured enemy. This is a moment in the film where the oppressed becomes an oppressor. The symbolism of the new uniforms is clearly associated with the more powerful group, while

the oppressed are forced to undress. The shifting power relations are underlined formally through the contrast between character and camera movement [4]. After the Whites were led out to a field, Red soldiers surround them. The circular character movement is countered with the linear movement of the camera. After recording the encircled Whites from a long shot proximity, the two main Red characters approach the camera and have a conversation, while the path of the tracking shot changes directions from a backwards track to a rightwards track.



3.3 The Red and the White: In the same shot, the encircled Whites and their oppressors are recorded in a linear backwards and rightwards tracking movement

This is the first instance of the film where the formal system of movements is more communicative than any other narrative register of the film: the spectator learns more about the changing relations between the characters from the cinematography and choreography than any character action or verbal explanation. The changing distance between camera and characters working together with costumes reveals the captured Whites as a group and refuses to give any subjectivity or psychological depth to their



characters. Changing the path of the movement corresponding to the characters' movement also depicts them as non-individuals: the director is not interested in their personal fate. He investigates the dynamics of the opposing groups. The geometrical rigidity of both character and camera movements foregrounds the mise-en-scène of the film and renders causality of the story and character psychology secondary.

Shifting power relations that characterize the entire film move into the foreground when the Red soldiers return to the monastery that they just left. The officer runs linearly back toward the gate with the soldier who has just refused to act as an oppressor: he gave his gun and belt back to his superior while the Whites were undressed out in the field, seemingly being prepared for execution. The camera moves [5] backwards as they approach and turns left and moves through the gate as the two characters enter the monastery. Apparently the officer plans to execute the deserter for not obeying his orders when he shouts for the guards. But the guards are gone.



3.4 The Red and the White: The camera turns right through the gate with the two Reds, creating a contrast between linear and circular movements

The cut after the long tracking shot reveals a completely empty courtyard in which the two Reds seem completely lost. The camera hesitatingly tracks left-right, then right-left, revealing how the soldiers are looking for other people. The Reds, who have captured several White soldiers, just recently occupied the monastery. This time, however, the two Reds return to find all their comrades gone or dead. Between the hollow spaces of the court, the pacing camera seems lost in the conflict. This recalls the map that opens the entire film, depicting the moves of the armies in the 1919 military conflict. Jancsó shows that the linearly or circularly moving camera is actually an imitation of moves of the Red or White brigades.



### 3.5 The Red and the White: The camera in the film moves similar to the armies

The function of the movements in multiple directions is first of all to counter the non-communicative aspect of the entire film's narration.<sup>147</sup> Jancsó composes very long takes with the camera almost always moving in The Red and the White. However, the constantly moving shots do not provide to the spectator an omniscient point-of-view by offering alternative standpoints. They rather act as limiting devices: they force the

<sup>147</sup> David Bordwell remarks about another early Jancsó-film from 1968 that "[t]he key to the narration of *The Confrontation* is its great degree of uncommunicativeness. Rendering almost every scene in a single shot effectively denies us the spatial ubiquity of a more editing-centered style." Bordwell, 1984: 144.

spectator to move back and forth, left and right and immediately back on the same path. It becomes apparent that camera is highly flaunted, but at the same time it hides crucial information from her. Directions are very hard to discern. There is virtually no example of parallel editing in the entire film. Jancsó never cuts from the oppressors to the oppressed: if their duality can be expressed in a mobile shot tracking between the two parties, he will compose the character movement and the camera movement to communicate it.

Taking into account the very little psychological characterization that the spectator learns about the figures of the film, the systematic nature of the camera movements seems a central device in communicating information to the viewer. Jancsó simply refuses to explain why the characters in the film act the way they act. Instead, he uses his unique visual style to compare the Reds to the Whites and show how both sides act inhumanely once they get the chance to do so, although it seems clear that the director's sympathies are with the Communist internationalist brigades. The undecided, pacing camera tells only one thing about the soldiers on both sides: in a military conflict, it is very hard to judge either side based on moral concerns. Probably the initial motivations for entering the conflict can be compared, but once war has started, justifying any violent action becomes complicated. The linearly or circularly moving camera acts as a device that finds it hard to attach itself to any of the two opposing groups: unable to create a point-of-view, it explores the actions of the Reds and the Whites in the long mobile shots typical for Jancsó. This central concern for the filmmaker proves to be a semantic code (the lack of attachment to any of the sides in the conflict) that can be traced throughout the texture of the entire film. The hesitatingly pacing camera with its

impersonal geometry creates the theme of the evasion of humanity in The Red and the White. In the scenes of the film, there is no room for the depiction of character psychology or any form of subjectivity. The wide vistas in Jancsó's film serve as an impersonal public space. By analogy, this formal element refers to the public sphere under Socialist rule: in the repressive years after the 1956 Hungarian revolution, the faith of the individual is irrelevant. This motif defines a site where the *semantic* codes of the film are transformed into *referential* codes, both of which arise from a normative background motif of the camera presence of Neorealism adapted to local realities of 1960s Hungary. According to Roland Barthes, the referential code points to cultural knowledge or a tradition that is commonly shared by the audiences.<sup>148</sup> For the Hungarian audiences of the 1960s, the impersonal, geometrical spaces of a past, armed conflict were signs of signifiers that refer to a current historical situation. Here the camera does not want to create a scene that resembles individual experiences, tells personal stories like the Neorealist filmmakers did. The spatial continuity in Jancsó's work creates conceptual, figurative codes that nonetheless builds on the normative background of the Italian directors' compositional strategies. In The Red and the White, the figurative codes result from a normative aesthetic heritage that the filmmaker modifies to express political commentary on local circumstances.

The scenes analyzed so far dealt with the movement of the camera and a few characters. Composing for visual contrast, Jancsó used either the direction or path of the camera movement or the characters movement as elements. However, Jancsó repeatedly works with shots that include a large number of figures. Here shape or formation of the

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<sup>148</sup> Barthes, Roland. S/Z. New York: Hill and Wang. 1974. p.17

group becomes a crucial parameter in the dualistic compositions. The director complicates the contrasting camera movements and character movements with the shape of the groups in his compositions. The duality or the contrast is created in these scenes through camera movement, character movement and character arrangement.

A small remaining group of Red soldiers who escaped from the hospital arrives at a hilltop from where they can overlook a large portion of the surrounding landscape. Suddenly they spot five Whites on horses riding towards them in a linear line. The camera moves diagonally with the progressing Reds from right to left. As the five riders turn around on a circular path on front of the linear formation of Reds, a large number of Czarist soldiers move into the frame from the right to the left, surrounding the Red Brigade.



3.6 The Red and the White: The progressing Reds are surrounded: the back and forth traveling camera echoes the rhythm of the character movement, depicting the hopeless situation

Here the choreography of the character movements repeats the pattern of the camera movement: a strategy that Jancsó already used several times in the film to create a rhythm. However, this time the shape of the groups of soldiers adds a new level to Jancsó's geometrical compositions. This rhythm lines up the soldiers along a geometrical pattern, which always hides their individuality; they are part of formations and take part in an armed conflict that the director depicts as violent, non-rational and senseless. In the final scene the camera repeats this central theme of the film through the tracking shot. As the diagonally moving camera frames the slopes of the hill occupied by the Reds, the huge White army in the background moves into the frame along the same path. Outnumbered by the enemy, the Reds retreat, and instantly the camera moves back diagonally with them toward the right. As soon as most of the Red soldiers have hidden in the rye, their commander walks back to see what the enemy is up to: the traveling shot follows his character.

At this point about twenty White riders attack the hilltop. The Red officer retreats again, and the riders pass the Reds who are hiding in the field. The tracking shot now retreats diagonally as well. The Red soldiers come out of the rye and shoot at the Whites; the camera now follows the attacking Reds. This is the fifth time that the same traveling shot has changed the direction of its movement. It becomes increasingly difficult to see who controls the situation.

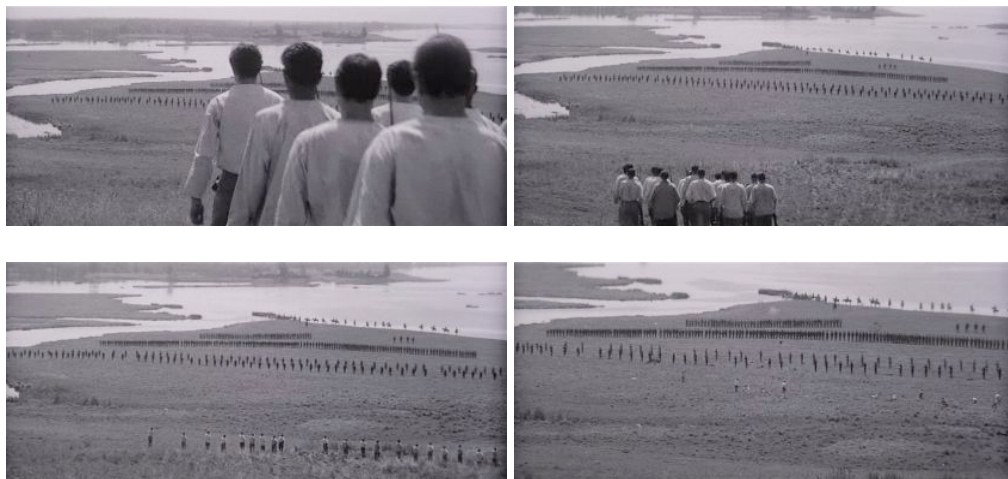






3.7 The Red and the White: In a backwards tracking shot, the White attackers on horses are attacked

Jancsó's strategy seems exactly to confuse the viewer about the power relations throughout the entire film: the attackers are attacked in the most unexpected moments. Now the Reds run in the opposite direction, and the viewer for the first time sees that there are hundreds of Whites lined up in face of them at the bottom of the hill. They retreat once more (simultaneously with the camera), regroup in a square-shaped formation and march against the Whites, singing Communist songs. They march into certain death, and the camera signals this by ceasing to follow them; it stops tracking on the left side of the hilltop and pans to the left, then it moves up on a crane. In the remaining part of the shot, we see the handful men walking and finally running towards a line of White soldiers. They kill a few Whites before they are shot themselves.



3.8 The Red and the White: The geometry of the battlefield deletes all forms of individuality: the men are dying in front of the line the Czarist army

By that time they are at an extreme long shot distance from the camera: they are depicted as toy soldiers on the battlefield whose personality does not matter. Although the camera zooms in, they are still only specks in a line-shaped military formation. In the wide vista of the tracking shot, the individuality of the soldiers is erased. As the director shows, in the arena of war the characters are not worth much; they are the building blocks of warfare or the building blocks of Jancsó's mobile frames. The ever-present camera, which normatively builds on the motif of the Neorealist "camera-presence," records this figurative code in The Red and the White in a highly conceptual form.

The identity of the two groups in the previous scene is clear from the beginning: the viewer knows that the soldiers on the hilltop are Red. Earlier in the film, however, a scene uses the strategy of including the shape of the characters' group in the interactions of the camera and character movements. However, the director here withholds information about whether the geometrically depicted characters are Red or White. The arrangement of the characters plays an important role here in the mobile frame, but the viewer does not find out the soldiers' identity until the end of the scene.

The impersonal aspect of the armed conflict is emphasized by the interplay of camera movement, character movement, character arrangement and the non-communicative narration. A White brigade rides up to a civilian hut where several women are carrying buckets of water from a well to their house. The White commander orders one of the women to undress, and his soldiers start to abuse her. Before the female



peasant is actually raped, a higher-ranking White officer shows up and executes the commander of the initial group for abusing civilians. Here Jancsó depicts a conflict within one side of the opposing forces that includes a quick change in the power scheme of the situation. How the composition of the scene, which consists only of four shots, unfolds is typical for Jancsó's strategies in The Red and the White. Formally, many elements in the mobile shots hint at the outcome that the viewer eventually witnesses: one of them is the formation or arrangement of the characters.

During the entire scene, the camera tracks back and forth along a line that is marked by the lined-up captured civilians. The traveling movement is combined with a pan [11] that always turns in the opposite direction than that of the track: if the track moves left, the simultaneous pan will compensate for it by turning to the right. Regularly, the oppressors walk or ride around the oppressed: the compositions unfold along a strongly preconceived choreography. The duality between the two groups, the soldiers and the peasants is apparent: the moving camera, the movements of the characters and the arrangement of the characters all co-produce an effect that divides the participants into oppressors and oppressed.

The formation of the figures in the frame becomes more complex when Jancsó's camera tilts up a little bit and reveals another group of soldiers entering the scene from the background in a straight line. They are so distant from the camera that the viewer cannot know whether the approaching group is Red or White.



3.9 The Red and the White: A slight tilt up reveals another line of characters in the background, parallel to the peasants

As the officer orders his men to wash the women he is about to rape, the camera continues its anticipatory horizontal tracking, which shows how the officer and his men are trapped between two lines now. The soldiers in the background are moving in closer and closer on the events, but the viewer still does not know anything about their identity.



3.10 The Red and the White: The trap around the abuser is closing as the level of violence rises

The third shot begins with another soldier riding up to the first officer, and now the viewer realizes that the approaching group is a brigade of Whites. Apparently the arriving officer is higher ranking: he makes the first officer report to him. At this point the trap around the first group of the abusing soldiers is closed. Just as in the previous shot, the camera continues the pacing left-right/right-left movement [12] as the first brigade is unarmed.





3.11 The Red and the White: The abusing officer is arrested by his own superior while the camera continues its pacing moves

Following the disarmament of the abusers, their officer is forced to walk in front of the line of soldiers, who have now the upper hand in the situation, towards the second, higher-ranking officer. Formally, the entire fourth shot of the situation mirrors the first one: only the participants have switched sides. The power relations have shifted. Just like the deserting Red who was hiding at the peasant hut, the officer is executed. The camera repeats the exact same movement from a few minutes earlier [13]. Through the mobile frame, Jancsó compares the deaths of the two men but does not add any commentary to the scene. It is left to the viewer to decide what she thinks of the actions. The impartial, non-communicative narration and the flaunted style interact here in a way that refuses to pass a judgment on its characters. The direct historical references are washed away, but the geometrical mise-en-scène with all its elements (camera movements, character movements and character arrangement within the mobile frame) forces the spectator to face the human aspects of the conflict. Oppressors and oppressed are acting very similarly, and Jancsó creates the comparison through style. Actual historical allusions are not necessary, for the director is interested in the creation of a conceptual theme in the film where individuality and subjectivity do not exist. While this qualifies the impartial camera movements as semantic codes that weave through the film (in an armed conflict,

both sides are equally responsible for the violence), for audiences who were aware of the political realities in the 1960s Hungary, the code functioned as a referential unit pointing at the irrelevance of individuality under the Soviet oppression. The figurative codes acquire their function through the cold geometry of Jancsó's style that is based on the normative heritage of the Neorealist aesthetic. This latter visual style reveals aspects of "reality" by observing it continuously, by preserving the uninterrupted spatial and temporal aspects of their representations. This strategy lives on in Jancsó's work; however, he assigns a more conceptual function to his compositions that express political-social commentary through the geometry of his lengthy takes.

A similar strategy can be discovered in another segment later on in the film, where the director visually connects two scenes by composing camera movement, character movements and character arrangement that closely resemble each other. Here again the linear vs. circular dichotomy is used, but this time Jancsó compares the soldiers to animals being gunned down. The director uses camera movement in a *dialectical* way: he first introduces two groups of figures that are compared by the visual tactics of similar camera movement, similar character movement and similar figure arrangement. From the three analogous elements the viewer recognizes Jancsó's metaphor about the brutality of the conflict. The soldiers on the ground are actually not much more important in the war than animals.





3.12 The Red and the White: While the plane passes linearly, the soldiers and the horses turn left

Jancsó again withholds probably the most important factor of the scene that would be necessary to establish a cause and effect chain among the events: who is firing at whom? Are the Reds shooting at the Whites, or vice versa? Here the linear movement of aerial shot and the circular movement of the group of soldiers and horses on the ground create the duality of the composition.

After a long shot showing the aircraft Jancsó cuts to a large group of galloping horses riding in a closed formation linearly. The linear-circular dichotomy is reversed: now it is the quickly moving aerial shot that flies above the animals on a path that turns sharply to the right. In the first part of the scene, the movement of the camera (and the plane) was linear; this time the choreography switches between the two. Flying above the horses the camera starts on the right side of the animals and ends up on their left side. Once the camera is on the left, cinematographer Tamás Somló zooms in quickly on the animals, singling out two of three from the group.





3.13 The Red and the White: The aerial shot circles around the linearly galloping horses and zooms in

Cut back to the long shot of the plane, and the next shot shows the men running from the enemy attacking from above. The fleeing men are running linearly, just like the horses, and the plane circles over them, starting again from the right and turning towards the left. Several shots are fired, and men, whose identity is still unclear, fall to the ground dead. As the shot continues, the camera once again zooms in quickly on the men, singling out two or three from the crowd. The similarity between the way the fleeing horses are recorded and the way the fleeing men are recorded cannot be overlooked.



3.14 The Red and the White: The aerial shot circles around the linearly running men and zooms in



Through style, Jancsó compares the soldiers to the horses, whose identity does not count. The asymmetrical power relations of the conflict discard any human aspects of the men participating, and their deaths are depicted as completely senseless. During the transition to the next scene the spectator finds out the identity of the soldiers on the ground (and thus that of the planes as well.) Once the camera gets down to ground level, we witness a group of Red soldiers fleeing from the White planes. This is not the first time in the film that the director withholds information to which side the soldiers he depicts belong. It seems that Jancsó is more sympathetic with the Red cause simply from the sheer numbers: the Whites appear as oppressors more often than the Reds. However, the film clearly tries to depict the conflict where good and evil cannot be defined in a Manichean manner. Here the figurative code results from a conceptual comparison: the long takes and the mobile camera observes horses and men, and finally connects the two sequences by similar camera movements.

There are no protagonists and antagonists in The Red and the White: most of the characters are small parts of a larger machinery: the war, where they behave very similarly. Depending whether they are on the side of the temporarily stronger party (oppressors) or whether they are on the losing end (oppressed), the Red and the White side will display very similar strategies. The strong abuse the weak, and the weak abuse the weaker. Once the weak become strong, and the power relation changes, they forget instantly what they just went through and abuse the group that has just abused it. This process is illustrated in Jancsó's film in a formalistic way: through the strategies of movement choreography. Through the dichotomies of the linear and circular movement, the repetition of the exact same camera- and character-movements across scenes with the

Red and the White characters on opposite sides, the director makes one thing clear. He is not so much interested in whether the Reds' or the Whites' cause was morally more acceptable. The conceptual aspect of the conflict is that once the violence erupted, both parties behave instinctively and irrationally.

This analysis has shown how the choreography of the camera movements, the characters' movements, figure arrangement, or the interplay of the three depicts a loss of humanity and loss of individuality in The Reds and the White. This evasion the director creates through composing along dualistic formal strategies in the kinetic aspects of the film. The interaction of character movement and camera movement uses the dichotomy of the linear shapes vs. circular shapes, or linear movement vs. circular movement.

Jancsó often combines the two and records a linear shape with a circularly moving camera or a circular shape with a linearly moving camera. These shapes can be soldiers in a formation or the preexisting forms in the landscape or setting (as a field divided in two by a river, or circular shaped walls of the monastery.) The overarching concept behind these geometrical compositions is that they all depict the men as mechanical parts of a machine. This mechanical nature does not take into account what the entire conflict is about; after this evasion of individuality, political questions do not even emerge in the film. The spectator sees only non-individualistic comparisons between groups of characters. The conflict remains abstract, since in The Red and the White, Jancsó does not unequivocally take sides between the Red and the White. The oppressed follow immediately the same strategies as the oppressors, once the power situation of the conflict changes. The hesitatingly, back-and-forth pacing camera itself moves constantly in between the two participating parties of the war. Thus the moving camera is a central



tool of Jancsó's non-communicative narration, which leaves the task of expressing the abstract concept of inhumanity to the flaunted, comparative visual style of the film.

However, the director takes the semantic code on the evasion of humanity in the armed conflict further. Jancsó builds on the *semantic* and creates a *referential* code to speak specifically about the political circumstances in the 1960s Hungary. To offer a critical evaluation of the local political situation, he uses a poetic language circumventing government censorship. The important aspect of this strategy for the current project is how cultural-historical circumstances are instrumental in the formation of the figurative codes of the director. This section has argued that Jancsó's visual style continues a tradition characteristic for the Italian Neorealist filmmakers: the strategy to observe and reveal "reality" by uninterrupted, continuous observation. By taking the norms for visual composition of the latter tradition and adapting them to a local cultural-political situation, the camera movements of Jancsó follow a specifically Eastern European path. Not being able to speak about the political system directly, the director offers his opinion by using style as a means for criticism. The figurative of Jancsó's semantic and referential codes is the result of an interaction between an aesthetic tradition that he continues and the political limitations he had to deal with in order to express himself as a filmmaker. The resulting poetic language shows a close connection between conceptualism and formalism, a characteristic that he continues even after a radical change in Hungary's political situation.

## II.      **Aesthetics of the Face: Subjectivity and Camera Movement in The Lord's Lantern in Budapest**

In Jancsó's early films, style always followed pre-established concepts that his films articulated. The contemporary Jancsó builds on the characteristic stylistic elements he developed more than thirty years ago, but the narrative function of the moving camera underwent significant changes. Surprising audiences and critics, the then seventy-seven year old director started an entirely new cycle of films in 1998. Not only did he break with the historical topics of his early films, but teaming up with director-cinematographer Ferenc Grunwalsky and writer Gyula Hernády, Jancsó developed a modified narrative strategy and visual style as well. Since 1998, he made six sequels to The Lord's Lantern, which are all based on the adventures of the two characters Kapa and Pepe. In the first film of the cycle, the two men are gravediggers shot and killed multiple times, but they are resurrected every time to find themselves reborn in the typical figures of the late 1990s Budapest. This allows Jancsó to give an overview of the contemporary, post-socialist Hungary and account for the social-cultural changes that happened in the country after the fall of the socialist regime.

Jancsó never really cared about developing plausible story lines and explaining the motivations behind the actions of his characters. Neither did the director establish a recognizable causal connection between the elements of his films' fabulas. However, the pre-1998 films all had some degree of cohesion or linearity: most Jancsó films used the framework of asymmetrical power relations to express how oppression or violence is

inextricably connected to the human nature. Even though not much happens in an early Jancsó film in the classical Hollywood sense, the situations he depicts develop linearly; they have beginning and an end so that the director can portray the constant shifts of power as in The Conversation or The Red and the White.

The Lord's Lantern breaks with this narrative strategy and unfolds along a series of very loosely connected episodes where only the characters of the two protagonists connect the different parts. The title of the film is actually a reference to a popular tale in Hungary in which the main character cannot be murdered since he received a lantern from the Lord that prevents him from getting killed by his enemies. The two gravediggers are shot multiple times in the film only to be resurrected as greedy entrepreneurs, corrupt businessmen or politicians, brutal and violent policemen, security guards, or simply as gravediggers again. In each episode, they return to their initial profession and comment on the events unfolding and their new characters. In this sense the gravedigger figures partially stand outside the diegetic world, since they talk about their own personae as filmic characters. But Jancsó also breaks the narrative transparency of the film by including himself and writer Gyula Hernády in several scenes of the film as themselves, talking to Kapa and Pepe. The level of reflexivity and the constantly shifting position of the narration in The Lord's Lantern make the fabula of the film hard to follow. There are no clear connections between episodes, which also interrupts the continuity between Jancsó's characters' actions. It also becomes hard to distinguish between the direct commentaries of the director about the film that he is making, the director's figure

Miklós Jancsó as a filmic character<sup>149</sup>, or the *metteur en scène* of the film The Lord's Lantern in Budapest.

András Murai has called Jancsó's new narrative strategy *disnarration*.<sup>150</sup> He describes the Kapa-Pepe cycle as films that, in a modernist way, break with logical connections of time, space and causality to emphasize that the caricature-characters of the director portray a similar situation as his early historical films: asymmetrical power relations, unfair distribution of wealth and goods, and a new unbalance between the rich and the poor. However, in the new films he does not even develop a more or less comprehensible linear frame story: only episodes remain that may or may not connect. The director introduces the new oppressors and new oppressed, who have adapted their methods to the circumstances and requirements of "wild" capitalism in the East-Central region of Europe in 1989. The director's old theme has hardly changed. The factor of the disappearing censorship might also have contributed to the disintegrating narrative strategies of Jancsó. During the socialist system, he had to disguise his commentaries about the unfair political situation he witnessed as historical stories. This allowed him to defend his films in face of the Socialist censorship in the 1960s and 1970s as ones that do not criticize the system. Hungarian audiences read his films as hidden observations on the Soviet oppression.

In the contemporary Hungary there is no need anymore to speak symbolically or in historical parables. The socialist censorship is gone. The freedom of expression in Jancsó's latest films causes his narratives to fall into several episodes: he does not bother with creating cohesive tales anymore that hide the direct historical aspects of his art. But

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<sup>149</sup> Wong Kar-Wai also includes his artistic persona in 2046, although in somewhat different form. Chapter 4 analyzes Kar-Wai's reflexive gestures in depth.

<sup>150</sup> András Murai: *Modern film and the hypertext*. (Metropolis, 2001/3. 40-49.)

the visual style that he developed with cinematographer Grunwalsky carries with it a large amount of information that the non-communicative narration withholds. Style tells more about the characters' relation to other characters and their environment than any of the dialogue. In Jancsó's current films, the visual style of the film remains a crucial element that provides one of the few connections between the films' episodes. Kapa and Pepe, whether they are powerful and wealthy businessmen or poor gravediggers, are really just oppressors and oppressed in the same character throughout the entire film, but the framings, compositions and camera movements will make this statement, not any of the characters.

The compositions and the camera's mobility narratively play a different part in this film than in Jancsó's early work. In his late 1960s films he was visually more interested in the dynamics of groups, which can be seen in the choreography of the character- and camera movements. The relative lack of close-ups that goes hand in hand with the refusal to account for the psychology of his figures created an atmosphere where individuality was pushed to the background. Jancsó's new visual style builds heavily on the experiences and earlier work of his new cinematographer Grunwalsky, whose films (Small but Strong (1989), The Return (1999)) put much heavier emphasis on the subjectivity of the characters. This subjectivity does not mean that the motivations of the characters are explained in a classical way: rather the close-ups of the faces are used as compositional elements of the formalist choreography in The Lord's Lantern.

The opposites and contrasts of Jancsó's early binary style change into an *aesthetic of the face* where each shot and camera movement is anchored to the figures' faces visible in the frame. Displaying continuity in the usage of the moving camera, however,

the director uses the faces in dualistic ways in his compositions. Also, the regular linear or circular tracking shots, which characterized The Red and the White, change into a much more irregular, shaky handheld style. Grunwalsky records most of his shots with a handheld camera that allows him to get disturbingly close to his characters. The way the characters' faces move across the frame will define the trajectory of the camera movement: Grunwalsky maintains the closed form of the faces' arrangement throughout the mobile shots. In this sense, the actors' and actresses' mobility is the central concept behind the mise-en-scène of The Lord's Lantern. The different areas of the frame play a more important part in the style of the contemporary Jancsó than earlier. Left and right, the upper and the lower regions of the frame are used expressively, which was not a typical composing strategy of the early Jancsó. If the dualism or dichotomy of the director's late 1960s films was expressed via the long takes, the large distances kept between camera and characters and the tracking shots that all created contrast between the different groups, Jancsó's revised visual style still aims at expressing the binary relations between oppressors and oppressed. This time, however, the distance between camera and actors or actresses decreases dramatically, and tracking shots change into handheld shots. The interactions between the figures in the scenes outline the blueprints for the shots' choreographies.

In this sense, Jancsó's objectivity and the refusal to account for character psychology changes into a subjectivity in the director's style that is still very formalistic and conceptual. One could argue that the spectator still does not learn much about motivations in The Lord's Lantern, but she gets the opportunity to observe the characters' faces from a small distance. This geometrical-visual arrangement of the faces narratively

plays a similar role to the ways the director moved the groups of soldiers and the camera in The Red and the White. Jancsó's visual style builds on his four decades long experiences as a filmmaker, and his adapted composing strategies are the continuations of a choreography he developed early on in his career. The new visual style is a synthezation of the schemas he has worked with during the 1960s and ever since in modified forms. The figurative codes in Jancsó's changing visual style point out that conceptually the director seems to be making similar statements in The Red and the White and in The Lord's Lantern in Budapest. What changes is the technique used for expressing the concept of power imbalance. The elements of his new visual style go back to the norms and schemes of his early art. The lack of political restraints in Jancsó's latest films causes his narratives to explore how an impersonal public sphere gave place to a more subjective, personal arena where he identifies surprisingly similar conflicts and character types as he did in his early films. According to the director, the political oppressors of the socialist system have transformed into capitalist oppressors. In his new films, he is interested in observing the faces of his characters and how the political invades the personal space of the individuals. The figurative elements of Jancsó's contemporary style arise from an interaction of his own earlier schemas and the contemporary political realities surrounding the creation of the film.

The new visual strategy emphasizes the faces in every composition and frames each shot corresponding to their formal arrangement. In the mobile shots, the path of the face moving across the frame marks the trajectory of the camera movement. The characters occupying opposite corners of the picture frame depict different attitudes that the filmmakers satirizes. Instead of explaining why the characters commit certain acts,

the director arranges their faces into binary pairs so the handheld camera movements and the mise-en-scène fill in the unaccounted aspects of the characters' motivations.

This strategy is introduced early in the film, where the director and writer Gyula Hernády meet the main characters of the film. They get together in the cemetery where Kapa and Pepe work as gravediggers and sit around a table. The handheld camera frames the scene so that the faces are arranged geometrically using the corners of the frame. Jancsó and Hernády's faces occupy the right and the left bottom corners. We never see them frontally: they appear in an over-the-shoulder shot, which creates the impression that the director and the writer are looking at the characters just like the spectator of the film. In front of them (and us), Pepe in a hat converses with one of the killers, who sits behind Hernády on the left side. Several elements in the composition guide the attention of the viewer towards the left part of the frame: first of all, the direction in which Pepe is looking from the middle of the frame. But the handheld camera also slowly moves over to the left to stop on a composition that is again marked by several faces in the corners [1].





3.15 The Lord's Lantern: The handheld shot from over the shoulder of the creators of the film moves left to frame the killer

In the scene, Jancsó (with white hair on the right) and Hernády (wearing glasses on the left) are looking at the man who killed them (Zsolt, in black shirt) along with the viewer. Their faces in the extreme foreground of the shot are positioned against the other characters. The camera moves left to bring in Zsolt, who introduces himself as the manager of the killers. "I do not even have a gun!" he says. The director casts himself (not entirely without irony) as a victim in the foreground and the new oppressors (the manager) as the killers in the background. The binary here is established using *different planes* in the composition. Moving uninterruptedly, the handheld camera keeps the dualistic composition intact throughout the shot.

Jancsó also uses the corners of the frame expressively in the moving shots. Victims and killers will occupy opposite corners in the scene. The group in the cemetery continues to chat, and after the waiter has served up their drinks, Jancsó and Hernády leave. The director shakes hand with the killer-manager and walks away. As Pepe turns around and walks over to the right side of the frame, the camera moves to the right [2]. A shooter appears in the background and kills Jancsó and Hernády. Zsolt looks at the scene with an emotionless expression from the opposite corner. After the shots are fired, Pepe attacks Zsolt, grabs him and shouts why the two old men had to be killed. He laconically answers that in his profession, there are no questions like that. "They were on the list!" This binary exists with respect to the *opposite corners* throughout the handheld shot.



3.16 The Lord's Lantern: The handheld camera adjusts to the action framing with the faces in the corners of the shot

The aesthetics used here also creates dualities or opposites in the frame. Instead of linear and circular character or camera movements, the left and right sides of the frame and foreground and background create a visual dualism. This dualism is not as objective and impartial as in the long- or extreme long shots typical for Jancsó's early films. In The Lord's Lantern it is important for Jancsó that the frame follows the action in a handheld shot, which creates a much more subjective atmosphere than a smoothly moving tracking shot. The movement here follows the action creating two layers: the first in the extreme foreground with several characters in an over-the-shoulder type position, and in the background where Zsolt appears in [1] or with the shooter in [2]. The slight camera movements are reserved for the adjustments to maintain the formal pattern with the faces in the corners.

This binary subjectivity becomes meaningful in light of Zsolt's words. It does not matter why the two old men had to be killed; they were simply on the list. The film creates two types of characters. The first group looks at violence, selfishness and brutality as the natural and necessary means to achieve their goals. Zsolt is the first representative of the film who lives and acts according to that attitude. The opposite group is exasperated at the immorality of these actions and reacts in outrage. Kapa and Pepe's characters as gravediggers stand for this attitude. When Pepe attacks Zsolt [2], the camera slightly adjusts the frame to reveal the two clashing positions. Even here, the two men's faces occupy opposite corners. From the aspect of character subjectivity, the handheld close-ups are crucial. The two different groups of characters could not be established using Jancsó's 1960s visual strategies. The large distances between camera and actors and actresses would not allow the viewer to observe their faces, on which the expressions (of the outraged characters) or the lack of expressions (of the laconic characters) are important for the conceptual aims of the film.

According to Jancsó, the political-social climate of the late 1990s gave birth to an attitude that looks at violence and oppression as completely natural. His film (and the entire Kapa-Pepe cycle) depicts this clash of different attitudes: ones that naturalize violence and greed and others that express mistrust and disbelief in face of the changing situation. While during the forty years of Socialist rule the oppression was of political nature, during the "wild" capitalism of the 1990s the different social classes are organized around pure wealth and power that pretends to be apolitical. Jancsó in his contemporary films wants us to observe the faces of these characters who are members of the new "ruling classes." Clearly this social commentary can be read as the depiction of characters

who act according to the perceived necessity of their own success: by respecting other's individuality or humanity or by disrespecting both. The interesting twist to this scheme is that most characters in The Lord's Lantern die and are reborn in characters who act according to the opposite value system. Kapa and Pepe in some scenes are gravediggers who use conventional morality to judge other characters' actions, but in others they are insensitive, Machiavellian entrepreneurs/politicians quickly ordering the death of figures who stand in their way. This strategy first compares the characters by setting up symbolic codes (comparison of the two sides) and later moves on to semantic-referential units. Jancsó's political diagnosis is fairly pessimistic: he sees the same attitudes of ignorance, intolerance and oppression as in the previous decades. The powerful aspect of these scenes arises from the disturbing closeness between camera (and viewer) and the characters' faces. While the new "entrepreneurs" in Hungary are the figures from the past, their power is not based on the political sphere but on their material wealth. They pretend to be different characters *in the face of the public*. This is why in The Lord's Lantern the viewer has to look at the characters from a minimal distance. This is why Jancsó relies on the close-ups systematically and creates a new mobile visual style on handheld shots and the geometry of the faces. For the Hungarian viewer, the director's visual strategies (referential codes) display a critique of social tendencies of the 1990s, where the socialist figures of the past reemerge as capitalist entrepreneurs. Grunwalsky's close-ups make the spectator stare at these characters from a disturbing closeness. His old norms are still alive, but the figurative codes in his contemporary films are adapted to the contemporary political realities. The semantic and referential codes in The Lord's Lantern point at Jancsó's earlier compositional strategies that exist as a normative

backdrop against which his newer codes can be interpreted. The common denominator between his 1960s and 1990s work is the camera movement that aims at creating visual dichotomies. While in The Red and the White this strategy used the normative background of the Neorealist aesthetic that he regarded as a self-imposed heritage, in his later films his own earlier strategies function as a normative background that interact with the political context of the 1990s Hungary to create the directors figurative visual codes.

Towards the end of the first episode of the film, the movements of the camera help Jancsó in creating the character's transformation. In the scene Józsi, the third gravedigger, gets married. Where she came from and how are completely irrelevant questions for Jancsó. Her appearance allows for another series of events that provide the occasion for the characters to portray oppositional characters. But as soon as Józsi, who shows up in the scene as an idiotic nouveau riche murderer who shoots his wife right after the wedding, is killed, he returns as a gravedigger.

After Józsi shoots his wife, Kapa and Pepe question him about why he killed her. The scene is a three-shot of them with the two protagonists as gravediggers and Józsi still in his wedding suit. Józsi's answer is very similar to what Zsolt said to Pepe: the question why someone was killed does not make any sense to him. The handheld three-shot [4] follows dynamics of the conversation in which Kapa and Pepe move around Józsi, who stands in the middle of the frame. The use of several mirrors mounted on the camera reflect light on the two protagonists' faces, accentuating the differences between the characters, marking them as different from Józsi. In this sense, not only the camera is handheld, but also the light sources: the entire composition maintains its mobility and can follow the quickly moving and regrouping actors.



3.17 The Lord's Lantern: The three characters move around in the handheld shot that always keeps their faces in the corners

Here Jancsó uses a third, the *left/right vs. center binary* to differentiate between different character attitudes. The director answers the question why Józsi has killed his wife through style. Finally Józsi eats a poisoned apple, which kills him. His short “life” as violent husband is over. However, after a cut the viewer witnesses the first “resurrection” of the film, which is marked with a very complicated camera movement [5].

Later the film combines the three aforementioned binaries (foreground/background, left/right corners and corners/center) in the mobile shots. Here Jancsó plays with the different personalities of Kapa and Pepe constantly. When Kapa appears as a powerful businessman, Pepe shows up as policeman who wants to give Kapa a ticket for drinking. Using the same visual tactics by composing with the faces that remain in the opposite corners of the frame, the slightly adjusted handheld shot accentuates the transformation [6]. The shifts in power create the dynamics of the scene:

when the policemen want to fine Kapa, he offers them money for looking away. As soon as he hands over the banknotes, the attitude of the two policemen becomes much friendlier. Kapa remains in control, an aspect that Jancsó emphasizes through the dual-layered shot: the corrupt policemen remain in the relative background, and Kapa is always closer to the camera. The differences are also underlined with the opposite ends of the frame versus the center area. The director here synthesizes the three binary strategies that he already introduced one by one. The obscenity of the new, “wild” capitalism becomes disturbing because the viewer is forced to witness and observe it from so close: the camera movement’s semantic code that surfaces again and again in the film points out how power relations are controlled by similar characters without the disguise of a political ideology. The figurative element again can be described as a correlation that comprises of Jancsó’s earlier visual strategies functioning as a normative background (geometrical compositions depicting an empty, hostile public space) and how his readjusted his three-decade old norms to the political realities of Hungary in the 1990s.



3.18 The Lord's Lantern: The two gravediggers appear as different characters in



the intimate handheld close-up

A traveling shot in which the camera is handheld while moving on tracks combines the three binary compositional strategies. During a later scene, Jancsó and Hernády appear again after being killed, and they sit on a bench talking to Pepe. From a close-up two-shot of creators of the film, the camera zooms out and starts to track towards the left. The surprising aspect of the movement is that the characters are moving in the same direction with the same speed as the camera: the entire bench is moved on tracks to left on a circular path. Here Jancsó recycles the linear-circular opposite to create contrast. In between, however, a complete band (Kispál, a popular Hungarian alternative rock group) appears playing a song, which seems to celebrate the resurrection of Jancsó and Hernády.



3.19 The Lord's Lantern: The characters are moving on a circular path with the camera following them on a linear track



The band between the camera and the characters in the background remains stationary. As soon as the band slides out of the frame, the movement reverses and returns on the same path to the right, together with the characters in the background. When the entire mobile composition returns to its starting phase, the resurrected character Józsi shows up in his gravedigger outfit. Even in this scene, where the camera is moved on a track, the operator (Grunwalsky) is sitting on the track holding the camera in his hand so that he can reframe to keep the characters and their faces at the corners of the frame. Again the interplay between the foreground and the background becomes important. The shot starts with Jancsó and Hernády in the foreground, but the zooming camera brings them further away. At this point behind the stationary faces of the band playing in the foreground, Jancsó and the filmic characters are moving in the background. Towards the end of the shot the bench with the characters arrives back to a medium shot proximity.

This foregrounds the faces of the characters, which seem to define the trajectory of the entire mobile composition. As soon as the faces of the filmic characters move further away from the camera, the faces of the band members move into the foreground. As the complex mobile shot brings back characters from being dead, the circular movement of the camera can be described as a full (life?) cycle. However, the camera does not impartially report about the figures, as in The Red and the White. Here characters' faces define the direction and the path of the movement. It is this sense of subjectivity that Jancsó uses to depict his oppositional characters. Once a killer, later a gravedigger: the dead character returns in the same shot that uses camera movement to comment on the interchangeability of these attitudes. Foreground and background, center and the corners, and the opposite corners all create the already detected binaries.

However, together with the handheld tracking movement, the shot produces an effect that once again lets style communicate Jancsó's main thesis: the differences between his oppressors and oppressed, or utilitarian characters and the passive ones are not that significant. They may be recorded in a moving shot using binary mise-en-scène, but most of the time, they are perfectly interchangeable.



3.20 The Lord's Lantern: With the band in foreground playing, the “dead” Józsi returns

The technique of the mobile faces guiding the mobility of the frame is carried to a new level at the end of the film when Kapa kills Pepe in a rising crane shot. Just as in [7], the camera operator steps on the crane to maintain the closed, geometrical form of the handheld shot. In the scene Kapa is a security guard who has caught the gravedigger Pepe but does not recognize him. Before Kapa shoots his friend, who dies for the fifth time, Pepe's body starts to rise. As his body rises, Kapa takes a gun and walks away from the camera, which is constantly maintaining his position in the opposite corner of the frame.



3.21 The Lord's Lantern: Pepe is killed is a crane shot: the two characters are framed dialectically

Here on top of the already mentioned binaries, the crane shot creates another level of contrast: one character high above the ground, the other one ground-level in the background. This last instance of the dualistic framing sums up the compositional strategy of the film. The characters in the opposite sides and corners of the frame represent oppositional attitudes or moralities that the director introduced in his social farce. The director does not once explain what these attitudes are. The short, disconnected dialogues that seem to have nothing to do with the action of the film, and stylistic strategies of the mise-en-scène are the only channels that contain some information the spectator can use to build hypotheses about what is happening.

The structure of the socialist societies changed in the year 1989. In the socialist system, large majorities were united in their resistance against an oppressive system that denied its citizens their basic rights. In most situations this resistance was an intellectual

position or attitude that brought people together irrespective of their different moral views, religion, social status or ethnic background. The fall of the old regime destroyed this fragile front, which led to violent armed conflicts throughout the region. In Hungary this transitory phase was peaceful, but it brought to surface the many differences buried by the socialist regime. In The Lord's Lantern, Jancsó offers his view of the two most common reactions to the disappearing socialist system and the arriving "wild" capitalism. One is the utilitarian attitude that forgets about any moral concerns when it comes to succeeding. The other is a helpless, passive attitude that is outraged at the immorality of the opposite position but is basically unable to prevent it or bring up any logical or moral arguments against it. Since Jancsó still refuses to account for the psychological motivations of his characters, style becomes the vehicle for channeling information to the viewer. The formal duality surfaces in the subjective visual style of the film: systematic compositions of the long takes and the handheld, constantly moving camera are positioning the characters at opposite sides or corners of the frame. In these dualistic compositions, characters representing the oppositional attitudes occupy the two sides or corners, or different planes.

Just like in The Red and the White, in The Lord's Lantern in Budapest Jancsó does not aim at judging any of the two groups of the film. While in the earlier film he refused to judge the actions of the Red or the White in order to display more universal dynamics of the oppressors and the oppressed, in the 1998 film neither of the two mentioned attitudes of the characters is favored. I suspect that Jancsó thinks both of them are dangerous in social terms (one because of its selfishness, the other because of its passivity), but the interactions of Kapa and Pepe are much more interesting for the

director than the question: “Which one’s actions are morally acceptable?” While in the former film the moving camera created a dialectic using different or opposite paths for the tracking shot and the character movement (linear or circular), in the Kapa-Pepe cycle the moving handheld camera frames the characters on opposite sides or corners to display their duality. By systematically using a stylistic technique to describe the filmic figures, Jancsó continues the formalist tradition that he started with his early films with significant adjustment.

The connections between the narrative functions of the camera movements in the two films are visible now. Through different formal strategies, Jancsó continues to assign a similar function to the mobile frame both in The Red and the White and in The Lord’s Lantern in Budapest. The technique of the very long takes and the moving shots remains virtually untouched. However, the types of the movements changed. The 1967 film built on the regularly and smoothly moving tracking and crane shots and used the similarities and dissimilarities to create dichotomies within the frame and to compose for a visual dialectics. In Jancsó’s 1998 film, the average shot length is not significantly shorter. Nearly all the compositions move: they are handheld so that the cinematographer can quickly react to and interact with the actresses and actors moving. In these intimate shots, the camera uses the foreground/background axis to create contrasts and the different oppositional areas of the frame: left/right and top/bottom. In Jancsó’s contemporary films the faces become building blocks for a formal visual compositions that counterweight for all the non-communicative aspects of the director’s narrative strategies. It seems that because of the smaller distances between the camera and the characters, the films would reveal more about the psychology of the characters, but this new subjectivity in the Kapa-

Pepe films is a formal subjectivity: the faces are only important as composing material for the film. The figures represent moral values or their lack that Jancsó's new works depict. The stylistic strategies are similar in the old and the new films.

This chapter has argued that the figurative codes of the camera movements' narrative functions in the two films analyzed stem from a tradition with which Jancsó consciously connects his art. Roland Barthes described textual codes that range from the proairetic, and hermeneutic toward the symbolic, the semantic and the referential. This project adapts this continuum and argues that more complex textual codes (figurative) are built on an interaction of less complex codes (normative) and their cultural-political milieu. Jancsó's textual units first build on the Neorealist strategies for visual composition and manipulates them to fit the restraints of expression in the Hungarian Communist-type oppression of the 1960s. This analysis showed how his own earlier codes proved to be normative in the formation of his contemporary figurative techniques. His early films showed a continuation of the Italian Neorealist themes and style. The presence of the camera in the Neorealist aesthetics in Jancsó's hands transforms into a calculated, formal geometry that serves the expression of conceptual ideas. In the political milieu of the 1960s Hungary, the state censors did not tolerate social-political criticism. Therefore, directors developed a language that let the style of these films communicate the critical observations. In The Red and the White, Jancsó's camera movements function along the semantic codes (humanist critique of the armed conflict by equating the opposite sides) that the local audiences read as referential units (the geometry of the style speaks of the lack of subjective space under the Socialist regime.) In his contemporary film The Lord's Lantern, the dualistic strategies of the camera

remain intact, but the cold geometrical style gives place to compositional tactics that anchor movement to the characters' faces. Here the figurative element in the handheld mobile shots arises from the comparison and the interchangeability of the old political oppressors and the nouveau riche capitalist. Jancsó creates the equation between the two by his dualistic camera movements that move the faces between the opposite corners of the mobile frame. The transition between the types of ruling classes in Hungary took place publicly, and most of the figures who today pose as "entrepreneurs" never had to account for their past actions. The director expresses this by making the audience stare at characters from a disturbing closeness. Decades after the formation of his artistic norms, Jancsó's political evaluation again takes the form of conceptual, stylistic strategies. The figurative arises out of the interaction of normative elements and their cultural-historical context.

Understanding and analyzing the narrative schemes of the mobile frame in The Red and the White has allowed this chapter to approach the narrative role of the visual style in the The Lord's Lantern. Also, the methodology that traced the role of camera movement continuously between the director's two films allowed for a stylistically more accurate account of Jancsó's modernist narration and political criticism: a tactics in Jancsó's work that can be detected on the stylistic level as well.

## Chapter Four

**MOBILITY AND THE DOMESTIC:**

## Horizontality and Camera Movement in the Far Eastern Interior

Camera movement has become a central trademark of contemporary visual style. The mobile frame, once a rarity that was reserved for dramatic highlights of the film, is used today by most filmmakers as a device that does not necessarily call attention to the crafted nature of the medium. The function of the moving camera is less flaunted, and viewers do not necessarily read it as an authorial technique. The mobile frame is one of four characteristics that mark major changes in the dominant visual style of contemporary cinema, which David Bordwell calls *intensified continuity*.<sup>151</sup> Although the examples that Bordwell uses suggest that the new style typifies American films, he makes it clear that the four changes described have a broader range. Visually, the differences between different popular national cinematic traditions have become harder to spot. This in turn suggests that the international style of narrative film will gradually be more and more homogenous. Diversities between mainstream eastern and western cinema norms are disappearing. As Bordwell points out, “[i]n Hong Kong during the 1980s, John Woo and Tsui Hark reworked Western norms, creating a flamboyant style that amounts to an intensification of an intensification.”<sup>152</sup> The elements of the intensified continuity style—more rapid editing, the usage of extreme lenses, increasing reliance on close-ups and lastly the constantly moving camera—seem to fit well with the martial arts genre

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<sup>151</sup> Bordwell, David. “Intensified Continuity” *Film Quarterly* 55, 3 (Spring 2002) pp. 16-28.

<sup>152</sup> Bordwell, David. “Intensified Continuity.” pp. 21.



depicting physical action, such as Woo's and Hark's films. But what happens in the more restrained context of the melodrama?

This chapter will trace the concept of intensified continuity in four far-eastern films, focusing on camera movement. The analysis will investigate Tran Anh Hung and Wong Kar-Wai's two films, which all take place in the domestic sphere. Depicting family- or love stories, the four films do not use intensified continuity (and most importantly, the mobile frame) to display action but rather to reveal the emotional states of their characters. The concept of intensified continuity fits Hong Kong action cinema better than the domestic films of Tran or Wong. All the examples that Bordwell mentions in his article when making the case for an international stylistic trend come from the genre of the action films. Therefore, the question whether the argument about intensified continuity can be applied across genres is of central relevance for this chapter. The concept of intensified continuity is descriptive on a fairly general level, which gives the term a wide range of applicability. The style of most contemporary directors displays the trademarks described by Bordwell, although these specific stylistic schemas will mix with the personal artistic concepts of these filmmakers. In different ways Tran Anh Hung and Wong Kar-Wai make intensified continuity their own. Although the visual style of both filmmakers can be placed in the larger international trend described by David Bordwell, their style is not typical and displays creative innovations, showing how the framework of intensified continuity can be repurposed. The narrative functions of camera movements are used systematically to show how a general trend can be tweaked to fit the subjective and authorial styles that this chapter will analyze. Therefore, in accord with the general purposes of this project, I will analyze how the figurative codes at work in the

two directors' films are based on the background of intensified continuity that interacts with the specific Asian forms of melodramatic expression.

Camera movement in Tran's and Wong Kar-Wai's films becomes an element that is used regularly, but the function of these mobile compositions proves to be different than in the Eastern action cinema. Tran's The Scent of the Green Papaya (1993) and Vertical Ray of the Sun (2000) connects characters and depicts relationships in the family with the moving camera, which crosses domestic interior spaces to express how the members of the family relate to each other. The orchestration of camera and character movement fulfills the role of mapping out traditional perceptions of the Vietnamese family. This chapter, however, is not only interested in camera movement per se: it also focuses on the development of the normative and figurative stylistic devices. The function of the moving camera in Papaya and Vertical Ray shifts significantly. Therefore, this section of the project investigates how the background norm of intensified continuity interacted with Asian forms of domestic melodrama in manipulating the narrative function of the tracking frame.

In Wong's In the Mood for Love (2000) and 2046 (2004) style functions as an element that communicates the separation and melancholy of the protagonists. Here movement also becomes an expressive device, but the lyrical spaces of Wong Kar-Wai express disconnection and suggest the impossibility of fulfillment. In the case of the two Hong-Kong films, the central question also focuses on the connections between the uses of the mobile framing. Since 2046 continues the story of In the Mood, the aspect of stylistic continuity moves into the foreground as well.

In the case of both directors, the chapter investigates *how* the artists modify an international stylistic trend according to local motifs and change the function of a technique that cuts across their continuing works. Overall, the argument of my project is that the assignment of figurative function to the tracking camera presupposes that the same technique already is an established, recognized stylistic element, i.e. a normative- or a less complex figurative textual code. In the current case study, the normative background is provided by an international stylistic trend, i.e. intensified continuity. I argue that the figurative narrative functions of the tracking shot in the two directors' work is based on an interaction of a general stylistic trend and local, Asian forms of melodramatic expression.

### **I. Intensified Continuity: an International Stylistic Trend**

At the core of Bordwell's article lies the conviction that no groundbreaking stylistic change has occurred in Hollywood since the classical period. The continuity system is still intact:

[e]stablishing and reestablishing shots situate the actors in the locale. An axis of action governs the actors' orientation and eyelines, and the shots, however different in angle, are taken from one side of that axis. The actors' movements are matched across cuts, and as the scene develops, the shots get closer to the performers, carrying us to the heart of the drama.<sup>153</sup>

However, there are still significant changes in visual style, most of which show an intensification of the classical continuity: "Intensified continuity is traditional continuity

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<sup>153</sup> Bordwell, David. "Intensified Continuity." pp. 16

amped up, raised to a higher pitch of emphasis.”<sup>154</sup> The trends of the contemporary visual style show that editing has accelerated gradually since the 1960s. Where a typical Hollywood film in the 1940s had about 300-700 shots and an average shot length (ASL) of 8-11 seconds, in the nineties films are much faster and contain more than 3000 shots. The second element of the new visual style is the increasing reliance on extreme lenses. Filmmakers use either long or short lenses and compose less and less with the “normal” 35mm lens. Thirdly, Bordwell lists the closer framings in the dialogue scenes of contemporary films that increasingly reduce the actors and actresses to faces. Finally, the free-ranging camera completes intensified continuity.

Although Bordwell in his article does not investigate in depth the reasons why these changes might have occurred, it seems safe to assume the rising financial significance of the ancillary markets is one of the most important factors that forced filmmakers to rethink their strategies of visual composition. Films today make more money on the small TV screens than in their theatrical version. The adjustments in style can be linked to the characteristics of the 1.33:1 aspect ratio of the TV and the sheer size of the TV screen. The smaller screen calls for a different aesthetic approach that is reflected in these four changes. The intensification of style is a logical and necessary step because the image has to be more attractive to hold the attention of the TV-spectator. It remains to be seen how the new HD technology with its 16:9 aspect ratio will change intensified continuity.

The range of Bordwell’s analysis is clearly international, although his examples are all from Hollywood films. “Many movies made outside North America use the same

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<sup>154</sup> Bordwell, David. “Intensified Continuity.” pp. 16.

expressive tactics I've highlighted (...) More broadly, intensified continuity has become a touchstone for the popular cinema of other countries."<sup>155</sup> However, it is clear that Wong is *not* a typical Hong Kong filmmaker, and the Vietnamese Tran *cannot* be linked to the Hong Kong tradition. It seems that intensified continuity also has its marks on filmmakers who do not follow the governing norms. Thus, the fluid camera (an international trend in the changing visual style of films) in the works of the two directors in question creates an entry point into their oeuvre. This allows for an analysis of kinetics as an expressive tactic in the depiction of the domestic, the family and romantic relationships.

## II. Melodrama in an Asian Context

The family in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Vietnamese and Chinese societies underwent significant changes. On one hand, the Vietnamese family has been asymmetrically damaged by several wars and the "burden of remembering the dead (...) has fallen to a postwar population in which women vastly outnumber men."<sup>156</sup> In this situation, the responsibility of "running the family" is taken over by female characters.<sup>157</sup> Vietnamese society, however, has been still dominated by a patriarchal Confucian family system that does not emancipate women but relegates them to the domestic duties. Often, Vietnamese

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<sup>155</sup> Bordwell, David. "Intensified Continuity." pp. 21.

<sup>156</sup> Tai, Hue-Tam Ho. "Faces of Remembrance and Forgetting." In: The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam. University of California Press. 2001. p. 167.

<sup>157</sup> Pam Grier recounts a similar situation in American society around the late 1960s with the men away fighting a war. This unbalanced situation finds its way to motion pictures in the Blaxploitation films' dominant female characters that Grier often portrayed. Badass Cinema. New Video Group. 2002.

art has portrayed dominant mother characters who take care of the family from the background. The culture idealizes images of the mother in the visual arts, poetry, and both traditional and popular music. Significantly, “[i]n contrast to this picture of maternal tenderness and constancy, fathers are often portrayed as unreliable creatures, absent emotionally and often physically.”<sup>158</sup> Most characters of Tran’s 1993 and 2000 film fit well into these patterns of gendered imagination. The domestic melodramas of the director connect to this tradition, but at the same time they modify the normative international trend of increasing reliance on camera movements. Both Papaya and Vertical Ray combine the aforementioned normative background with locally specific “language” of the melodrama dominated by female figures to create intriguingly complicated forms of figurative expression.

On the other hand, Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-Wai’s cultural heritage is of different kind. His films depict a similar conflict between traditional and the modern society, but Wong takes the cultural clash into an urban setting. His characters struggle with memories of relationships that could not and cannot be fulfilled: the melodramatic aspect of the two films bring to surface a highly formalistic nostalgia that can be interpreted on a political level as well hinting at the modern history of Hong Kong, the nation state. Although In the Mood for Love and its “sequel” 2046 are both saturated with references to national identity and Hong Kong, in this chapter I focus on the couple or rather the impossibility of the formation of a couple as a sign of modernization of a traditional society. Around the main characters the viewer can see large families, which makes the contrast between the traditional family and the dysfunctional marriages of the

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<sup>158</sup> Tai, Hue-Tam Ho. “Faces of Remembrance and Forgetting.” p. 169.

protagonists even starker. Wong creates a visual harmony and authenticity of the 1960s Hong Kong that in turn functions as a surrogate for the unconsumed emotions of Chow and Su. The melodramatic in Wong's domestic stories expresses the tension between modern urban life and the traditional domestic harmony, which reveals the importance of the basic unit of the Confucian social order, the family. The emotional imbalance of the characters becomes much more suffocating since it takes place within the beautifully choreographed, harmonic compositions of Wong. In the director's world, the unity of the surrounding only exists to create a contrast to Chow and Su's sufferings.

Western society's need for melodrama stems from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the shifting ethical paradigms of the rising bourgeoisie. Several scholars analyzed the notion of melodrama<sup>159</sup> in recent years who distinguish between several different melodramatic modes. This chapter focuses on the domestic family melodrama, which has been described by Peter Brooks as the *text of muteness*. "Words, however unrepressed and pure, however transparent as vehicles for the expression of basic relations and verities, appear to be not wholly adequate to the representation of meanings, and the melodramatic message must be formulated through other registers of the sign."<sup>160</sup> In the domestic family melodrama the function of articulating emotions often is carried by pantomime and gesture. Often the action stops to sum up the situation in tableaux that freeze the characters in typical or highly descriptive poses. The fates of the characters in the domestic melodrama frequently turn 180 degrees, so the Manichean morality of the stories is easy to discern. According to Brooks, society's interest in melodrama stems

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<sup>159</sup> Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity* (Columbia University Press, 2001), Ben Brester—Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and Early Feature Film* (Oxford University Press, 1998), Christine Gledhill (ed.) *Home Is Where the Heart Is* (British Film Institute, 1987).

<sup>160</sup> Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven: Yale University, 1995. p. 56.

from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when the rising bourgeoisie turned toward secular moral meaning to encompass everyday life.

Western critics of Hollywood melodrama have focused on the bourgeois ideology of the family. Later, the feminist critics<sup>161</sup> pointed out “the specific relevance of particularly the 1930s and 1940s melodrama modes to women. Feminists have been exploring ways in which the genre (a) permitted the articulation of unconscious female needs, desires and frustrations and (b) allows for female figures to be subjects of narratives (...)”<sup>162</sup> The importance of the melodramatic expression in Asia has been significantly different from its Western counterparts. Vietnamese melodrama, which because of the common Confucian background has similar forms as the Chinese melodrama, focuses not on the individual’s experiences within the family but family as a coherent unit in itself. According to Ning,

Family melodrama has been one of the dominant forms of expression in the Chinese cinema since its beginning in the early years of this century. The centrality of the genre in Chinese cinema derives to some extent from the position of the family in Chinese society. The family, rather than the individual or the state, was the most significant social unit in traditional China. In addition to its basic socioeconomic functions, the family constituted a unique social-security system that provided care for its needy and aging members and a religious unit where ancestor worship was performed.<sup>163</sup>

Maintaining this basic socioeconomic and religious unit therefore is the main goal of family melodrama in the Asian context instead of expressing male and female domestic

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<sup>161</sup> Mulvey, Laura. “Notes on Sirk and Melodrama.” *Movie* 25-26:53-6. (1990). De Lauretis, Teresa. *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1976. Doane, Mary Ann. “Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator.” *Screen* 23, 3-4 (September): 74-87.

<sup>162</sup> Kaplan, E Ann. “Melodrama/Subjectivity/Ideology: Western Melodrama Theories and their Relevance to Recent Chinese Cinema.” In.: *Melodrama and Asian Cinema*. (Ed.) Dissanayake, Wimal. Cambridge University Press, 1993. p. 12.

<sup>163</sup> Ning, Ma. “Symbolic Representation and Symbolic Violence: Chinese Family Melodrama of the early 1980s.” In.: *Melodrama and Asian Cinema*. (Ed.) Dissanayake, Wimal. Cambridge University Press, 1993. p. 29.



experiences. Tran Anh Hung regards the family home with a nostalgia that is hard to miss: as an émigré filmmaker his longing for the domestic harmony is realized in the visual harmony he creates. The family home with its interconnected spaces that are traversed by the female figures and the tracking camera show that “the image of the mother that represents the nostalgic days of childhood and the sense of connectedness with one’s personal past.”<sup>164</sup> Tran regards this nostalgic harmony as one that can be recreated: as I argue, his visual style can be regarded as an attempt to do so. As this chapter turns towards In the Mood for Love and 2046, Wong Kar-Wai’s melancholic-pessimistic version of the same nostalgic longing will move into the foreground.

### **III. Tracking through the family home: Tran Anh Hung**

Tran is an émigré filmmaker who left Vietnam with his family at an early age around the time of the communist victory in the nation’s civil war. They moved to Paris where he studied film production. In 1993 he directed his feature-film debut The Scent of the Green Papaya, which is set in Vietnam but was shot outside Paris with a cast of French-Vietnamese nonprofessionals. The film revolves around the hardships of a family where the father regularly takes all the savings and spends it in the course of a week, after which he returns broke and sick. We witness the events through the eyes of Mui, a young maid who will become a family member and ends up marrying one of the sons.

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<sup>164</sup> Tai, Hue-Tam Ho. “Faces of Remembrance and Forgetting.” p. 169.

Tran created a lyrical visual style where the mobile camera systematically crosses through the spaces of the Vietnamese family home to reveal nostalgically the dynamics of the relationships between the family members. The sophisticated compositions of the film use two, three and sometimes even four different planes of action with moving characters. By the movements of the camera, Tran manages to keep the figures in door- or window frames that create frames within the frame. The *mise-en-scène* on the one hand establishes the characters as separated from the other members from the family<sup>165</sup>; on the other hand the constantly tracking camera reverses this impression by moving through the doors and windows, breaking down these barriers. The horizontality of the compositions probably stems from the humble behavior of the film's central character Mui, who moves in with the family as a servant. Her head lowered, quietly and politely gliding across the rooms of the house, the camera imitates Mui's visual experiences. Tran uses short lenses to give his compositions a large depth of field, which allows the characters to move in any possible direction without the viewer losing focus. If he uses long lenses, the shot will rack focus shifting our attention in between different planes of the composition. The handling of the space introduces a unity that is only disrupted by shallow compositions if Tran didactically directs the viewer's attention to one plane of the family home.

Tran's tendency to use slow horizontal tracking shots and the short lenses virtually eliminates the possibility of visual separation that the frames within the frame seem to create. Accordingly, the entire house opens up as one communal space allowing the movement to explicate the restrained behavior of the family. The kinetics of the film

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<sup>165</sup> Camera movement will achieve similar functions in Wong Kar-Wai's films that will be analyzed in the second part of this chapter.

expresses what the family members cannot say to each other verbally. The Scent of the Green Papaya thus becomes a nostalgic study in Vietnamese family relations where the traditional patterns of behavior are left intact, but the style of the film constantly comments on the events in a melodramatic way. This chapter will argue that in Tran's two films the muteness of the melodramatic situation transfers the function of the representation of meaning to formal qualities of the image. Instead of the gestures or pantomime more commonly associated with the melodramatic expression, the unity of the family becomes visible through an exteriorization of emotions depicted through visual style. Mise-en-scène, in which the figurative, horizontally tracking camera plays an essential part, represents a domestic unity created by the female characters that in turn is a *semantic code* woven through the texture of the film. According to Roland Barthes, the semantic signifier occurs "in several places in the text; it is a shifting element which can combine with other similar elements to create characters, ambiances, shapes and symbols."<sup>166</sup> As I will point out, the idea of the mother, the servant and Mui breaking down physical and emotional isolation becomes visible through the reappearing codes of the visual style of the film. The figurative development of the tracking shot's narrative function is the guiding question for this project. Against the background of intensified continuity's camera movement, Tran develops a new textual code where the technique results from an interaction with the Asian motifs of the melodramatic. The figurative devices are based on existing normative elements and the local cultural context.

Tran introduces his visual strategies to the viewer at the very beginning of the film. As Mui arrives at the house where the film will take place, the camera accompanies

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<sup>166</sup> Barthes, Roland. S/Z. New York: Hill and Wang 1974: 17.

her walking up on the street when she knocks on the door. The mother appears at the door, and her figure becomes visible in a bright window frame. When Mui enters, the viewer meets the family as she walks through the house. Tran keeps all the characters either behind frames or bars, which establishes the characters as constrained and separated from each other. As the mother and Mui walk through the house in one long right-to-left tracking shot [1], their characters are walking behind the windows along the corridors of the house, constantly remaining within the borders established by the openings.



4.1 The Scent of the Green Papaya: Mui's arrival. Tran uses the doors and windows as frames within the frame

There are several planes here that Tran uses; plants that mark the foreground create a curtain to the events unfolding in the middle ground. The mother and Mui occupy this second plane. Behind their characters, we see the father playing his instrument in a window. The dark, silhouetted figures of the two women quietly rushing past the man's window create a subtle impression in the viewer about the gender relationships in the family. Tran will elaborate on the topic later on in the film, but the introduction speaks for itself: the female characters will challenge traditional gender roles in nontraditional ways. What seems like a confinement of the female characters will reveal itself as an ability to show responsibility—something the head of the family (the father) is unable to. The (verbally) mute text will express the unifying function of the maids and the mother by horizontally moving the camera, depicting the domestic work of the women. While the male characters in the film do not ever labor, the mother, the old maid and Mui cross the sections of the house horizontally, taking care of the household. The semantic function of the camera movement creates a theme of the working women that is woven through the entire text of the film pointing at the gender roles in the family home. This sets up a horizon of expectation for the viewer along which the gender relations will be interpreted.

When Mui sits down on her bed and the old maid starts to undress her, the camera starts to track back towards right on the same path. Tran gives his viewer another chance to explore the house, this time with the mother who serves up some tea for the father. We feel that she is just another servant for the man, who does not say a single word after a cut has taken us closer to his room. However, we are still lurking through a window, the frame of which borders the composition. The father's face remains completely

motionless. The first shot of the film has introduced the viewer to all the characters of the film and has tracked across the family home twice, all in one shot. The semantic code is the gender role pattern; this pattern is conveyed through different framing strategies: we saw the confined, uncommunicative father in stationary shots and the females in long tracking shots connecting the different sections of the house with their character movement.

The aspect ratio of the film is 1.66:1, which does not give the director a very wide frame, but it seems that Tran is working with well-defined modules just as anamorphic compositions do. These modules as geometrical units foreground the two-dimensional concept of the *grid* that can be placed on the composition. The concept of the grid that Marshall Deutelbaum borrows from graphic design and applies to the analysis of the anamorphic frame as modules<sup>167</sup> becomes an even more complex formal characteristic of the frame once it is applied to shots with camera movement. With horizontal tracking shots the viewer mentally constructs a wide diegetic space that unfolds along the geometrical forms of the family home. Tran's modules do not necessarily obey the rigid concept of the quarter grid coming from graphic design. However, the choreography of character and camera movement will put characters behind several different modules that in the domestic sphere are represented by doors, hallways and doorframes. Tran's irregular modules are in constant flux, changing as the tracking shots horizontally slide in new details of the family home. The modules seem so organic because they correspond to

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<sup>167</sup> "Most useful of all has been the concept of the grid as a rational and objective regulative system. In books and magazines the grid insures a uniformity of lay-out from page to page. The quartered grid in anamorphic filmmaking provides a similar uniformity of composition from shot to shot. The two dimensional pattern of the grid that underpins the placement [of] text and image on the printed page functions equally well to underpin the placement of a film's apparently three-dimensional elements." Deutelbaum, Marshall. "Basic Principles of Anamorphic Composition" *Film History* Vol. 15. pp. 72-80 2003: 72.

the structure of the home and not the rigid notion of the pre-established grid. In Tran's compositions, the modules seem to follow elements of the diegetic space rather than regular quarter divisions.

The separation of the characters in space seems to follow the architectural patterns of the house in which the entire scene unfolds. Each character occupies a module to herself, into which the other characters rarely intrude. These modules are either openings on the walls like door- or window frames, or plain bars and columns that vertically divide up the space of the shots. However, the camera will break down the barriers between these modules, and Tran connects the horizontal camera movements to the female servant's way of quietly moving through the house.



4.2 The Scent of the Green Papaya: During the same shot, the architecture of the house creates modules that the moving camera crosses

Sometimes the modules occupy the entire vertical dimension of the frame from the top to the bottom, as can be seen in 4.2: the doors on the hallway, the areas between the columns in the garden. But the irregularity of Tran's modules is apparent in each of the four frames on 4.1: the windows demarcate areas that will serve as a frame first for

the mother's head when she opens the gate for Mui, then for both Mui and the mother behind the window bars in the second frame. Later a differently shaped module window frames the father, who resignedly and introvertedly plays his instrument, and lastly for the old maid and Mui settling down in the servant's room. These windows all mark irregular modules, but they also function as the personal territories of the characters that are rarely violated. Deutelbaum rightly points out that the modules can be used to focus the attention of the spectator to a specific (central) part of the frame, but with the mobile frame, the viewer is forced to notice the repeating patterns of the modules within the modules hiding the characters. The tracking camera provides the connection between these segments by the horizontal traveling shots that keep the units of space in flux. Thus the technique figuratively "shows" how the through the female characters' actions the isolation of the family members can be overcome.

The complex, fluid modular tracking shots become a central stylistic trademark of the film. Tran adds new planes to compose, reveal, cut off and open up complicated and irregular modules within the domestic sphere. In an eighty-eight second mobile shot [4], the camera moves across the house and reveals character separation. Starting with a long shot of Trung and the father playing music behind a set of bars, the camera very slowly starts to track right, which will briefly reveal them in a narrow module on the left side of the frame, allowing the viewer a glimpse of the intimate moment between father and son. After the two slide out of the frame, the camera continues its movement and tracks across two rooms just to show the mother walking down on the stairs from the grandmother's room. Here the tracking stops and reverses its direction to follow the mother back toward the left and show her retreating to the bedroom. First she walks down through a doorway



in the central module of the composition towards the background, and as she takes a right at the end of the corridor, the camera movement changes its direction again. After a short right track, Tran shows the mother entering her room, her figure diminished in size because of the larger distance, standing in the brightly lit door. The bars behind which the scene unfolds accompany her movement throughout the entire shot.



#### 4.3 The Scent of the Green Papaya: The men play music while the mother retreats to the bedroom

The geometry of these compositions seems apparent. Sometimes the frame is divided into regular three-part modules; in other parts of the tracking shot the quartered frame dominates, but the doors and windows constantly open up additional, smaller modules during the tracking, indexing the characters. Accordingly Tran's modules can be

parts of the frame but also portions of the diegetic space. The restrained representation of the character relations within the family foreshadows the events that are about to take place. Apparently there is not much communication going on between the father and the mother. Even Trung and his father rather exchange musical tunes instead of words, an episode characteristic of their inability to articulate their feelings.

Despite the lack of communication, the tracking of the camera is the only occasion that encourages the viewer to look at the group of characters as one family. The composition of the main character's (Mui's) and the old maid's movements across the spaces of the house mirror the tracking path of the camera. Meanwhile, the members of the family are too busy trying to keep up an external harmony that is reflected in every element of the mise-en-scene: the object sliding through the tracking shot, the saturated colors of the household – basically the entirely geometrical and calm atmosphere of the house. As Tran explains in an interview he gave to Cineaste,

[d]ealing with the family is an inherent mechanism in Asian society. The way one thinks about the individual is very different between east and west. There are no 'outstanding' human beings in Asia. However, there are exemplary ones. The superman image can only be a creation of the West, because it's the exaltation of the individual. Whereas in Asia the individual is blended in a group, and the family is primary.<sup>168</sup>

The male characters' actions endanger the unity for the family in Papaya. This is why the visual separation of the figures becomes important for the director. Counterbalancing isolation, the horizontally moving camera re-introduces the unity via the female characters. The establishing of the visual isolation/unification theme (Barthes' semantic

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<sup>168</sup> Sklar, Robert. "The Politics of Pure Emotion" Cineaste, Fall 2001, Vol. 26. p. 70.

signifier) apparent in Papaya is of central importance, since it will serve as the basis for stylistic inferences in Tran's next domestic film, Vertical Ray.

In Papaya, the melodramatic effect of the compositions in the domestic are created by the apparent contradictions between the visual aspects of the unity we encounter in every shot of the film and the lack of domestic harmony that exists in the relationship between the mother and the father. The drama stems from the couple having lost a daughter and the parents being unable to forgive themselves for what happened with her. Therefore, Mui's appearance brings memories to the surface that trigger another catastrophic turn of events later on in the film. However, the cataclysmic reversals of the characters' faiths are not dealt with in a Western manner. Tran explains that in Western cinema, confrontations are important elements because they tend to be dramatic and noisy. On the other hand,

[i]n Asia, this isn't necessarily so. In a Confucian world order, harmony is the most important. (...) [T]he characters wonder what part of suffering can remain within themselves. Keeping suffering within oneself means never throwing it out on the table. If you discuss it, you keep it alive. Whereas when you keep it inside, in time it dissolves. That's a big difference between Asia and the West.<sup>169</sup>

In Tran's film, this emotional isolation of the character is apparent though the visual separation of the characters into discrete modules of the frame. But the mobile camera keeps the "harmony" of family unity alive by tracking through the house and by introducing the continuity back into the restricted and non-communicative encounters the characters go through. Mui's curiosity and the still-life-like extreme close-ups of animals and plants tie this sense of domestic harmony to nature.

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<sup>169</sup> Sklar, Robert. "The Politics of Pure Emotion" Cineaste, Fall 2001, Vol. 26. p. 70.

Eastern variations of the domestic melodramatic look even more restrained than many of their Western equivalents. But the domestic melodramatic tradition has always limited the possibility of physical action and replaced it with introverted psychological self-accusations. According to Elsaesser, in the western domestic melodrama “the hysterical outburst replaces any more directly liberating or self-annihilating action, and the cathartic violence of a shoot-out or a chase becomes inner violence, often which the characters turn against themselves.”<sup>170</sup> This interiorization of the conflict in the melodrama will not allow the characters to live out their inner tensions, which restrain the way they act and talk. Style, acting and mise-en-scène will be the central tools in the filmmakers’ hands to express these inner conflicts. For example, critics point to Douglas Sirk’s recurring use of mirrors that represent the split consciousness of the characters. Here the drama is the result of the tension between the desire to act but the impossibility to do so. Elsaesser says that

Melodrama is iconographically fixed by the claustrophobic atmosphere of the bourgeois home and/or the small-town setting, its emotional pattern is that of panic a latent hysteria, reinforced stylistically by a complex handling of space in interiors (...) to the point where the world seems totally predetermined and pervaded by ‘meaning’ and interpretable signs.<sup>171</sup>

In the Western melodramatic tradition the interiorization of the conflict is expressed via transferring the psychological into the exterior; the mute melodrama reveals itself in a world of signs.

Tran in the Cineaste-interview points out how in the eastern domestic melodrama even the possibility of the hysterical outburst is suppressed. The interiorization that is

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<sup>170</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama” in. Movies and Methods II. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.p. 177.

<sup>171</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama” in. Movies and Methods II. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. p. 183.

noted by theorists of the Western melodrama emerges in a more radical form in the Eastern variant: the emotional is further repressed. The regularity and tranquility of forms and the camera movements contradict the viewer's perception about the psychology of the characters. However, the world filled with interpretable signs noted by Elsaesser also exists in The Scent of the Green Papaya, where the trapped plants (the seeds of the papaya fruit buried inside) and animals (the ants stuck in wax) become surrogates for the characters, who also seem to be trapped by not being able to express themselves emotionally. Ultimately, the visual unity of the tracking shots' semantic codes shows that the characters of Papaya will overcome the domestic crisis. This foreshadows the conclusion of the film, which refuses to accept the burden that the father's infidelity introduces. Visual order suggests that the tradition of the family as a whole cannot and will not be disrupted as a result of the actions of a single individual. In this context, the muteness of the female characters assumes the function of active contribution to the continuity of the family unity. Tran's visual style seems to suggest this difference between the female and the male characters of the film: there is a strong contrast between three main female characters' mobility in the family home and the isolation of the male characters. The local uses of the melodramatic expression significantly contribute to the formation of Tran's figurative camera movements. In a Barthesian sense, the tracking frames function here as *semantic* and *referential* codes. Semantic, since the topic of the imbalanced gender relations is depicted through the female's efforts to keep the family running, and referential, since the Asian melodramatic meaning is closely tied to local forms of expression. These figurative codes are based on the interaction of the

contemporary visual style's growing reliance on mobile shots and locally specific mode of the melodramatic.

Tran's frequent tracking shots gain significance in the light of the family's unity that must survive. In the times of crisis, characters stick to the common everyday practices that the horizontal camera movements so smoothly compare to the female characters' (the mother, the old servant and Mui's) way of moving around in the open and interconnected spaces of the domestic. And crisis indeed hits the family when the father one night disappears with all the money and jewels.

The mother deals with the situation by sticking to the order and geometry in the household that represent the unity of the family. The old maid's instructions to Mui marking the first half of the film exemplify this. She is teaching Mui how to prepare a traditional food, how to serve it, how to cheat with the flavors if there is a food shortage, etc. If even the Western tactics of melodrama (hysteria, emotional outburst) are suppressed, the adherence to the tradition will remain the only channel for the protagonists' expressions. The emotional outburst in Tran's film is transformed into an obsession with the tradition. Since the personal cannot be expressed, the characters overcompensate the tradition of the household and the family; it remains the only choice for them. The situation of the female characters is thus somewhat paradoxical. They are imprisoned by the tradition of gender roles, and the only way to express their frustration over this is overcompensating in a different terrain of the same tradition: the household. Accordingly, Tran lengthily lingers on the images of how Mui is introduced to the ways of serving, i.e. maintaining and caring for the family as a whole. This is why food assumes such an important role in the film's iconography. Eating and food contribute to

the preservation of the unity that ultimately will mean survival for the family. This unity becomes visible in Tran's insisting to move the camera geometrically, similar to the movements of the three women. The semantic function of the tracking shots becomes visible on a different level. If the women cannot express their emotions about the importance of the domestic ties, this role will be relegated to the stylistic registers of the film: the mobile frame.

Tran introduces the theme of the "geometrical household" early in the film. Visually, the moving camera expresses unity of the family in the prolonged tracking shots. Mui's character becomes a "connector" of the different geometrical modules in the household. After watching the old maid prepare food for the family, Mui helps to serve it for the first time in a long rightwards tracking shot [5] crossing the court of the house, then she walks up the stairs and enters her masters' living room, arrives at the dining table. The single continuous movement crosses several separate modules with the figure of the little girl, whose character is set up as someone who introduces the visual balance or harmony that covers up the melodramatic situation in Tran's film.





4.4 The Scent of the Green Papaya: Mui serves the food, crossing through the modules of the house

A few minutes later in the film, Mui reverses direction. Of course Tran records the little maid's service in another horizontal tracking shot, this time leftward that will take her upstairs to the grandmother's room. Here the non-communicative, repressed situation is beautifully expressed in a single low angle shot.



4.5 The Scent of the Green Papaya: In an Ozu-like setup, the characters appear separated from each other by the elements of mise-en-scene

The grandmother is sitting upstairs in her room behind a grid, the back of a chair frames the mother's face, and the father and the two children occupy the opposite ends of the



table. Every character in the composition is put into his/her own separate module. The melodramatic muteness is visualized by the frames within the frame.

But at this time, Tran cuts back to an even more intimate tracking shot that separates Mui from the background using a long lens, and the medium shot emphasizes her role as a “connector” of the modules, thus figuratively the characters. Mui’s walk up the stairs to bring the food to grandma powerfully underlines this. A rack focus, still in the same mobile shot tracking rightwards, reveals the older son’s friend Khuyen arriving on the far end of the court after Mui has left the frame on the right. Khuyen, just like other characters, occupies a separate module. Both the irregular modules of Tran and also the rack focusing in depth establish a connection here. Semantically, Mui becomes a figure who allows the viewer to perceive the unity of the family.



4.6 The Scent of the Green Papaya: Mui’s character connects different planes and

modules

In camera movements [7] and [8] Mui's character fulfills the same function: to serve compositionally as a connecting device of different modules that are created by the architecture of the house. This is apparent in a quick rightwards tracking shot [8] in which the mobile frame apparently focuses on the little servant. However, Tran's composition creates a second plane of action in the background in which Trung leaves to have lunch with Khuyen. The care with which Tran connects Mui with Khuyen for the second time foreshadows the events taking place in the ending of the film. In this shot, though, the director creates a double dominant contrast. By sheer size, we focus on Mui, but the much smaller sized figures of Trung and Khuyen are accentuated by the color of their clothes and by the patches of light on their bodies coming in through the roof. In the previous tracking shot [6] the modules were stationary. However, in [8] Tran follows both Mui in the foreground and Trung and Khuyen in the background, who are all walking at the same speed, thus keeping all the characters in the same modules at different distances. The interaction of fore, middle and background is made possible via the moving character of Mui, behind whom we can discern the figure of this future husband. The camera does not follow the male character's path as he enters the house though: the visual point of view of the spectator is aligned with Mui: she guarantees the unity of the family home both visually and symbolically through her actions. All of the female characters are constantly working, while the male family members are reclining of waiting to be served. Mui's movements across the modules means constant work.



4.7 The Scent of the Green Papaya: The fluid modules frame characters on two different planes in a leftwards tracking shot

The compositions of Tran that connect the members through spatial means here semantically reunite the separated family. As Mui walks away from the table, the camera tracks to the right with her figure. At the same time, Trung and Khuyen in the background also leave. Mui passes in front of several openings (windows and doors) on the wall of the house, all of which reveal the two men in their white clothes walking towards the garden gate. Still in the same shot, Mui arrives at the fire where the old maid sits with the rest of the food that the two servants are allowed to eat after everyone in the family have received their portions. Tracking from the dinner table through the entire house with Trung and Khuyen in the background towards the fireplace puts every

character in one united space, creating a spatial unity that will function as a haven in the troubled times that are to follow the idyllic depiction of the encounters early on in the film. It is a unity that arises out of the interaction of the camera movements and the architecture of the set, which allows the spectator to look at several planes of action through a smaller frame within one frame. The moving camera following Mui through the house (with additional characters in the background) thus becomes a connector between the segmented spaces of the family household: the director creates an integrative *female* presence that glides across the modules of the house. By transferring the significance of Mui's figure from the explicit (verbal) channel to the *mise-en-scène*, Tran creates a semantic code, which speaks of the gender roles of the family. Paradoxically, the female characters in Papaya are not permitted to fulfill roles that are traditionally assigned to males. Thus the transgressive quality of Mui, the mother and the maid reveals itself by the "mute revolting" against the Confucian patriarchal system visualized through the tracking shots.

The architecture of the set (the house) is used to the fullest extent by Tran's visual strategies: it creates a space that will make the characters communicate via their co-existence or co-presence. Interestingly, the director almost always puts the female characters in the foreground, and the males in the back. Tran creates a dual-layered horizontal tracking shot moving towards the right with the mother in the foreground working in the textile shop and a man carrying water in the background. Initially, the long lens focuses on her face, but after a rack focus our attention shifts towards a window with bars on it in the upper left corner of the frame. A man appears carrying two buckets of water on a stick, walks towards the window and disappears to the right behind the

wall. The camera follows the now invisible man, and we see the interior of the textile shop. However, Tran does not readjust focus: the brightly colored rolls of material remain in focus, while the old maid helping out in the extreme foreground remains blurry. Then the camera arrives at another door-window combination, in which we recognize the man with the buckets again.



4.8 The Scent of the Green Papaya: The house provides spaces for the characters to silently co-exist

In Papaya, the female figures are the primary creators of a figurative, semantic-referential unity, while the males mostly enjoy the family's support as a natural backdrop to their lives. However, as the two last examples showed, this unity is based on a repressive social order that turns the women into house servants. Tran's focus in the female aspect of domesticity is apparent in his framing tactics: the movements always follow females who appear in the foreground of the shots.

The gendered nature of the spaces in the house becomes apparent in a scene that consists of two crosscut shots. While the older of the two young sons is reading in the foreground, Mui mops the floor and the young son Tin arrives in the frame background. As Mui starts to move towards the back, Tran changes the camera angle and now in

horizontal leftwards tracking shot follows Mui [11]. She crosses several modules until she arrives at Tin's feet. Here Tran reveals a third plane in depth: besides from the columns in the foreground, Mui and Tin and the court in the mid ground, a character walks across of a doorframe in the back, which adds another layer to the composition. At this point Tin starts to spill the water from the bucket until his older brother tells him to stop. Here Tran cuts back to the initial shot in depth that connects the characters. As always, the camera does not move closer to the actor. Tran returns back to the endpoint of the previous track [11] and Tin leaves through a door, which the director emphasizes by the appearance of a neutral character (the thirds layer from a few seconds ago). Here again the camera follows Mui's movements, setting up her character as moving through the irregular modules of the home with the camera, while Tin recedes to the background after he tried to humiliate the young maid. The camera here does not follow the young boy who is also moving across the modules of the house but is rather attached to Mui's character: the placement of the camera's tracking point-of-view expresses her activity and his passivity. The connections between a traditional female behavior and the slowly tracking subjective camera become much stronger through Tran's compositions.





4.9 The Scent of the Green Papaya: Mui moves through the modules, while male characters seem stuck in them

The events that follow underline the significance of these gendered spaces and architectural expressions of domestic unity. The frustrated father, apparently unable to cope with the memory of his dead daughter that is strengthened by Mui's appearance, leaves the house with all the money and jewels. We learn from the maid that this is not the first time this has happened. In the scenes to follow, the fact that women occupy the foreground of the tracking shots in the multi-layered compositions shows that they are the primary caretakers in the family.

The family has to cooperate efficiently to be able to put food on the table: deal with the customers in the textile shop, cook, clean, buy food on the market. All of these tasks are completed by the women. Meanwhile the visual style of the film counterbalances the fragility of the situation that continues to frame characters in the modules only connected to each other by the old maid, Mui, and the frustrated mother, who will get over the loss of her husband by successfully taking over the role of the head of the family. When the incapable father returns home, he gets sick and eventually dies.



What the visual style of Tran already established becomes clear in the story as well: the head of the family is clearly not the father.

According to Elsaesser, the melodramatic “brings out the characteristic attempt of the bourgeois household to make time stand still, immobilize life and fix forever domestic property relations as a model of social life and bulwark against the more disturbing side of human nature.”<sup>172</sup> Describing characteristics of the domestic melodramas of the West, these remarks also relate to the works of Tran Anh Hung, who received his film education in Paris and was probably not untouched by the Western influences. His household in Papaya still revolves around the material harmony that is expressed with the female characters’ focus on the textile shop, the food, the processes of cooking and eating, i.e., the general order of things in the house. The camera’s tactics also strengthen this obsession: the horizontal tracking shots emphasize the geometry of objects<sup>173</sup>. The modules represented by the architecture of the house together with the mobile shots will depict a world in which “women [are] (...) caught in a world of objects into which they are expected to invest their feelings.”<sup>174</sup> For Elsaesser, though, this characteristic of Western melodrama is related to the victimization of women, who are passive and are “waiting at home, standing at the window.”<sup>175</sup> Tran’s females will not

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<sup>172</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama” in. Movies and Methods II. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. p. 182.

<sup>173</sup> Interestingly, this is another difference between the Western way of depicting the reversal of emotions or the Eastern of burying of the same inside. According to Elsaesser, “letting the emotions rise and then bringing them suddenly down (...) is an extreme example of dramatic discontinuity and a similar, vertiginous drop in the emotional temperature punctuates good many melodramas – almost invariably played out against the vertical axis of the staircase.”(181) This vertical dimension of the western melodrama becomes a horizontal axis in the very moderate and restrained world of Tran’s film via the endless number tracking shots.

<sup>174</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama” in. Movies and Methods II. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. p.182.

<sup>175</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama” in. Movies and Methods II. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. p. 182.



wait around, however. Silently they take control of their lives. This switch is not dramatized loudly by hysterical outbursts: the father returns home and dies without changing anything in the fate of the family.

The irony of the narrative is that in a sense the power relations have not been significantly different before the leaving and subsequent death of the father. Tran only shows him playing his instrument withdrawn in his room that becomes his encapsulating module. We never see him walking across the house: all of the shots depicting him are stationary. As already mentioned, he hardly ever talks to anyone. His face remains void of any expression. But the usual “pathos [that] results from non-communication or silence made eloquent”<sup>176</sup> is missing from Tran’s work. The silence rather creates a distance, which results in the viewer’s awareness of the formal expressions of emotions. These emotions are underplayed: they are dealt with internally. This is equally true about the female characters, who will not waste any time reflecting and seem to live out their frustration about separation in creating visual unity around them.

Here lies the major difference between the Western melodrama described convincingly by Elsaesser and its Asian counterparts. The internal conflict is not reflected directly in a disharmonious physical world, as in the films of Douglas Sirk or Nicholas Ray. Rather, in Tran’s universe the existence or creation of visual balance and physical harmony around the characters will allow them to compensate for their internal problems and to counterbalance their effects. The outer world’s harmony becomes a way of compensation for the inner conflict. In both variants, “[t]he discrepancy between seeming and being, of intention and results, registers as a perplexing frustration, and an ever-

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<sup>176</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama” in. Movies and Methods II. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. p. 186.

increasing gap opens between emotions and the reality they seek to reach.”<sup>177</sup> However, as Tran points out in the interview for Cineaste, the Asian melodrama will not exteriorize the conflict: time might dissolve suffering, if one manages to keep the harmony in one’s actions. To a significant extent the horizontal tracking shots create and sustain this unity in Tran’s Papaya.

After the 1993 The Scent of the Green Papaya, Tran went on to make Cyclo, a film also set in Vietnam but revolving around the violent urban world of the bicycle-taxis in Ho Chi Minh City. In 2000 Tran returned to domestic themes with The Vertical Ray of the Sun. As in his first film, this story unfolds in the homes of the characters: in the private sphere of family life. Tran’s visual style still heavily relies on the movements of the camera, but in this film he not only uses horizontal tracking shots but also pans. The different camera movements carry different functions. His third film revolves around three sisters, two of whom face crises in their marriages. In the problematic relationships, Tran created a family saga where the conflicts are played out along tensions between traditional values and modern urban life. Finally, the troubled relationships are resolved in a way that suggests the crucial importance of the family as a supportive unit, even in situations that seem to often question the validity of tradition.

The long pans express the unity of the family in Vertical Ray during the memorial dinners punctuating the progression of the story. In the pan, the movement has an epicenter around which the head of the camera turns. This lends the compositions a certain spatial stability. Tran uses this stability to show that the memory of the grandparents that brings them together in celebration and remembrance. They are only

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<sup>177</sup> Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama” in. Movies and Methods II. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. p. 188.

present in the form of old photos, but reunion evokes their presence verbally and visually: first through retelling of the stories of the grandparents' perfect relationship and then by the mobile shots that are compositionally anchored in this vantage point of the center for the pans. Once Tran has created this stability with the pans, he disrupts it with the use of the never-ending horizontal tracking shots. The tracking mobile frame expresses the experiences of the family members, which cannot be connected to the memory of the grandparents or the traditional roles in the family, suggesting that there is no point of comparison for these emotions that the family member still will have to process. From the aspect of stylistic development, the use of the tracking shot in Papaya and Vertical Ray is of central relevance. The track that expressed isolation but eventually unity in the domestic sphere in Papaya is starkly contrasted with the dual function of the mobile frames in Vertical Ray. The latter film complicates the narrative role assigned to the moving camera by building on the schemes established by Tran's first picture. Thus, the figurative camera movements of Vertical Ray normatively rely on an already established function in Papaya.

The mentioned emotions revolve around the three sisters, who are developing feelings outside their marriages that do not conform to their perceived traditional female roles within the family. Although Tran shows scenes from one husband's double life in which he has a "second" family, the film clearly focuses on how the sisters experience and ultimately solve the crisis in commitment. Tran gives his viewer a glimpse into how traditional family roles collide with the actual feelings of the women. The melodrama, as in Papaya, will find a resolution by the acts of the female characters, whose ability to adapt to new conditions within a traditional life style allows marriages to survive. Tran

approaches questions of fidelity and infidelity with imagery that will assign different mobile frames to the traditional role of the women and to their challenging or transgressing the boundaries of those roles. Camera movements once again carry a central function in the expression of the melodramatic in Vertical Ray.

Formally, an important factor contributing to the changes in Tran's usage of the tracks and the pans becomes the different aspect ratio he uses in this film. Whereas in Papaya he worked with a 1.66:1 frame, in Vertical Ray he uses a wider 1.85:1 frame. With a wider frame, the pans will capture more details than in the narrower aspect ratio. It seems that Tran wants to distinguish between two sorts of camera movements to detach tradition from emotion, but still be able to compose with the modular frame areas as he did in his first movie. On one hand the tracking shots of Tran in Vertical Ray are reserved for the depiction of emotions that are transgressing the traditionally perceived family roles. On the other hand, the pans of the film revolving literally around a vertical axis depict emotions that are anchored in the axis of the family's unity. That is why the pans can mostly be seen during the ceremonial dinners organized to celebrate the memory of the grandparent. With the wider frame the pans of the film will capture more detail, allowing the camera to turn slower and still include large portions of the family home. Tran's figurative use of the pans and the tracking shots shows how he continues to refine his compositional strategies: on one hand, the camera movements show a close interaction between the international trend of intensified continuity and the Asian melodramatic, but on the other hand Tran also contrasts his strategies to his earlier work and uses figurative elements from Papaya normatively. The function of the tracking camera in his 1997 film (expression of the unity of the family through the female

characters' movements) will serve as a normative backdrop for new purposes in the director's latest film.

The movie opens up with Lien and Hai, two siblings waking up. Instantly we recognize Tran's characteristic composition: in front of an interior window Hai sits up in the bed, walks around to his sister's bed through a door and reappears on the other side next to her bed. As the camera follows his movement with a slow leftwards pan, the bittersweet melody of Lou Reed's *Pale Blue Eyes* underlines the scene's warm familiarity.



4.10 The Vertical Ray of the Sun: Keeping Hai in a module is still Tran's main strategy. The pan of the camera provides a vantage point of familiarity

Hai moves through the modules of the house, making the separate spaces interconnect, just like Mui did in Papaya. However, in the pans, these modules appear as parts of the same space that protect the characters because the point-of-view in fact remains stationary: only the camera's head moves. This way the mobile frame imitates

the point-of-view of a bystander who looks at the scene without being part of it. Through the stable vantage point of the camera the viewer can observe that the family members occupy and live in the same area, unlike the figures throughout Papaya (see illustration 5.5). Pans allow the viewer less information about the depth of a composition. As Bordwell points out, a “moving vantage point supplies a dense stream of information about objects’ slants, their edges, their corners, their surfaces, their relations with other objects.”<sup>178</sup> This dense stream of information is not present in the pan’s static vantage point. Less information on depth cues makes these mobile frames more likely to be read as one single segment of space that the siblings crisscross immediately in the first scene of the film. Without a word they go about their morning routines of getting dressed and ready for the day. Restricting information on the spatial layout of the apartment actually contributes to the safe and secure impression in the viewer about the sibling’s situation: this balance can also be seen in the fluid compositions that repeatedly place Hai and Lien on opposite end of the apartment. Although at this point of the film, Tran has not revealed much information about his figures, one thing seems clear: unlike the family members who hid in their own modules in Papaya, Hai and Lien move freely across the unified spaces of their apartment, which allows the viewer to start forming some hypotheses: their characters seem to move in between tradition and modernity. This communicative introduction with its strong semantic codes contributes to later, more complex figurative units in Vertical Ray.

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<sup>178</sup> Bordwell, David. “Camera Movement and Cinematic Space” Cine-Tracts, Vol. 2, 1977. p. 22.



4.11 The Vertical Ray of the Sun: Little information on depth cues allows the viewer to look at the house as a nonseparate spatial unit

In Papaya, the horizontal tracks follow characters through the space of the house to make the connecting function of the female protagonists more explicit. The three characters of the old maid, Mui and the mother created the unity that is expressed in exteriorized visual harmony. In Vertical Ray, however, the mentioned harmony already exists: the memories of the grandparent provide it for every member of the family. The inner struggles of the characters, however, will be displayed in a very fine, low-key style: by the different camera movements.

The first of these explorations occurs around the middle of the film, where Suong meets her lover in a hotel room. The camera picks up the characters sitting on the bed, and Suong is singing. She refuses to speak: the melodramatic described as a “text of muteness” reveals itself in a character of muteness. She has no words for the emotions that she experiences, and the conflict between her traditional role as a mother and her transgressive role as a lover becomes explicit through her rejection of verbal expression. Moving rightwards next to the characters along the bed, the tracking shot [1] will make the couple look like as if they were sitting in front of a changing background of an

already mentioned semantic dichotomy of tradition and actual emotion. A background with red color emphasizes the forbidden aspect of their relationship.



4.12 The Vertical Ray of the Sun: The background with the mirror around Suong and his lover is changing. The lines and edges, i.e. the perspective of the shot is in flux

The shot ends in a close up of the red wall, but the camera does not stop here. Once it got close enough so the viewer can discover the uneven surface and different tones of the reds, Tran continues the track slowly towards the right to change the plane marked by the wall in front of which the secret lovers are sitting. This invokes an uneasy feeling in the viewer: not only are the objects shifting in and out of the screen, the red backdrop moves at an angle as well. The frame in the tracking shot does not have a stable vantage point around which it turns. The traveling frame expresses the transgressive position of Suong. In the final frame of the shot we discover that we are looking at two footprints. Are the characters walking down an untraditional path? The tracking shot



disallows the viewer to realize what she is looking at until the last few frames of the shot: what seemingly was an abstract red blotch now appears as footprints.



4.13 The Vertical Ray of the Sun: The track creates instability by modifying the angle at which the camera is looking at the wall

Most of the other tracking shots in the film emphasize the loss of security. Nowhere does Tran use the tracking shot to create harmony; the tracks are used in a particular way not allowing the viewer to look at the transgressive relations as “safe.”

The tracking shots without any stable vantage point are reserved for those scenes in the film where a “forbidden” or transgressive relationship is about to unfold, or where a relationship or marriage is about to be tested by non-traditional emotions. The transgression is expressed visually in a powerful way, since in this movie Tran will use the tracking shot sparingly. Its rarity foregrounds its impact on the viewer, who is looking at the pans of the film as compositions that allow a panoramic view on the different generations reminiscing about their grandparents. Their memories serve as a starting point for everything else in the film. When family unity is disrupted by the emergence of a lover, or even the possibility of cheating, Tran will switch to the tracking shot where the camera literally moves without a stable vantage point. In the context of the domestic

melodrama, this becomes the hint that the female characters enter a territory where they cannot use memories/tradition as a backdrop or point of comparison for guiding their actions. They are exploring their feelings that tradition did not teach them how to handle. The figurative role of Tran's semantic-referential camera movements sets up the code of tradition vs. emotion. This textual unit results in an interaction of the normative background and the influences of the local cultural milieu in which these codes are situated. On one hand, the normative horizon is provided by intensified continuity and its increasing reliance on camera movements, but on the other hand Tran's previous film becomes a background against which his mobile shots of Vertical Ray can be interpreted. In the two films, these background norms mix the Asian expression of the melodramatic, which project the idealized female characters' emotions onto the geometrically conceived external spaces of the domestic. The director's semantic-referential camera movements are essential elements of these imaginations.

As the incestuous relationship of Lien and Hai starts becoming recognizable for the viewer, Tran will visually compare the siblings to Suong and her lover with the camera tracking across the cut. Similar to the scene in the beginning of the film, the mobile shot [2] records another morning-scene of Lien and Hai waking up. The camera travels around the bed when the module on the wall opens up in the rightwards movement. They talk about crawling into each other's bed during the night. Moving around the stationary characters towards a frontal two shot, the camera frames them just for a beat and then continues to glide back right, when they start a romantic dance. Here Hai and Lien's relation moves very close to incest: the transgression is expressed with a camera movement without a vantage point.



4.14 The Vertical Ray of the Sun: The siblings romantically dance through the modules

As they disappear frame left, Tran cuts immediately to the hotel room with Suong and her lover. Transgressing physical boundaries is like transgressing social boundaries: the movement of the camera that was reversed towards the left in the end of the Lien and Hai's scene continues, and the horizontal track [3] records another dance at another place.



4.15 The Vertical Ray of the Sun: Just like the siblings, the lovers slowly dance through the room in a tracking shot

Tran uses external harmony once again in his latest film to counterbalance the emotional turmoil of the family members. The melodramatic, like in Papaya, arises from the harboring of the conflicts and emotions and from using physical harmony as a backdrop that exteriorizes these emotions. In Vertical Ray, however, the dichotomy of the pans and the tracks is used to evoke two opposite effects. On one hand, the pans show

us a large family where the members share thoughts and feelings that seem to emanate from the traditional ways of life represented by the memories of the grandparents or the memorial dinners. On the other hand, the tracks reveal situations that cannot be dealt with in the same way (cheating, incest). Tradition and modernity clash in the lives of the three sisters, and the melodrama arises out of this conflict. Figurative visual order is the technique that channels information about an inner contradiction.

Camera movement still is the central stylistic element of Tran's visual style. He uses the mobile frame to show the viewer how the characters deal with psychological conflict. In Vertical Ray, he fine-tunes his methods, however. He uses the pan for traditional culture and traditional relationships, where, metaphorically speaking, a vertical ray of the sun nails down the camera not allowing it to move anywhere, only to turn. From a safe vantage point, we look at the family where on the surface everything seems to unfold in a balanced and safe manner. But the tracks will disrupt the safety that the pans visually created and introduce a pictorial instability that thematically forms a parallel to the topic of infidelity.

The ending of Vertical Ray seems to allow the co-existence of tradition and modernity by the simultaneous usage of the two camera movements. Lien and Hai once again dance across their room, the camera pans and tracks to follow them, but at this point of the film, we know that Lien is seeing someone, and that Hai overcame his incestuous feelings and thus symbolically grew up from a child to a man.

Tran does not prefer either of the two options in perceiving movement in his films. The pans and the tracks co-exist to express differences that the film does not express verbally, but through style. The crises of commitment and conflicts are not

resolved in the film. Tran presents contradicting emotions that are powerfully set apart by the expressive use of the camera movements. Not much changes in the situation of the characters in Vertical Ray. The couples and the family members begin to express the realization that inner balance is the co-existence of emotions.

Tran's use of camera movement is consistent in the systematic narrative function he assigns to the device. The mobile frames carry the information that is not communicated in other ways. Tracks are an important technique in the hands of the director that express the characteristically melodramatic counterbalancing inner conflicts. In Tran's films, the traditional is still capable of outweighing modernity's effects. The domestic protectively harbors the characters. The significance of Tran's camera movements for this project is the figurative dynamic of the tracking shot's function throughout his work. In his first film, Tran used the camera to imitate the movements of the women through the spaces of the family home. The melodrama in Papaya unfolds around the unity that the maids and the mother are creating despite the impotence of the father. Mobile framing becomes a technique that formally depicts how the women cross the irregular modules, and literally and symbolically provide a connection within a problematic domestic situation.

In Vertical Ray Tran develops the function of the mobile framing further. He systematically uses either pans or tracks to underline different emotions. Traditional or "safe" emotions (husband-wife, siblings) accompany the camera movement that revolves around a vertical axis: the pan. The tradition of the family represented by the grandparents' memory provides a vantage point for these character relations; the visual mobility mirrors this with the panning movement. Once interpreted against the

transgressive emotions (wife-lover, incest), Tran's dual strategy becomes more visible: with the tracks he creates movements without a stable vantage point. The tradition of the domestic in Vertical Ray does not provide any explanation for these emotions, and the melodrama unfolds along the different ways the characters try out to solve these emotional conflicts. The film uses pans and tracks to emphasize the difference between traditional family bonds and the transgressive relations between the characters. The semantic function of the mobile camera becomes visible against two normative horizons, simultaneously: firstly, it is easy to see how the mobile frames of the director do not only serve the narrative function of intensified continuity and, secondly, how in Vertical Ray the director modifies his experiences with the tracking shot from Papaya. In both films, however, the figurative function of the stylistic device results from a cooperation between background and a local cultural context that modifies the purpose of the mobile frame's textual code.

#### **IV.     Theatricality and Nostalgia: the Mobile Spaces of Wong Kar-Wai**

Wong Kar-Wai throughout his career has been a filmmaker who is overtly fond of camera movements. Chungking Express (1994) and Fallen Angels (1995), for example, use the mobile camera as most contemporary music videos do. Handheld shots swish across the scenes and, combined with slow motion effects or fish-eye lens, create the distorted and dreamlike atmosphere of the contemporary urban milieu. The two latter films' connections to the visual style that Bordwell describes as intensified continuity

deserve an in-depth analysis in itself. However, the focus of this chapter is the sphere of the domestic, and here I will investigate how the mobility has changed in Wong's two latest films and how these changes are related to the expressions of the melodramatic.

The wild handheld swishes that depicted the urban Hong Kong settings of Chungking Express and Fallen Angels have disappeared completely from the stories that Wong turns to in In the Mood for Love (2000) and 2046 (2004). The director's attention here focuses on Hong Kong in the 1960s, an era that he already began to explore in his 1991 film Days of Being Wild. Generically, the continuity is easy to discover with his earlier work: he is still concerned with depicting love stories that are faced with insurmountable obstacles, making the melodramatic aspect of these stories obvious. Wong made the common topic his own by putting estranged and contemplative characters on the screen who seem to be completely out of touch with the fast paced life of the city-state Hong Kong. The contradictions between the neon light-bathed, ultramodern, up-tempo setting and the dreamy, philosophical characters create a dual atmosphere.

In Wong's two latest films, the tempo of his earlier work is slowed down drastically, and the visual style shows a different world: the characters hardly ever leave the interiors in the films. Not only has the director abandoned the urban settings and withdrawn to interiors almost completely, but also the wild handheld camera movements have been tamed into moderate tracking shots. Wong seems to use a less-is-more tactic in these films, and he expresses the repression of emotions (the central theme or semantic code of both In the Mood and 2046) with smooth and regular camera movements. Combined with blocking and compositional strategies that cannot be seen in his earlier

films, the anamorphic screen in In the Mood for Love and the Cinemascope frame in 2046 becomes a stage on which events unfold in a very theatrical way. The melodramatic in Wong's domestic stories expresses the tension between modern urban life void of the traditional harmony which exists in the basic unit of the Confucian social order, the family. The emotional imbalance of the characters becomes much more suffocating since it takes place within the beautifully choreographed, harmonic compositions of Wong. In the director's world, the unity of the surrounding only exists to create a contrast to Chow and Su's sufferings. The moving camera is an organic part of his visual strategy that also self-consciously functions as a curtain that opens and closes on the protagonists' lives. Intensified continuity in Wong films becomes intensified melodrama, where the camera still constantly moves, where the mute characters project their feelings not into gestures or pantomime but their perfectly designed surrounding that is recorded in theatrically sweeping tracking shots. The semantic and referential in Wong's In the Mood and 2046 results from an interaction of intensified continuity as a normative background and the specific Asian forms of melodramatic expression.

In most shots of both films, half of the screen (sometimes an even larger area) is blocked by an object that has no direct narrative relevance. These excessive elements are used as pure forms, surfaces or textures that keep making the viewer peep around to be able to see what happens behind them. Marshall Deutelbaum probably could not find a better-suited example for his ideas in modular compositions than Wong's shots: the screen is almost always divided along geometrical lines, mostly irregular squares. These homogenous modular surfaces exist in Wong's composition to visualize a breach: the spatial units serve to emphasize the disconnection between the characters. Here the



distance exists to disconnect the characters from each other. Similar to Kurosawa's wipes, the doors, mirrors or slants of furniture glide in and out of the shots horizontally as the sideways tracking camera redefines the segmentation of the modules. For Peter Brunette, this strategy points out that "no single, fixed perspective is ever likely to bring us the truth (...)"<sup>179</sup> The horizontal moves, however, also remind the viewer of a theatrical curtain. Wong's tracking shots seem to open these curtains and say (as an announcer would): 'Let me introduce my characters!'<sup>180</sup> Wong creates a truly melodramatic atmosphere: the psychological disconnections are exteriorized. However, in In the Mood for Love and 2046 this harmony, as opposed to Tran's balanced compositions, does not offer any consolation. The interiorization of emotions in the Eastern melodramatic that Tran mentions in the Cineaste interview does not dissolve the conflicts at all. As the last intertitle of the film sums up:

He remembers those vanished years.  
As though looking through a dusty window pane,  
the past is something he could see but not touch.  
And everything he sees is blurred and indistinct.

The camera movements of Wong's two latest films thus become elements that have a semantic function. Contrary to Tran's tracking shots, Wong's mobile frames express a lyrical, melodramatic separation that "explains" unaccounted elements of the story. Instead of connecting modules by characters moving between them they show the

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<sup>179</sup> Brunette, Peter. Wong Kar-Wai. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005. 92.

<sup>180</sup> "Wong has said that the point of this technique was to include the spectator in the scene, as though he or she were also a resident of this crowded location (Ciment and Niogret, "Entretien" [2000] 80.)" Quoted in Brunette, 92. Obviously though, these hindrances also create a constant reminder for the viewer about the self-conscious and non-communicative narrator. The inclusion that Kar-Wai talks about is also an exclusion. Accordingly, "William Chang said that its purpose was to eliminate "direct contact with the characters. We are looking at things from afar. It gives you space to think and feel rather than just identify with the actors" (qtd. in Camhi 11.)" Brunette, 92. Just like Tran's work, the exclusion or distance disrupts the invisibility of the narration and allows for a very figurative interpretation of the stylistic elements.

protagonists' isolation and containment. As soon as the fifth minute of In the Mood arrives, Wong composes an exchange of characters whose personal space seems limited by the modules of the shot. At the beginning of the film, the “curtain” opens from the right via a leftwards tracking shot [2] that follows the arriving Mrs. Chan.



4.16 In the Mood for Love: The curtain opens and reveals the dining room as a module

She walks into the dining room of the boarding house, bringing cigarettes for her husband. She barely sits down, Mrs. Chow also arrives, and Mrs. Chan gets up from the chair to make room for the arriving wife. Through the opening of the door, we can see only half of Mrs. Chan's body when Mr. Chow walks out of the room.





4.17 In the Mood for Love: The protagonists meet in the central module while a track modifies the proportion of the modules

The layout of the modules is changing throughout the scene: the tightest composition is reserved for the part of the shot where Mr. Chow and Mrs. Chan pass each other in the door frame. Wong intensified the scene by a slow diagonal leftward track-in, making the bodies of the two protagonists larger by moving from a full shot to a medium shot, but also enlarging the size of the central module. The few seconds sum up the reserved channels of communication of the two main characters in a very sensuous manner: the figures do not look at each other, each of their bodies turn away from each other as they pass. This impression is underlined by Shimeru Umebayashi's score that foregrounds the lyrical chorus of the strings gliding up to higher pitched sounds and coming back down again, following the rhythm of the characters' movements. Camera and character movement together evoke the impression of distancing: the mobile frame passes the scene in the living room without actually entering. The viewer peeps around the doorsill while trying to discover the invisible characters in the left part of the room. She wants to enter to see the characters, but the view is refused: the spectator catches a glimpse of the coming and going figures but is not allowed to enter. The horizontally

passing camera in front of the door and the point-of-view it creates remain an outsider to the events.

The rhythm that is created by a tracking shot that starts in one direction and then reverses becomes a central element of Wong's compositions. The to-and-fro movements that are repeatedly mirrored by similar character movements suggest a routine of estranged characters passing each other without facing real emotions. These mobile shots serve to frame two trapped characters as partially hidden from the eyes of the spectator, just as they hide their own emotions from themselves. The camera movements add a voyeuristic aspect as well: the tracking shots remind the viewer about her peeping position and our view is blocked every time the camera glides behind a wall.

Symmetrical construction is Wong's method in establishing the rhythm of the scene. First, the horizontal tracking occurs on empty frames, then on Mrs. Chan and Mr. Chow walking into the shots respectively and finally with both of them in the frame walking in the opposite directions. After the separate elements, in the final version of the "market stairs" scene shows them combined.



4.18 In the Mood for Love: Mrs. Chow walks down the stairs to the local market to get food in a slow rightward track

The strange jump-cut punctuates the scene by interrupting the tracking shot [5]. Between the first two frames of 4.18, the angle of the camera changes. Instead of keeping the camera focused on the lower half of Mrs. Chan's body, the camera will switch to a medium shot now from the waist up as she descends the stairs on her way for food. However, the movement is continuous through the edit. This functions as another Brechtian element in Wong's style by creating a distance between viewer and the story. The distance allows for the more contemplative attitude in the spectator and underlines the loneliness of the character as well. A minute later, the figure of Mrs. Chow returns in the symmetrical second half of the scene.



4.19 In the Mood for Love: The tracking is symmetrically reversed with Mrs. Chan returning

However, after she exited the frame on the left, the shot continues after its apparent function is completed. After a long static close-up on the street lamp, Mr. Chow appears frame left, mirroring the previous action by walking down the same stair.



4.20 In the Mood for Love: Mr. Chow repeats the descending theme

Finally, the sequence is over with the two characters meeting on the stairs. Wong has created an entire sequence around a rhythm that consists of repetitions of the same movements of the characters, recorded in the same left-to-right and then right-to-left tracks.



4.21 In the Mood for Love: The circle is closed. Mrs. Chan and Mr. Chow meet on the stairs

Although the two finally meet at the stairs, their separation is apparent: by sharing the same space but not showing any sign of recognition, their inability to communicate is

emphasized. Although the effect is not only created by the moving camera (staging and lighting also emphasize the separation), the horizontal tracks contribute to the visual expression of isolation. The camera moves on the surface of the scene (left-right, right-left), but the characters move in depth. The viewer's point-of-view is restrained: the director wants us to look at the protagonists in a distantiated way. Wong's two modules on the sides (the walls on the two sides of the stairs) intrude into the foreground, just like in the previous sequence from the dining room: they act as curtains that open and close, or wipes that connect shots. We are "looking through a dusty window pane," as the intertitle suggests, which makes everything that is in front of our eyes distant, unreachable and remote.

The characters' exteriorized perception stands at the center of Wong's melodramas. For Wong, the question what the actual emotions are seems ancillary: the character's (and by analogy, the spectator's) perception of emotions stands at the center of this inquiry. We basically never learn what really happened between Mrs. Chan and Mr. Chow or why they never followed through with their emotions. What we get is a representation of their relationship. Wong investigates and describes the conscious experiences of his characters in all its varieties through the semantic codes of his camera movements: isolation while sharing the same space, restraint albeit inclusion. The spectator sees traces of their consciousness projected on the narrow, intimate spaces of corridors, rooms. As critics have noted, "the camera almost always ends up shooting through some kind of hindrance, be it a doorway, a curtain, venetian blinds, a diaphanous lampshade, or one of the many mirrors that are found throughout the film."<sup>181</sup> Wong Kar-

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<sup>181</sup> Brunette, 2005: 92. Also Stephan Teo points out this in 2005: p. 118.

Wai's distancing strategy is a sign of his phenomenological interest in his characters: their consciousness is projected onto their environment. This figurative code of joint isolation is never verbalized, motivated or explained. It is the results of a clash between a normative global trend towards mobile compositions and the specific local, cultural forms of melodramatic expression. Wong frames almost always move; however, not in order to increase the physical dynamics the frame but to create a semantic code that "speaks" instead of his mute characters.

Wong is apparently obsessed with creating compositions that hide the characters behind objects arranged in perfect symmetry. This in turn expresses how the repressed lives of his characters are still trapped in their own universes, i.e., modules. The first movement on characters [2], for example, is recreated later in [22]. While Tran Anh Hung repeatedly traverses the symmetry by the camera moving diagonally on the characters or the sets (exactly following Mui's movements, for example), Wong's tracking shots will not even scratch the surface of the frozen worlds of Mrs. Chan and Mr. Chow.

The more perfect these bounded forms appear, the less chance Wong thinks Mrs. Chan and Mr. Chow have to escape. Therefore, he will repeatedly restage the character and camera movements that the viewer has already seen. Tracking shot [5] is mirrored in movement [8]. Chow now is smoking a cigarette at the top of the stairs that lead to the food market under the lamp that shone on the passing Mrs. Chan and Chow.<sup>182</sup> The redundancy in the kinetics of the scene makes their separation inevitable.

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<sup>182</sup> The stair motif then is recreated during the interior scenes when the characters pass each other on the motel stairs in the movement-montage of [16].



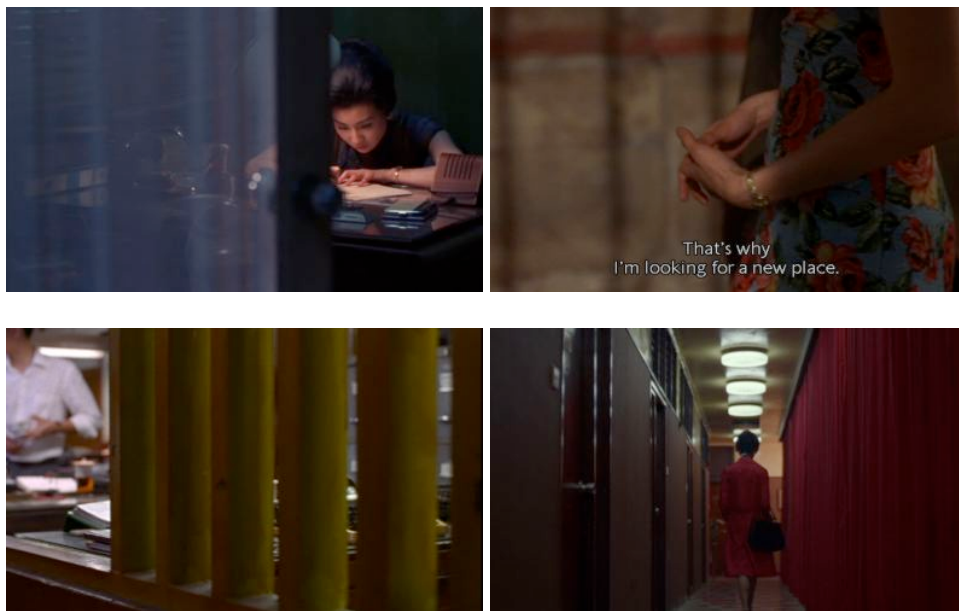
In addition there are several variants of the woman and the man walking along a wall with the camera shooting through some kind of bars. All of the mobile frames visually lock up the two characters. The initial version is the leftwards moving tracking shot [9] which captures Mrs. Chan and Chow walking home from a restaurant at night. The woman asks the man whether his wife will notice their late arrival. Chow laconically replies that she will not. But this time both know: their partners are unfaithful. “But we will not be like them!” – Mrs. Chan declares. And we believe her: they will not act on their emotions, as the prison bars show. First only their shadows are imprisoned with the camera shooting through the bars, but the tracking shot following the couple finally suggests that the characters themselves become locked into a situation that the actions of their partners have pre-created for them: the character movement combined with the camera movement depicts the process in which the couple gradually “lock up” their emotions.



4.22 In the Mood for Love: The bars first imprison the shadows, then characters themselves in the tracking shot

This movement is repeated in several camera movements on the corridors of the hotel, where the door of hotel room that repeats the visual rhythm of the harsh window bars established in track [9]. In tracking shot [12], folds of the curtain visually echo the

window bars. Also camera movement [13] recreates [9], again playing with the shadow of the characters. In tracking shot [15] the camera moves across Chow's office, and the vertical lines once again represent the repressed nature of their emotional lives. Tracking on Mrs. Chan's leaving character, the movement [17] repeats the motif using the red curtains and the doors on the hotel corridor. The vertical lines moving in on the characters horizontally (right-left or left-right) capture their figures as imprisoned by the setting. As these briefly mentioned examples show, the numerous slow tracking shots repeat a motif systematically. In all of the mobile framings mentioned above, the movements slide in curtains or separators that close the doors of the character's "prison cells."



4.23 In the Mood for Love: The visual rhythm of the vertical lines is repeated in several tracking shots

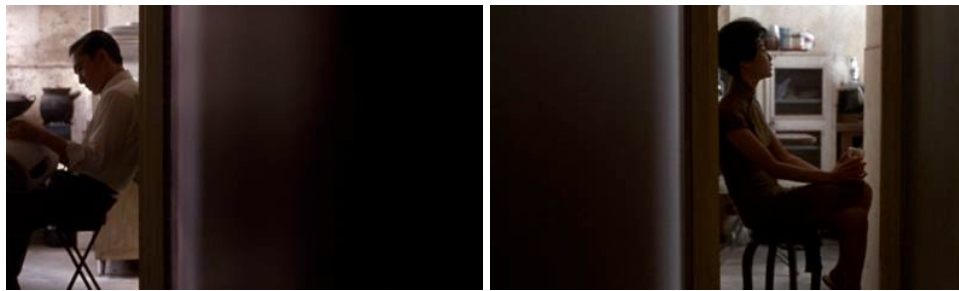
Wong Kar-Wai also repeatedly uses a tracking shot that moves horizontally from one character to the other. This technique relegates the two characters into opposite

sections of the mobile frame. In the shots moving horizontally between Mrs. Chan and Mr. Chow, they cannot be seen occupying the same segment of space. Kar-Wai uses the tracking shot to further emphasize semantically the emotional disconnection to the spectator.

The first occurrence of this technique is camera movement [10] with the couple sitting in a restaurant. A close-up moves from the woman's plate to Chow's, and after a few seconds, it glides back towards Mrs.Chan's food again. This camera movement could visually connect the characters, but the director once again finds means to underline the impossibility of fulfillment: the close-up never allows them to be seen together in one frame. Parts of their bodies are blurred by the long lens as well, and the semantic code of separation once again becomes the overtone of the scene. The same disconnection through horizontal to-and-fro camera movements is recreated in movements [18], [19], [20] and [25].

Lyricaly expressing the isolation, an "impossible" camera movement [25] sums up the visual strategies of the director towards the end of the film. This scene takes us back to the motel, where the camera tracks from Mrs. Chan sitting with her back to the wall on the left. As if the wall were a mirror, we see Chow sitting with his back towards to wall on the right. There is not much left for the characters to say: the melodrama has reached its peak, and the projection of the emotions onto the environment is completed. The emotions of the characters will remain inside: just like they are sitting in separate rooms with their backs towards each other, they will not be able to open up and follow through with their feelings. Like an indecisive onlooker, the camera that tracks back and forth between the man and the woman is unable to unite them in one frame. When the

camera travels across the wall between the two rooms, there are a few seconds of complete darkness separating Mrs. Chan and Mr. Chow. Psychologically, this semantic visual trope of the physical and emotional gap between the two becomes descriptive of their emotional state.



#### 4.24 In the Mood for Love: Complete separation in the horizontal track

The horizontal bounded forms that Tran Anh Hung has revealed in his melodramas had a therapeutic function. For Wong Kar-Wai's couple, the horizontal tracking shots function as a visual separation, pointing out Mrs. Chan and Chow's inability to face their feelings. The role of tradition that is evident in the family's life in Tran's films is nowhere to be found in the urban domestic spaces of Wong. The camera movements in Tran's films had the narrative function of expressing unity by following the characters through the house, but the same device fulfills a different role in In the Mood for Love: it separates the lovers and also articulates the impossibility for them to express their emotions to each other.

The aforementioned tendency grows even stronger when Chow's character is taken on a metaphorical journey across space and time in 2046. Here the mobile frames contribute to creating an even more artificial world where separation and isolation unfold in Wong's theatrical tableaux. The visual strategies of 2046 are similar to the style of In

the Mood for Love. A major difference is, as with Tran's second film analyzed here, the change in the aspect ratio. Wong here uses the Cinemascope frame instead of the 1.85 image, thus foregrounding the horizontality of the compositions further. The much wider frame allows for the horizontal tracking shots to capture larger portions of the scenery. This might be responsible for the fact that, in general, the camera moves less in 2046. With Chow narrating the events throughout the complicated flashbacks and flashforwards of the plot, it feels as if he were the one pulling the curtain on the events. In the horizontal tracking shots that still dominate the film, Chow seems to act as an ironic narrator who already knows that the goal of his character is unreachable; nevertheless he consciously presents to the viewer his characters' efforts to relive his memories.

Chow is the narrator of his own melodramatic story, where every element of the *mise-en-scène* is designed to express the pain over lost memories. The tracking shots visualize a state of mind, which results from the protagonists' inability to reach their memories. The same mobile frames present the story theatrically to the spectator: the object in the foreground slowly moves out of the frame horizontally and appears as the opening and closing curtains on the events unfolding on the screen. Although these mobile shots obviously do not present his visual point-of-view, with his voice-over narration Chow metaphorically becomes the *metteur-en-scène* of his own story.

He presents events for the viewer by opening the curtains (tracking shots) for us to get a glimpse: the slow horizontal tracks move the typically Wongian mirrors, furniture or curtains out of the frame, only to slide them back again to hide the events. Chow cannot relive these memories, which he narrates throughout the film; therefore, he hides them. The semantic function of the "curtain"-like horizontal tracking shots consists in

this concealment. Time slips away, and in Wong's theater all that is left for the protagonist is to act as an announcer to his own failed attempts to capture harmony in relationships.

As soon as the ninth minute of the film, Wong introduces the horizontal tracking shot [1] as a device that will open the "curtains" of the events only to close them shortly. Here Chow is partying with several women in a nightclub.



4.25 2046: The "curtain" opens and closes in the same tracking shot

The red tint of the shots emphasizes the artificiality or theatricality of the scene, which opens with a slow leftwards track, making the camera seem to come out from behind a wall of furniture: the curtains open up. But a few seconds later the camera will reverse directions and smoothly slide back behind the obstacle or hindrance, visually closing the view on the characters. It seems that compared to In the Mood, where Chow simply was the narrator of his own story, he has become a much more conscious narrator of his own tale. The increasingly flaunted nature of the narration is visually expressed by the theatrical tracking shots that present moments of Chow's life for us like an exhibit.

While in the first camera movement I described in 2046 the object in the foreground cannot be identified, later on Wong will literally pull the curtain on his characters. Early on in the film, Chow encounters Lulu, a former lover. She does not remember Chow, which is visualized by a deep red drape taking over the Cinemascope frame in a slow leftwards tracking shot [2]. The two characters disappearing behind an out-of-focus curtain represent the distance that the lack of memories creates.



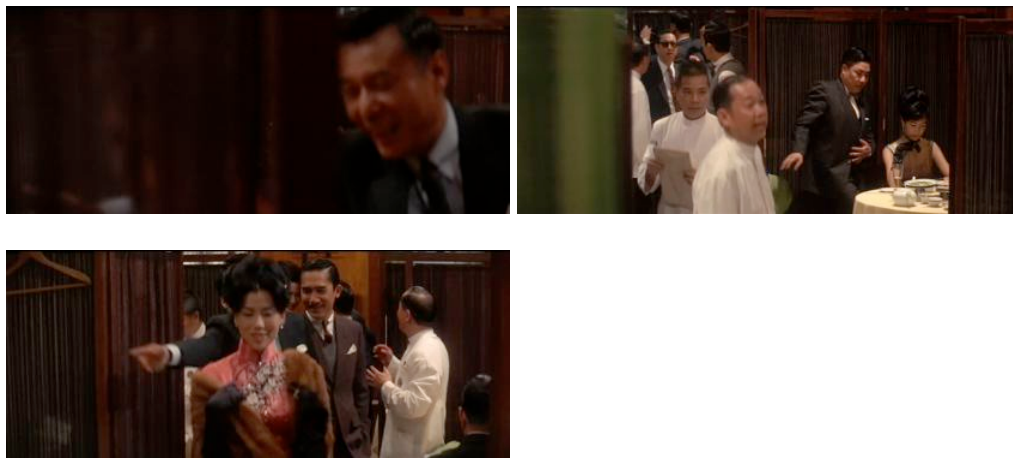
4.26 2046: Another curtain shot: visualizing the recognition of lost memories

On top of the flaunted visual style, Wong self-consciously plays with blurring the boundaries between different diegetic levels in the plot. It becomes increasingly hard to distinguish between Chow, the protagonist of his film, and the characters of the fictional world created by Chow, the writer. As a result of this playful mixing of the discursive levels in the film, the spectator is led to think that Wong is actually interweaving his own role as a filmmaker into the story. He wrote the screenplay, and so the writer in that screenplay is an obvious stand-in for him. The protagonist himself expresses this when he declares: “People I ran into in the normal course of things turned up in my stories. I felt more and more at ease in my fiction world.” In other words, the real Wong, his protagonist Chow, and the characters Chow creates in his work as a writer overlap. The director/writer is in exile, when he excludes himself from the real world and submerges himself in the universe of fiction.



#### 4.27 2046: The personality of the artist (here a writer) is isolated

This separation from “real” events, from other characters is what Wong expresses with the isolating curtain-tracking shot, one of the central elements of 2046’s visual style. Detachment is then carried to its ultimate extreme in a complicated scene at a restaurant where the tracking camera [6] moves behind several dividers that fragment the space of the scene. In the fictional world the dividers are supposed to separate the different tables from each other at the restaurant. The arriving guests are shot through these curtains while sitting down around the table for a dinner where Chow is supposed to introduce his new girlfriend, Bai Ling, to the company. She never shows up. In Wong’s world, however, the composition marks the beginning of an affair, the end of which will take place at the same spot.



#### 4.28 2046: Chow’s company arrives but a divider shifts in between the guests and



the camera, which then cuts to a reverse shot to reveal the fragmented space of the restaurant

Twenty minutes later in the film, Chow and Bai Ling express their disaffection by walking past each other in the same restaurant, forcing a disinterested expression on their faces while they fleetingly wink to each other. The camera is moving [8] the exact same way as in the first restaurant scene.



4.29 2046: Bai Ling and Chow meet in the space fragmented by several curtains that move in and out of the Cinemascope frame via the tracking camera

These tracking-curtain shots appear at key moments of the film: during Chow's platonic relationship with Ms. Wang, who helps him in his creative crisis [9,12], or on the futuristic train where the time traveler (Chow's literary equivalent) kisses the android only to realize that she does not love him [10-11], or even during Chow's final encounter with Bai Ling at the very end of the film [13].

The rigidly modular composition relegates the characters into their own separate sections of the frame. These modules are not open, as Tran's frames-within-the-frame. In

the latter director's films, the modules were interconnected with the tracking camera that followed the characters moving through them. In Wong Kar-Wai's films, the moving camera succeeds in creating a visual isolation that is not alleviated but accentuated by the mobile frames. The slowly moving tracking shots frame objects that glide in between the protagonists, creating an overtone of isolation. Tran and Wong use similar melodramatic situations and compose using similar visual strategies, but their horizontal tracking shots evoke a different impression. The beautiful geometrical harmony (what the tracking shots in all four films further emphasize) around the troubled characters functions in Tran's work as a counterbalance to their emotional turmoil. But the same modular geometry seems to bring Wong Kar-Wai's characters further apart. They are not in control of the space around them: they do not make their own the corridors of the hotels where they live and remain strangers to their own rooms. The interiors of the family home (with their traditional geometry and interconnected spaces) and the cold urban interiors (with their estranged geometry and isolated spaces) could not be depicted with more similar stylistic techniques yet for more disparate dramatic purposes than in Papaya and Vertical Ray on the one hand, and In the Mood and 2046 on the other hand.<sup>183</sup>

Camera movement fulfills opposite purposes in the work of the two directors, although their shots are physically moving in similar ways. The slow horizontal tracking shot is a benchmark of the visual style of both films. The key difference seems to lie in the fact that Tran's camera mostly follows family members moving around and through the spaces of the family home, semantically giving the mobile frame a security through a human presence. Although these are not point-of-view shots, the spectator still sees that

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<sup>183</sup> Some of these similarities are explained by the fact that cinematographer Mark Lee Ping-bin shot both Vertical Ray and In the Mood.

the tracks belong to characters.<sup>184</sup> In Wong's tracks, the movements objectify the characters in two ways. First, the viewer will see in between the camera and the characters several out-of-focus objects, and these obstacles are not plants that glide into Tran's tracking shots but window bars or curtains that literally and semantically serve as separators. Second, Wong Kar-Wai uses fewer following tracking shots depicting the figures isolated in space and psychologically as well.

Tran and Wong both show that intensified continuity is a visual trend that exists on an international level: both directors embrace it as a normative background during the creation of their own figurative codes. The four films analyzed illustrate Bordwell's broad concept, and apparently the trend of the moving camera becomes an almost always horizontally moving camera in these two directors' hands. The technically very similar device, however, will carry opposite meaning in the traditional harmony of Tran Anh Hung and the urban geometry of Wong Kar-Wai. Interconnection and separation both result from a horizontally tracking camera. The exteriorized melodramatic is a creation that arises out of an interaction of character traits, mise-en-scene and visual style. The four films show how the device of the horizontally tracking frame can become a technique with opposing functions: through its relations with other elements of the language of film, like character movement, set design or even aspect ratio.

This project concentrates on the normative and figurative in the development of stylistic devices. By focusing on the four analyzed films, the study brought to surface a technique that is a central element of both Tran's and Wong's visual style. Tran in Papaya uses the mobile frame as an attachment to the characters who make the isolated,

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<sup>184</sup> What Murray Smith calls *attachment*. 1995.

irregular modules connect. Once he developed the technique of module-interconnection, he modifies it: with the addition of panning camera movements, he creates a contrast between two different types of mobile frames. According to the Asian melodramatic tradition, the characters do not express emotion only through the external visual balance that they create. In Vertical Ray, the tracking shots serve to express nontraditional or transgressive emotions of the characters through movement without a vantage point. On the other hand, the pans communicate the power of tradition: in the panning shots, the family members are harbored by the safety of the domestic. The tracks in both films create insecurity, but Papaya softens this impression by character attachment: the tracks follow the female members of the family who recreate the stability of the home. Vertical Ray creates a contrast by adding a different camera movement that was virtually nonexistent in Papaya. Both of Tran's films illustrate how the figurative narrative function of the mobile framings results from an interaction of normative background (intensified continuity), which is influenced and modified by the local codes of the Asian melodramatic.

With Wong Kar-Wai, this chapter illustrated an intensification of the tracking shot's expressive value. In In the Mood the technique serves as a lyrical isolation of the characters, and also communicates their inability to communicate with each other. Contrary to Tran, Wong does not soften the disconnection emphasized by the tracking shots with character movement: the director much rather adds the mobile framing to other tactics of staging, mise-en-scène to achieve a sensuous yet estranged notion of separation. With 2046, the isolation becomes much more theatrical. Mr. Chow becomes a stand-in for Wong's artistic persona: Chow becomes disconnected from his own role in the film,

from his own role as a writer who is part of the story of the film. The tracking shots contribute to this effect by setting up the *curtain effect* with the shallow telephoto compositions slowly moving horizontally on the bounded forms of the sets. The director intensifies the notion of isolation by composing tracking shots that visually express the disconnection of the protagonist from his own role. The mobile “curtain shots” show that the protagonist can act as a *metteur-en-scène*: he moves back and forth between different diegetic levels. Chow never stepped outside his role in In the Mood, but in 2046 the character reflects about his own situation as if he were not only a filmic character but also a viewer to his own tale. Wong Kar-Wai amplifies the effect of the isolating tracking shot across the two films analyzed: Chow’s ability to comment on the events that happened to him reveals itself in the slowly moving mobile frames. These tracking compositions play a hide-and-reveal game creating not just a distance between characters, but also the artist and his material. The norm of the emotional isolation expressed by the visuals in In the Mood is intensified to an intellectual disconnection between creator and creation as seen in 2046. Camera movement in In the Mood disconnected diegetic character from another diegetic character. Camera movement in 2046 disconnects the same character from his own diegetic role and shows that he occasionally steps outside the story world. The readability of the second figurative technique strongly relies on the first: the figurative mobile frames of In the Mood become a normative background for 2046. Wong Kar-Wai’s and Tran Anh Hung’s visual tactics become more and more complex as the directors refine their strategies as filmmakers.

Figurative textual elements activate connotative meaning through the stylistic register of motion pictures. As this project argues, this figurative meaning is created by a

cooperation of existing background norms encompassing the general function of a textual code and the local cultural context, which in specifies the broad trend and enriches it with motifs that have limited cultural significance. The figurative results from an interaction of the normative and a local network of signifiers. This chapter showed that in Tran Anh Hung's and Wong Kar-Wai's work this aforementioned progression can be discovered in the development of the mobile frame's textual function. For both filmmakers, contemporary visual style (intensified continuity), and specifically its component of the constantly moving camera proved to be a normative horizon. However, the broad trend of intensified continuity that encompasses the visual style in many contemporary motion pictures is not locally specific. The camera movements of contemporary filmmakers depend on many factors, like generic framework, industrial background, among them the cultural context, which bind it to a specific space and time. For Tran's and Wong's domestic stories, this local cultural motif proved to be the Asian framework of melodrama, where the "text of muteness" transfers characters emotions not to sets and pantomime (Western variant) but the sheer visual parameters of the shots. The two directors' endlessly moving shots integrate this melodramatic tradition into their visual styles when creating mobile compositions to "speak" instead of their characters.

## CONCLUSION

Stylistic progress is a process that classical film theory often indexed as essential in understanding the status of film as an art form. The evolution of the directors' expressive tools paved the way for realist and formalist arguments, respectively. For André Bazin, considerations on the status of motion pictures lead to the conviction that silent or sound, films should create scenes with continuous spatial and temporal parameters and therefore advocated the use of lengthy takes, large depth of field and camera movement.<sup>185</sup> The Russian Montage filmmakers, on the other hand, regarded editing the essential stylistic feature of film and related their own dialectical montage scenes to D. W. Griffith's narrative techniques.<sup>186</sup> With the demise of the ontological questions of classical film theory, aspects of film style and stylistic progress have been largely neglected, except by the Neoformalist scholars<sup>187</sup>.

While developing a coherent terminology to analyze style and advocating a problem-solution model, Neoformalism regards the "problem" of style as an immanent artistic question, a question of how to express certain information on a specific channel. This approach avoids investigating the numerous points of interaction between film style and local cultural factors that surrounded the emergence of a new expressive technique.

Applied to the example to camera movement, the technique of the tracking-in camera of

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<sup>185</sup> Bazin, André. "Evolution of the Language of the Cinema" In.: Brady, Leo—Marshall Cohen (Eds.) Film Theory and Criticism, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition (Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>186</sup> Pudovkin, V. I.: "On Editing." Eisenstein, Sergei. "The Cinematic Principle and the Ideogram." and "The Dialectical Approach to Film Form." In.: Brady, Leo—Marshall Cohen (Eds.) Film Theory and Criticism, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition (Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>187</sup> Bordwell, David. On the History of Film Style. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.)  
Thompson, Kristin. Breaking the glass armor: neoformalist film analysis. (Princeton University Press, 1988.)

Pastrone is an answer to a stylistic problem, i.e. how to convey the emotions of the characters to the spectators. But it is also a phenomenon that is not independent from the newly discovered capacity for character subjectivity in the cinema, which is a broader problem than an immanent stylistic issue. This project represents an attempt to theoretically account for stylistic progress through development of a specific device, the tracking camera. While adapting a Neoformalist terminology, I have also pointed out the limitations of this approach: it neglects the local cultural realities that surround the emergence of stylistic elements. In contemporary theory, the routes of bottom-up formalist inquiry and top-down “cultural” methods often appear separated. I am convinced that the two can be combined in an analysis that does not lose sight of film’s textual qualities but also finds a way to integrate stylistic progress into larger cultural trends. A bottom-up research program, progressing towards observations connecting style and history from the detailed analyses of cinematic devices seems a productive method to connect what often remains separated in film studies: observations of larger cultural trends and the minute, close analysis of cinematic texts.

*Traveling Through Space* has used the example of the tracking camera to show how the emergence of figurative stylistic elements is based on an existing normative background that interacts with the local cultural tendencies. To conceptually account for the normative and figurative textual codes, I applied Roland Barthes’s typology about the narrative function of distinctive textual/stylistic units.<sup>188</sup> In his influential study *S/Z*, Barthes gives a close reading of Balzac’s *Sarrasine* and analyzes how meaning is created in the structure of the text. Using his system of textual codes that causally, thematically

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<sup>188</sup> Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1974.



or otherwise make the literary text operate, he describes the central narrative functions of distinctive textual units. Barthes' conceptual framework becomes functional by assigning specific codes to the interactions of the elements of narration. They are the *hermeneutic*, the *semic*, the *proairetic*, the *symbolic* and the *cultural code*.<sup>189</sup> I have used this continuum of five textual codes to show that the more complex narrative functions (for example semantic and referential) require the existence and widespread recognition of simpler (like proairetic and hermeutic) devices of the same technique. This project describes the developing norms of the tracking camera as ones that first focused on the normative functions, on which auteurs later could base other non-standard uses. The argument of my project is that the assignment of figurative function to the tracking camera presupposes that the same technique already is an established, recognized stylistic element, i.e. a normative- or a less complex figurative textual code. In other words, different storytelling functions of the tracking camera become widely accepted as norms before film auteurs start to experiment with more complex, figurative uses of the same device.

The development of the norms more complex than the first two Barthesian codes (proairetic, hermeneutic) shows that the figurative or thematic norms guiding the mobile frame cannot be explained by referring to internal narrative factors alone. From Chapter Two on, the case studies of this project revealed how do the figurative or thematic norms of the moving camera expand from normative or less complex figurative uses. These figurative elements show a correlation with cultural trends that surround their birth. Without the established schemes, the “added” function of a symbolic, semantic or a

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<sup>189</sup> Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1974. pp. 16-18.

referential code would be not visible at all: the idea of the camera-doppelganger in F. W. Murnau, the figurative tracking shots of Jancsó Miklós or the horizontally moving frames of Tran Anh Hung or Wong Kar-Wai carry functions that are the products of existing stylistic norms influenced by cultural forces specific in each case.

The chapters all demonstrate the normative-figurative dynamics, with different variations, however. The analysis on Cabiria highlights the formation of the systematic normative function for the tracking camera. With Murnau, the study outlines an interaction of the point-of-view camera movements with the Doppelganger-motif prevalent in Germany. The chapter moves on to show that without a culturally significant background symbol, the American film Sunrise does not continue the figurative techniques of The Last Laugh. Therefore, the case of Sunrise represents a “negative” example of my thesis: while I argue that the figurative results from the interaction of the normative codes a local cultural signifiers, with the latter component (i.e. without the Doppelganger-motif in America,) the figurative camera movements lose their complexity. Jancsó’s films depict a continuous tradition that dialectically composes with visual pairs or opposites. The Hungarian filmmaker’s political statements, which he articulated through style, are readjusted to express local political realities: from an impersonal geometrical style in the 1967 film favoring rigid tracking shots Jancsó moves toward a more subjective vision that foregrounds handheld camera movements and close-ups. Here the interaction of a normative Neorealist heritage with Hungary’s political realities results in the formation of allegorical figurative camera tactics. Finally, Tran’s and Wong’s work is interpreted against the background of a contemporary international aesthetics of intensified continuity, which they combine with the tradition of the Asian

“texts of muteness,” the melodrama. Here the figurative elements are updated from film to film (from The Scent of the Green Papaya to Vertical Ray of the Sun, and from In the Mood for Love to 2046) to symbolically express the radicalizing visions of the two directors about an interaction of the traditional Asian domestic life with the modern life in a postcolonial society.

The selection of the case studies in this project has been far from systematic: I have chosen different auteur directors who have developed signature normative and figurative techniques. While I have not proposed a comprehensive historical model for the development of aesthetic devices, the study seems to show that the model possesses some explanatory power in the case of the tracking shot’s development on the normative-figurative axis. However, the limitations introduced through my choices of directors point toward the future prospect of the project.

The first possible direction in which the current study could continue is the inclusion of “studio directors” in the investigation of the tracking frame’s narrative functions. Whatever the outcomes of such an analysis would be, it had the effect of widening the empirical basis for the normative-figurative framework I have suggested. Since this project has examined how select auteurs situate their flaunted camera movements against a normative background that through an interaction with the local cultural context allows for the figurative meaning to arise, the addition of less self-conscious artists’ work to the sampled films would highlight how the figurative narrative function itself becomes “normative.” Murnau, Jancsó, Tran and Wong all use tracking shots that assign new, previously not established codes to the tracking shot, but symbolic, semantic and referential, i.e. figurative units can be recognized codes that are used by a

wide array of filmmakers with their storytelling function mutually understood by global audiences across different national and cultural borders. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>190</sup> the “vertigo shot” exemplifies this dynamic. The technique in question consists of two separate but simultaneous camera movements: one physical, the other optical. While the camera itself is being physically pulled in or out of the scene (tracking), the framing stays the same since the zooming out or in counterbalances the dolly movement. The resulting effect seems to bend space as the viewer experiences changes in her perception of depth.

Originally used by Hitchcock in his 1958 film Vertigo, the technique has been used by several auteurs in Jules and Jim (Francois Truffaut, 1962), Jaws (Steven Spielberg, 1975), Goodfellas (Martin Scorsese, 1990). Lately, however, the camera movement that seems to bend space has appeared in large number of audiovisual texts. By virtue of its use in television commercials, prime time TV shows and video games, it is safe to assume that today the vertigo shot is not an excessive technique; moreover, audiences recognize it as a device that tells a story. The tracking in—zooming out shot appears in a TV commercial in Spring 2004 in a Mitsubishi 2004 Galant ED ad with the car in the middle of the shot in an urban setting. The vertigo effect suggests that in the middle of a fast changing world, the car is a safe, stable point. The same effect was utilized by a Coca Cola commercial, where the Coke dispenser occupied the center of the frame around which “space bends.” The shot has also been used in a Verizon Wireless commercial. I have also seen the vertigo shot the TV show One on One (UPN) during the 2004 Spring season, and recently, the golf tournament video game Tiger Woods 2004 (EA Sports) incorporated the effect when switching back and forth between players in a

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<sup>190</sup> “Bending Space: Narrative Functions of the Vertigo Shot” Presented at the Annual SCMS Conference, London, April 2005.

multiplayer option. These examples shows how the original figurative technique that had the semantic function of a setting up the theme of a changing surrounding sifted through various layers of popular culture to become a somewhat overused shot, which today can be regarded as a figurative code in a “normative” position. By describing the process of the figurative textual codes turning into widely accepted normative units (along with the normative-toward-figurative dynamic analyzed throughout the chapters,) the picture of the development of specific stylistic devices would become much fuller.

Another direction that would broaden the basis for of the normative-figurative model using the five Barthesian codes is to elaborate on the formation of the normative textual units. In the first chapter of this study, I have argued that the before Pastrone’s Cabiria, the traveling shot fulfilled functions that were—with a few exemptions—limited to heightening the spectacular qualities of the image. During shifting the narrative paradigms of the cinema of attraction and early narrative cinema a systematic narrative function is assigned to the tracking camera, and Pastrone’s film can be regarded as a pioneering work in this process. Apart from the problem-solution model advocated by the Neoformalist paradigm, industrial and generic could be investigated that surrounded the production of Cabiria, and thus the formation of a systematic normative function of the tracking camera movement?

In Italy, the studios had a strong infrastructural background since, more than other European countries, which went back to the special exhibition and production circumstances. The film industry relied not so much on temporary film venues and traveling exhibitors since the number of permanent theaters as higher when compared with other European countries. This allowed principal Italian film producing companies

to emerge, many of them located in Turin. The interiors of Cabiria itself were shot at FERT Studios in Turin. This stable background for the production probably allowed more room for experimentation with the traveling camera that requires the tracks, on which the camera moves, to be coordinated with other aspects of mise-en-scène. On top of an industrially motivated investigation focusing on the formation of the tracking shot's normative function, the question of film genres also seems a promising aspect. A generic approach to Cabiria could compare the film to other monumental historical motion pictures of the decade. In the Italian cinema of the 1910s, spectacular historical epics were popular with audiences: Arturo Ambrosio and Luigi Maggi directed The Last Days of Pompeii (1908) Enrico Guazzoni's Quo Vadis (1914). However, these films did not mobilize tracking techniques to portray character emotion and even character motivation by indexing dramatically important information by moving the camera. Comparing the visual strategies of Cabiria with other historical epics of the times (even with Pastrone's earlier The Fall of Troy from 1910), the developing normative iconography of the genre can be traced. An analysis of the industrial and generic aspects of stylistic progress opens up new directions for the normative-figurative model that I have proposed throughout this project.

Finally, stylistic development can be investigated through the lens of several other artistic devices, from which the tracking camera movement is only one of the possible choices. My preference for choosing the mobile frame stems from my personal fascination with the versatility of the device and its relatively neglected status within film studies. The aesthetics of camera movement is an element of filmic narration that has been investigated by scholars only sporadically. As the previous chapters showed,

combined with other elements of *mise-en-scène* it has been used by filmmakers to express both normative and figurative narrative codes. The normative-figurative model of stylistic progress, which I have proposed here focusing on the tracking movements of the camera, should be broadened by testing its explanatory power on other stylistic devices. Other filmic techniques have received much more attention in the past years, from which editing stands out the most. On one hand, this is probably due to the fact that D. W. Griffith's films along with the Russian Montage directors' work have historically proved to be essential stages in the development of film's "language." On the other hand, the question about the normative-figurative aspects of editing seems to me a promising direction that would extend the idea of the gradual progression of narrative functions to a filmic device beyond the traveling camera. According to the anecdotes about the seminars at the State Film School in Moscow, Kuleshov showed his students—among them Pudovkin and Eisenstein—films of Mack Sennett and D. W. Griffith, and was especially fond of the American filmmakers' technique of cross-cutting. The radicalization of the montage techniques in the films of Kuleshov, Pudovkin and finally Eisenstein move from narrative connections, linkages towards abstract collision and conflict. Therefore, the evolution of editing from Griffith to Eisenstein could be described as a progress from normative functions towards figurative techniques that actually build on the experiences of editing for narrative linkages. This shift is strongly influenced by the local social-political circumstances, and the ideological content in Eisenstein's films shows how the dialectical method served as a background motif for the changes in the function of editing. A thorough examination of the details of this process would probably bring to light the details of the process.

On top of editing, there are several other filmic techniques that could serve the purpose of highlighting the dynamics of stylistic progress. Lighting design for example is one of the areas, which has received little academic attention.<sup>191</sup> Forthcoming scholarship will probably focus on the development of this crucially important factor of film aesthetics. Until more comprehensive analyses stand at the disposal of film scholars, the normative-figurative model remains an example for how stylistic progress can occur. In the future, I hope to be able to continue my investigation about the interaction of stylistic norms and socio-cultural factors.

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<sup>191</sup> With the exemption of Barry Salt's groundbreaking study Film style and technology: history and analysis London : Starword, 1983.



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## **Appendix A: List of Tracking Camera Movements in Cabiria and Intolerance**

### **CABIRIA (1914)**

[1] 4:35 – characters start talking to each other after a slow diagonal track-in has taken us close to them. Before that they just fill in the composition.

[2] 8:50 – slow diagonal track in shows the viewer a secret passage through which the trapped characters escape from a room in flames.

[3] 9:11 – parallel tracking reveals off-screen gold that the plundering servants will take from the ruined palace.

[4] 9:40 – close-up of servants steeling the gold. Slow parallel track reframes them: in the end they're in the center.

[5] 10:04 – nurse takes Cabiria with her from the palace. Her leaving is covered with a slow parallel track

[6] 12:11 – nurse tries on stolen ring. After this moment, camera track out medium quickly to show other servant dividing the stolen goods.

[7] 14:29 – slow diagonal track in onto nurse and Cabiria at slave market. Buyers take a look at them. Camera comes to a halt at a full shot, when nurse makes a protective gesture “saying” she will not let C. be sold alone, she’s going with her. The deal is negotiated, camera pulls out.

[8] 16:30 – two Romans, Fulvius Axilla and Maciste arrive to an Inn, camera slowly track parallel to the walls with them until they walk through the door.

[9] 16:48 – inside the Inn, characters regroup, slow diagonal track in to frame the new center of the action.

[10] 17:03 – a guest of the Inn talks to one of the waiters. As waiter shows up, slow track starts towards the table of the guest, cutting off the waiter who returns in two seconds to the frame and starts talking to the guest.

[11] 17:13 – same as [9]

[12] 17:56 – slow diagonal track out moves from a long shot of children dancing to the priest stepping into the room and looking at the children to choose one to sacrifice. The new focal point after the movement is immediately filled in by the nurse (as she sits

down, camera tilts down) trying make the priest believe C. is ill, therefore cannot be sacrificed. Unsuccessfully, she is taken to the temple.

[13] 27:31 – slow parallel track following the crowds into the mouth of the Moloch

[14] 27:59 – after the Romans have teamed up with the nurse to save C., they're in the temple and sneak into the first line during the ceremony. Their movement is followed with a diagonal slow track in.

[15] 32:15 – bewildered priests follow the Romans and C. to the Inn. As they bang on the door, slow parallel track to the left.

[16] 32:43 – tilt down from window of the Inn continues in a track as the crowd of priests leaves looking the C.

[17] 36:42 – slow diagonal rightwards track in reframes C. and Machiste and moves on to the right until the innkeeper shows up in the frame to bring them some water. As he enters the room, camera track back the exact same path.

[18] 39:46 – slow diagonal track in ends with the full shot of two characters: Massinissa sends a gift to Sophonisba.

[19] 44:11 – the innkeeper tells the priest about the Romans and C. in the temple: slow diagonal track in end in a full shot of the innkeeper and two priests.

[20] 46:11 – the two Romans and C. leave the inn. As they move, camera follows slowly in a parallel track, after they left, camera pulls back to show innkeeper.

[action scenes are shot static. It's the drama where camera moves]

[21] 50:00 – slow diagonal track in as Massanissa is left with C. Shot ends with a full shot of M., her servant and C. As they take away C., camera retreats.

[22] 54:47 – frontal track in on Archimedes as he invents some weapon for Carthago to defeat the Roman fleet.

[23] 1:00:42 – Fulvius recovers at Batto's house, he tells B. the story of the ring. Slow frontal track in ends in a full shot of the two.

[24] 1:02:32 – the two Carthago kings talk in a full shot. They negotiate an alliance in a full shot. After they agree, camera slowly pulls out diagonally to the left.

[25] 1:03:18 – track in on the same path as [24] to the kings as they're entertained by dancers

[26] 1:03:48 – Sophonisba sends a dove with a message. She walks towards camera, which slowly pulls back.

[27] 1:04:16 – She brings dove to window, camera moves with her parallel to sets. Camera stops with her in the center of the frame, than she lets the bird fly away.

[28] 1:04:44 – after expressing her pain, camera pulls back, same path as [27] to reveal servants and sets.

[29] 1:12:48 – a pan following Fulvius's return to the Inn results in a slow diagonal track in as he walks up to the door.

[30] 1:14:40 – camera pulls back same path as characters leave the Inn.

[31] 1:15:05 – Maciste working as a slave. Full shot results in a track-out that shows the whole scenario: Fulvius arrives.

[32] 1:15:41 – Fulvius leaves the Inn as keeper is still asleep. Parallel dolly shot follows him from the bed of the innkeeper to the door as he leaves.

[33] 1:15:57 – cut to exterior: he walks away from the building: camera tracks out to keep him at a constant distance.

[34] 1:19:09 – same as [32] now with Maciste and Fulvius leaving the Inn.

[35] 1:19:34 – same as [33] now with Maciste and Fulvius leaving the Inn.

[36] 1:20:32 – long shot of the Carthago court. Slow frontal track in to reveal characters.

[several long exterior action shots here of the escaping Fulvius and Maciste, no camera movement]

[37] 1:27:14 – close up of the battlefield. Slow diagonal rightwards tracking out reveals dead bodies.

[38] 1:34:59 – Sophonisba's servant crosses the palace. Slow parallel tracking shot follows her.

[39] 1:35:58 – Sophonisba in chair. Camera moves diagonally to the left to a full shot.

[40] 1:36:59 – the servant is brought in to the king. She lands on the floor, camera pulls back.

[41] 1:38:10 – Karthalo is trying to seduce Elissa=Cabiria. Slow diagonal rightward track-in shows a full shot of them.

[42] 1:40:10 – Fulvius and Maciste discover the food storage. As they enter the room, slow diagonal track back to the left opens up the storage room.

[43] 1:42:38 – Romans enter the city of Cirta. Slow parallel tracking shot takes the Roman leaders up to the stairs of the palace.

[44] 1:45:38 – long diagonal leftwards track-back shows Maciste exploring the food storage. The shot ends with Fulvius drawing on a wall.

[45] 1:48:25 – Massinissa and Sophonisba on a terrace. The slow diagonal leftwards track-back opens up the scene to reveal other characters, who tell them about Fulvius and Maciste.

[46] 1:48:40 – same setting. Track back as Massinissa leaves.

[47] 1:50:00 – same setting Massanissa and Sophonisba return to terrace. Slow diagonal leftwards track out escorts them to the terrace.

[48] 1:52:08 – Slow track in reveals Sophonisba listening to a conversation from behind a curtain that summons Massinissa to Scipio's camp.

[49] 1:57:31 – Maciste arrives to Sophonisba's tent. As he reports, slow frontal track-in singles out the two characters.

[50] 1:58:54 – Sophonisba is looking at Massinissa's gift in the palace. Slow diagonal rightwards track-in end with her putting poison in a drink ready to commit suicide.

[51] 2:00:18 – Slow diagonal leftwards track-in ends in a full shot of her dying in Maciste's arms, as he puts her on a bed.

[52] 2:02:41 – Cabiria cries at Sophonisba's bedside as she dies but takes a last look at her.

[53] 2:03:24 – Fulvius, Cabiria and Sophonisba in a three-shot. Track in moves from a long shot to a full shot of the three, as the queen finally dies.

### **INTOLERANCE (1916): Babylonian episode**

[1] 18:18 – slow frontal track in above the heads of the characters towards the gates of the city

[2] 18:28 – a quick parallel track (combined with a pan) along the walls picks up Rhapsode who walks along the wall towards gates

[3] 21:39 – track back shot of Belshazzar’s chariot proceeding on the walls

[4] same as [3] in a full shot of Belshazzar

[5] 1:50:27 – slow frontal high angle crane shot descending towards the wide stairs of the Babylonian set. Length: 43 seconds.

[6] 1:51:22 – slow frontal track out as Belshazzar walks to along during the victory celebrations

[7] 1:51:48 – slow frontal high angle crane shot, starts much closer than [6] descending towards the stairs with dancers. When camera arrives above the figures it starts to rise again to show sets. Length: 42 seconds. Allan Dwan says he helped to construct the dolly-crane combination for Griffith for this shot (Brownlow: The Parade’s Gone By, 100-101.)

[8] 1:52:19 – slow high angle rising crane shot up the Babylonian walls. Length: 25 seconds.

[9] 2:04:48 - slow frontal high angle crane shot, starts further away than [7] descending towards the stairs with dancers.

[10]] 2:04:52 – immediate cut to a track out full shot with two dancers

[11] 2:05:18 – track out from dancers as in [10] followed by an immediate track in back towards the dancers.

[12] 2:06:02 – [11] reversed: track in followed by track out

[13] 2:35:56 – track out full shot back on the moving chariot of Cyrus

[14] 2:36:03 – track out long shot back on the moving chariot of Cyrus

[15] 2:36:10 – Mountain Girl follows the Persians, track out full shot back on her chariot

[16] 2:36:13 – as [15] in medium shot

[17] 2:36:25 – Mountain Girl racing in parallel tracking shot gradually moving away from the path of her chariot

[18] 2:38:37 – as [5] but camera does not descend. Length: 7 seconds.

[19] 2:38:44 – descending crane shot above the same stairs, much closer than [18] and ends above the heads of the dancing crowd. Length: 6 seconds.

[20] 2:38:50 – parallel tracking long shot of dancers moving sideways of stairs.

[21] 2:39:10 – Cyrus's fighters riding against Babylon. Parallel track follows the first line of soldiers. (this shot is edited together with a tracking shot showing a racing train in the contemporary episode

The other episodes of the film contain few pans and tilts that all fulfill the function of reframing. I've found no tracking shots other than in the Babylonian and the contemporary episode.

At 2:20:38 in the contemporary episode, track is a very powerful track in to a close up of the Dear One fading out after she has heard the verdict of the jury that sentences the father of his child to death.

Also in the contemporary episode around 2:40:00 there are 5 tracking shots that show the rescue team riding trains and cars trying to save Jenkins from being executed.

## **Appendix B: List of Traveling Camera Movements in The Last Laugh and Sunrise**

### **The Last Laugh (1924)**

[1] 00:29 – camera in elevator descending to the main lobby of the hotel. Effectively, the shot makes the impression of a movement on a crane.

[2] 00:42 – tracking towards the revolving door end showing Jannings at the entrance of the hotel in the rain.

[3] 16:14 – handheld shot in the revolving door. The first segment of the shot shows Jannings entering the hotel the morning of the second day. After three seconds Murnau cuts to a subjective shot of showing the new porter from Jannings' POV. Three second later there is a cut back to the terrified face of the protagonist. In a symmetrical way, the last shot lasts again three seconds.

[4] 18:29 – the mobile framing starts with a pan from a two-shot of the manager and Jannings to the left reframing the latter character into the center. The camera then frontally tracks in quickly, moves across the glass door (double exposure) and stops in a medium shot.

[5] 24:11 – Slow track-out is combined with a tilt down on Jannings now without his uniform. Then the camera tilts up. The tilting movement of the camera mirrors the protagonist's head: looking down on his own body, realizing he has lost the uniform, the lifting his head again.

[6] 24:43 – Slow track-in towards the uniform now on a hanger.

[7] 26:03 – Shot starts with a pan to the right following Jannings. As he turns his back to the camera, a quick track-in starts to follow the two characters, passes them. As the movement ends, they walk back into the frame from the right.

[8] 28:22 – Quick track-out from the deserted entrance of the hotel in the evening. The films seems sped up here, since a passerby is walking a little too fast.

[9] 31:11 – As Jannings steels back his uniform, he slinks out of the hotel lobby. The camera picks him up as he exist the managers room and stars a very quick left-lateral track-in to the sleeping bellboys. As the camera comes to a halt, Jannings passes through the frame rapidly.

[10] 31:45 – After the trick shot where a Jannings imagines a building collapsing over his body, he frantically turns away, which movement is underlined by the camera tracking out parallel to the street.

*Dream-sequence:*

[11] 37:05 – camera on a wire quickly moves out from a close-up of a trumpet to a high angle long shot showing Jannings in a second floor window of the house on the opposite side of the street looking down at the musicians. The two elements of the subjective shot (object of gaze-cut-person looking) are connected with the rapid movement of the camera.

[12] 37:34 – similar to [3], here the drunk Jannings swings in a chair from the right to the left and then back. Repeated as POV shot. It seems that the shot is not pan, since the center of movement is between the camera and Jannings, like in the compositions with the revolving door. Swing shot.

[13] 38:29 - Murnau shows the revolving door in strange, mystical light with Jannings stepping out. A medium speed frontal track in stops in a full shot of the porter.

[14] 39:25 – Jannings in his drunk state imagines arriving home through the revolving door with a heavy luggage held up high in his right hand. As he walks through the revolving door, handheld shot follows him. As the rocking camera enters the wedding party, it goes around the court to show the guest, then returns to Jannings who throws the luggage up into the air. At this moment the movement stops, the guest are applauding. Jannings repeats his act, and the handheld camera, still in the same shot, moves in on the guests again and arrives back to the starting point. Length: 71 seconds.

[15] 44:11 – the hung-over porter leaves the next morning for work. As he steps out of the building to the court, he walks in front of the neighbors who are mocking him. The camera keeps him centered in a rightwards-parallel tracking long shot.

[16] 44:29 – fuzzy, dreamlike track-in to a woman in the window shows Jannings' altered perception.

[17] 44:33 – same as [15] in a medium shot

[18] 44:35 – same as [15]

[19] 44:50 – Jannings stumbles to work on the sidewalk. The camera keeps him centered in a rightwards-parallel tracking long shot.

[20] 45:08 – out-of-focus POV shot of Jannings looking at the entrance of the hotel. Quick frontal track in to the new porter.

[21] 50:09 – Jannings' neighbor walks to hotel. Parallel walking speed tracking shot along sidewalk

[22] 50:29 –tracking shot in the kitchen of the hotel along the table with different dishes, ending with 5 waiters serving up food.



[23] 54:10 – the thin neighbor discovers that Jannings is working in the restroom. Camera shows her in a medium shot, with the camera suddenly tracking in very quickly to an extreme close-up of her face laughing hysterically.

[24] 1:01:24 – Jannings sneaks out of the hotel and crosses the busy street: camera slowly tracks out in front of him towards left.

[25] 1:01:36 – track in contrast Jannings' sneaking out of the hotel with a track in towards the new porter

[26] 1:03:25 – Jannings arrives home in the uniform. Camera slowly tracks out with him to the right parallel to the walls of the house as laughing neighbors in the doors and windows make fun of him

[27] 1:13:24 – in the epilogue, we're in the restaurant of the hotel, where guests hand each other the newspaper article about the sudden reversal of Jannings' fortune. The camera follows the path of the article by tracking out walking speed at the wall of the restaurant. The long movement across several rooms comes to a halt at a table being surrounded by seven waiters. The camera quickly tracks in to a close-up of a huge cake in the hands of one of the waiters. As he leaves the frame, we see Jannings at the table eating expensive dishes. Length: 53 seconds.

Here the guests of the restaurant look at someone next to the camera, as if Jannings was just entering. Illogical, since he is sitting at the table at the end of the shot.

[28] 1:20:40 – Track-in follows Jannings leaving the restaurant. Again, as the mobile framing starts, the protagonist is immediately next to the camera. The guest bidding farewell to him waves at a then invisible person slightly out of the frame. The tracking however brings Jannings back into the frame, and he turns his back to the camera walking towards his former workplace, the restroom.

[29] 1:25:45 – Jannings leaves the hotel. Before the entrance outside, the bellboys line up for tip. As the now rich Jannings puts a coin in each hand walking towards his coach, the camera track out frontally. The personnel comes out running to get to the end of the line before Jannings does to get a tip as well.

[30] 1:26:51 – frontal two-shot of the former night watchman and Jannings leaving the hotel on their coach. Camera is in the coach shooting back on the hotel and the personnel.

Murnau also uses pans: most interesting use of the technique occurs in the stairway of the house where the porter lives. Characters walking up or down at the revolving stairs are shot with the camera panning to keep them in the frame, but the movement also contributes to the claustrophobia and the confined space of the setting.

**SUNRISE (1927)**

[1] 3:45 – crane shots lifts from the boat arriving to the village above the crowd and tilts down while descending back.

[2] 5:42 – a 180° pan picks up the City Woman as she walks down the street. After she passes the camera, it starts to track with her down the street to the Man's house.

[3] 11:08 – tracking shot follows the Man into the marsh where he is about to meet the Woman. The shot was done on stage. Camera follows him on an overhead track with a platform suspended from it (Struss operated this shot, because he had an automatic camera that did not had to be cranked). As the man steps between the bushes, the camera moves on filming the Man from the left side in profile. As he climbs over a fence, and walks up back to the camera, the shot becomes suddenly his POV. Now as he steps under a tree, there are branches in the way, which are pushed to the side. Then we see the Woman, who waits for him at the lakeshore. (The idea about a second painted moon is not right. In the beginning of the shot, the moon is over the Man. Then the pan to left looses the moon. When the camera becomes his POV, there is a pan back to the original direction where the first moon was. ) *Length:* camera stops moving at 11:59, so the movement lasts 51 seconds, but the shot is continued until 12:39.

[4] 14:54 – multiple exposure shot with the Woman and the Man lying at the lakeshore. She has just told him to go to the city with her. In the upper part of the film, we see a tracking in on a model of a city scene to illustrate their entry to the city.

[5] 15:00 – quick leftward parallel track on a miniature set with painted background about urban scenes as another part of the in-camera montage that is characteristic of Struss's work.

[6] 15:59 – leftwards tracking shot on the footprints of the Woman's high heels and the Man's shoes in the marsh. The dolly then reaches the couple, who finally take a rest after going through the mud.

[7] 17:01 – Man enters the frame from the left as he arrives back to the village. Camera tracks with him in profile up to the gates of his home.

[8] 26:20 – camera on a barge tied to the boat of the Man and the Wife as they leave for the lake.

[9] 28:30 – after he has brought back to dog to the house, the Man returns to the boat and turns it back towards the open water. The circling camera moves first the Man's figure in front of the background of the lakeshore, then the Wife figure in front of the background of the village. Tracking on water.

[10] 31:25 – high angle shot from the back of the boat shooting down on the Man rowing. There are a few cuts to a close-up of the side of the boat speeding in the water. Tracking on water.

[12] 33:11–35:23 trip to the city filmed from within the tram; master shot.

[13] 33:31 – tram ride; cut-in to a medium two shot of the Man and his Wife

[14] 33:41 – tram ride; cut-in to a close-up of the Wife.

[15] 33:50 – tram ride; cut-in to a close-up of the Man with conductor entering.

[16] 34:02 – same as [14]

[17] 34:17 – tram ride; shot from behind the back of the silhouetted tram conductor, as they arrive into the city.

[18] 34:56 – same as [12]

[19] 35:41 – tracking shot from a boom with the camera following the Wife through the traffic of a city street. Cars pass both in front of and behind her, then the Man catches up with her and they both reach the other side of the street in heavy traffic.

[20] 39:24 – couple walks along the sidewalk, camera follows them in a right-forward tracking. As so often in the film, camera is behind the characters.

[21] 39:52 – after a cut-in, [20] is continued

[22] 44:54 – matted shot with the couple walking down in the middle of the city street in between the cars after they exited the church and the Woman forgave the Man. The urban setting is matted behind the couple (weird perspective). As they walk on, the urban street fades into an idyllic garden. The couple stops walking and the background fades back into the original city setting: they cause a traffic jam.

[23] 46:18 – the couple now on the sidewalk. Frontal track out from in front of the characters: their relationship is open, we see their faces.

[24] 59:46 – camera tracks in a crane-dolly shot frontally through the gates of the Luna Park above the heads of the guests.

[25] 1:00:25 – shot starts with a pan to the right that continues with a crane-dolly above the heads of the guests in a restaurant moving in to the table where the couple will sit down later.

[26] 1:01:42 – slow left-forward track in to a large glass window behind which couples are dancing

[27] 1:02:01 – [26] continued

[28] 1:10:56 – mirror shot to [25]: camera retreats from their table at the restaurant

[29] 1:11:44 – mirror shot to [24]: camera retreats from the Luna Park

[30] 1:12:18 – couple gets back on the tram at night. Shot is the same as [12] when recorded their ride into the city. Now Murnau bookends that shot with a opposite movement of the tram.

[31] 1:12:59 – several tracking on the water shots as the couple is in the boat on its way back to the village and during the storm on the lake as well.

[32] 1:33:05 – the Woman leaves the village on a coach. The camera is on the coach with her in a full frontal dolly shot.

## **Appendix C: List of Tracking Camera movements in The Reds and the Whites and**

### **The Lord's Lantern in Budapest**

#### **THE REDS AND THE WHITES (1967)**

[1] 1:35 – White soldiers are chasing Red soldiers: two Reds are fleeing next to a riverbank. The Reds start to fire out of the frame and as they retreat, the camera tracks with them linearly. The Whites, however, encircle them at 2:51, the Red soldier about to be killed is in a circle of White soldiers. By this time, the camera tracks backwards. After the questioning he is led back to the river at 3:25, camera follows. In the background there are two Whites on horses. Once the officer killed the Red, camera retreats again towards where he left his horse. He gets on the horse, camera pushes in again. White officer rides out of the frame, when the hiding Red emerges from the bushes, he jumps into the water in order to escape. Shot ends at 4:50. Camera tracks and changes directions five times. The movements of the characters, which is countered by the geometrical movements of the camera.

[2] 5:45 – the fleeing Red from [1] is picked up moving along the river in a leftwards tracking shot. He arrives to a monastery that he approaches by getting away from the camera circularly.

[3] 7:04 – the Red soldier is back to the Red-controlled monastery. He changes clothes (he becomes the oppressor) while the captured Whites are prepared for execution (they are undressed – symbolism of the uniforms here?). The Whites are led away in a line, while the camera pans and tracks around them circularly.

[4] 7:50 – the captured Whites are led out to the field in a zoom out shot. When the protagonist and a Red officer arrive in a medium shot proximity, the camera to track with them over to the encircled Whites. Now the Reds have captured the Whites (8:13). One Red deserter is in the foreground while the captured undress. The viewer only sees his reactions. But then the captured are free to leave. At 9:34 the deserter and the officer, who are on the same side in the conflict, display another level of power dynamics: camera zooms in and circles around them. Shot ends at 10:02 with a zoom out: the two Reds are running back towards the monastery.

[5] 10:03 – cut to the two Reds running along the walls of the monastery. In a right pan/left track combination, the camera follows them circularly through the gate into the court. The movement stops on a long shot with the empty court. The Red officer is shouting for the guards: the empty court frighteningly surrounds them. From the composition and the movements it seems clear that the monastery is under the control of

the Whites again. The tracking changes directions very often, which seems to express the interchangeability of the two sides in the conflict.

[6] 12:38 – after the Red officer jumps from the tower, the camera picks up the action in the court again, where the Reds are being undressed. Camera tracks in to the left, then track out again on the same path.

[7] 13:16 – the Whites have captured many Reds, who are summoned in a smaller court within the monastery. The geometry of the captured is apparent: their lines come forward and retreat which the camera captures in circle-like pan-track-zoom combinations. Shot ends at 16:00 with another group of White officers walking into the frame.

[8] 16:00 – four White guards walk through the gate with a Red prisoners in the background. When the camera tracks in back towards them, a guards picks one and brings him to the officers. The commander tells him to run off towards the right. As he leaves the frame, the camera zooms in and circles quickly around the commander who takes a gun from one of the guards. Towards the end of the circling movement, the camera zooms out to show how the officer shoots the fleeing Red in the back. Immediately before the shot is fired, the camera zooms in again to enhance visibility. The circling camera and the linearly running Red contrast each other visually. At 18:40 the same movement is repeated when the fourth red is shot.

[9] 19:09 – the White guards enter another court where a large number of Red captives are being held. The camera tracks left with the entering guards. As soon as the Reds in the background approach the officers, the camera horizontally tracks left-right, right-left in front of them. The Reds are surrounded by many White soldiers. Via the front/back(characters)-left/right(camera)moves, the duality again is established in the frame: which group is the oppressor and which is the oppressed? The non-Russians are singled out and moved to the right side of the court.

[10] 27:59 – Quick leftwards tracking shot recording a group of Whites chasing the protagonist through the fields. Both parties fire out of the frame at the enemy who are singled out into separate shots.

[11] 28:33 – the Whites arrive at little hut where three women are being surrounded. The situation once again is described by the pan/track/zoom combination that seems to circle around the females, who are being abused. The camera is always at the opposite side then the officer who is in command and is questioning the women. In the same shot at 29:49, there is a horizontally lined up group of soldiers approaching the scene. The camera movements are composed to that this approaching group is kept within the same frame. Shot ends at 32:05 with two soldiers abusing one of the women.

[12] 32:06 – cut to the officer watching the scene, when a higher ranking White arrives. Now the first officer becomes the victim. The same pan/track /zoom technique now circles around him, showing that the power dynamics have shifted. The horizontal line of

soldiers now stands closely behind the abusers. At this point, when all the members of the initial group are captured, the movement stops.

[13] 32:55 – as the abuser is executed, the camera tracks right behind the horizontal line of the soldiers who were approaching in [12].

[14] 45:15 – dancing scene in the forest. Although the women are indeed dancing in between the rigid lines of the musicians and the White soldiers, camera throughout the actual dancing segment of the scene remains stationary. The dichotomy here between the two groups of characters is so explicit, that the director probably does not need to move the camera to create the contrast. However, when Jancsó composes the elements of the scene at 42:58, he first introduces the three groups of characters in mobile shots. (1) the women arrive on the coaches which is recorded in a leftwards pan/track combination. When the two coaches turn right behind the trees, the forest with its vertical lines forms prison bars in front of them. Then (2) at 43:20 the White soldiers in dark uniforms appear from left and they run after the coaches. The camera still track leftwards. At 43:35 the musicians appear from the left and at this point the camera stops. At 43:50 the tracking movement changes directions and moves back towards the right with the musicians after the women and the soldiers. At 44:06 Jancsó cuts to a rightwards tracking shot moving with the musicians, which leads up the frame that remains the same until the end of the scene.

[15] 48:24 – planes appear firing at the soldiers on the ground. At this point, it is perfectly unclear, whether it is a Red or a White plane. It almost seems like Jancsó does not even want to distinguish between them, although his sympathy is mostly with the Reds. At 48:34, an aerial shot (the plane POV) functions as a mobile frame with a linear trajectory, and the troops on the ground try to get out of the way of the planes by turning sharply to the right. Both groups are firing their guns at the enemy. Again, the *circular vs. linear* strategy can be discovered within the relation of the character movement and the camera movement creating a dichotomy. Jancsó never allows both parties to show up in the same composition: the Reds and the Whites are strictly separated. At 49:23, a classic point-of-view structure shows an airplane and then cuts to a long line of horses galloping on the ground. The shot circles clockwise around the animals above, which ride in a straight line across the field. Towards the end of the shot, the camera zooms in on the horses. Cut back to the plane disappearing behind a hill. Right after this at 49:43 Jancsó composes a very similar aerial shot, but this time instead of the animals, there are soldiers running across the field, who are being gunned down from the air. The similar compositions compare the soldiers to fighting animals but also render the entire armed conflict senseless. Only at the very end of the scene do we realize that the soldiers on the ground were the Reds.

[16] 55:23 – two Reds plan to send a message to the Headquarters. One of them dresses as a White and rides away with the message. The camera in the entire scene tracks left-to-right and then back right-to-left expressing the duality, which is the theme of the entire film. Later a nurse helps them by distracting the appearing White soldiers on horses. Here the camera continues to track left-right and right-left. The characters seem to mirror the

movements of the camera: the riders move back-and-forth. Until the Red who stays at the hospital is killed (1:04:50), the frame continues to pace horizontally on the scene.

[17] 1:06:17 – The White officers try to force the nurses at the hospital to separate the Whites from the Reds. The scene includes several quick rightwards tracking compositions on the lined up nurses and soldiers. The questioning itself consists of making the nurse line up multiple times. However, when the chief nurse is asked to collaborate, the camera suddenly stops and she declares that “There are no Reds or Whites here, only patients!”

[18] 1:19:20 – In the final scene, the remaining Reds arrive to a hilltop with a little hut. A leftwards tracking shot travels with them initially and follows them behind the hut where the landscape opens up with a river and forests. They spot five riders who appear to be White and start to fire at them. As the gunshots can be heard, from behind the trees large number of White appear and line up horizontally at the bottom of the hill. The Reds cannot decide what to do and their commander makes them line up and retreat several times. All these movements are recorded in left-right and right-left tracking shots, which repeat the major theme of the film: the death of these men is ultimately senseless. At 1:20:44, the White launch a cavalry attack but the Reds hide in the rye. Once the riders pass, they come out and fire at the enemy. These back-and-forth movements are recorded with the quick traveling shots characteristic of the whole film. Immediately after, the Reds regroup in the face of the enemy, and fire away at them from the hill. The camera returns to the exact same spot looking down at the White army.

[19] 1:25:19 – In the final scene of the film, the Red cavalry arrives to the hilltop, where the internationalist brigade attacked the Whites in [18]. Aerial helicopter shots show the riding soldiers dynamically moving across the frame, which shows that Jancso’s film does take sides in the conflict. The Red side is depicted in a way that does not express the hesitation, that can often be discovered in the depiction of the Whites (back-and-forth movements etc. ) Also, in the end, one of the Red soldiers salutes to the ones who have died in the battle on the hill. As important as the moment dramaturgically is, the camera remains stationary in during the take.

### **The Lord’s Lantern in Budapest (1998)**

[1] 7:10 – the handheld shot starts with Jancsó’s and the waiter’s face marking the borders of the skewed frame. As soon as the waiter moves in towards the table, the frame becomes horizontal and the leftwards handheld movement of the camera brings in Pepe’s face. The leftwards handheld track continues and Jancsó’s face becomes off-frame but Hernadi moves in on the left side. The camera follows the dialogue: as soon as someone speaks or is spoken to, the handheld camera focuses on a CU of that character’s face. At 7:33 when Pepe and the waiter make arrangements for the drinks that he orders, only the



two are in the two-shot, with Jozsi in the background drinking a beer. The waiter leaves around 7:41 and the frame moves left again to bring back Hernádi, who is listening to Pepe. The constant handheld adjustments of the frame follow the path of the moving faces on the screen. Usually the faces in the CU are accompanied by someone at full shot or long shot proximity in the background: the frames are composed on several layers.

[2] 8:37 – the four-shot with Jancsó and Hernadi leaving the buffet changes into a two-full shot. At 9:08, the shot is adjusted so that the killer can be seen shooting the two old men. Zsolti and Pepe frame the Chinese man in the foreground. Pepe is outraged at the violence, which is exemplified by the camera moving in on XCU proximity.

[3] 11:27 – Kapa and Pepe talk in a CU for several minutes. Depending on who is speaking the frame is skewed towards the speaker's side.

[4] 19:42 – three shot on Kapa, Jozsi and Pepe after Jozsi just shot his wife, the XCU on the three is interrupted once with Jozsi shooting a blonde woman, and ends with the shooter eating a poisoned apple. The movements of the characters is made more expressive with the slight adjustments of the handheld shot. It seem that the cinematography creates an *aesthetics of the face* with does not really take into consideration other contents of the frame than the faces. These faces are pre-ordered according to a formal pattern. In this depictions, the lights are very mobile as a results of the use of multiple mirrors. The lit areas can move with the moving characters in the compositions since they are reflections.

[5] 22:52 – parallel movements of the characters on tracks and the camera on tracks. Jancso and Hernadi sit on a track with Pepe drinking a beer, while the camera zooms out. Right after the characters are moved on a bench and the camera follows but in between a band (Kispal) remains stationary while playing a song. At 23:32 the band leaves the frame and the camera catches up with Hernadi, Jancsó and Pepe moved on the bench and zooms in to the faces of the two right characters speaking. Here the movements turn around and return on the same path rightwards and a minute ago.

[6] 27:16 – Kapa stops the car in an alley and starts to drink, but two policemen show up. The entire conversation again is composed according to the aesthetics of the faces. The geometrical forms are demarcated by the arrangement of the faces. Mobile reflections make the arrangement of the faces more expressive.

[7] 32:10 – The shot starts with Pepe and Kapa, who is to speak to the funeral crowd. We see the two characters' back with a group of family members in the background. The two main characters define the borders of the frame. As his speech is over, a handheld crane shot moving over towards right picking up a woman who will carry a large plate of food to the guests. The three characters take the stairs, but the camera moves down on the handheld crane shot. At 34:05 the crane starts to rise and turn around its own vertical axis, follows that plate of meat just to descend again to a smaller group of characters who discuss the arrival of the new conservatism. The shot ends at 35:25.

[8] 48:10 – two arc-shaped movements on Kapa, Pepe and Jozsi discussing Pepe's suicide plans. The shot is not handheld, it rather seems to move on tracks. Hankiss?

[9] 50:17 – the shot starts with the three main characters preparing for Pepe's jump into the well. At 51:31, the camera starts to move around the well, but the three faces mark the speed and the frame during the mobile frame. Around 52:30 it becomes clear that the shot is handheld because of the angle of the camera. Finally it is Kapa who will jump into the well: this is foreshadowed by the reflected light on his body seconds before the jump.

[10] 1:02:54 – as Kapa takes over the "company," the action once again takes the form of long and violent conversations, which are recorded in long handheld shots following the choreography of the moving actors. The lights stand out starkly as they are straight reflections moved around on the bodies of the characters with mirrors.

[11] 1:30:30 – Kapa is a security guard, when he meets Pepe. The encounter ends violently as well, and the scene again is recorded in XCU handheld shots that follow the trajectory of the faces moving within the frame.

[12] 1:31:58 – during the hip-hop tune, the faces in the crowd are recorded with the handheld camera. This is an explicit example of the face-aesthetics recorded with telephoto lenses. The director composes his own persona into the shot.

[13] 1:34:16 – Pepe takes off: the crane follows. The trajectory of the movement is defined by the face. This aesthetics calls for constant handheld cinematography so that the frame can be adjusted. Even the crane shot is handheld, which can be seen as Pepe lift off the ground.

## **Appendix D: List of Tracking Camera Movements in The Scent of the Green**

### **Papaya, The Vertical Ray of the Sun, In the Mood for Love and 2046**

#### **1. Tran Anh Hung: The Scent of the Green Papaya (1993)**

[1] 2:49 – Mui enters the garden of the house as the mother opens the door for her. The camera quickly tracks R-L from a long shot proximity at their walking speed to introduce the house. As they walk through the house, the camera keeps the two characters in the frames of the windows, doors, corridors and patios. In the foreground of the shot there are several plants. Immediately in the beginning of the film, several planes of action are established. The 41 seconds long movement ends with Mui in the servant's room given over to the old maid (3:30). After a few seconds long break (3:38), the camera starts to track back L-R as the mother picks up the can of tea and returns to the other end of the house on the same path to the father (4:04) who's figure could be seen in the first segment of the movement through a window.

[2] 5:24 – CU of the old couple with a telephoto lens. As she leaves R, the camera slowly tracks L-R with after towards the door. The movement stops on the back of his head. He puts down his instrument. Modular composition even in the 4:3 frame.

[3] 6:09 – Trung appears in the door. He walks over to the father's bed and crosses several modules in a following R-L tracking shot. The camera stops on a composition where the two are in the middle of the frame and the two sides are occupied by the out-of-focus doorsills.

[4] 6:20 – Trung and father play music together behind the bars of a door. Camera slowly tracks L-R, the two slide off the frame. The movement and reveals the garden, then pans over to a staircase to pick up the mother walking down on it. The pan reverses and she walks back R-L. She walks towards the background away from the camera then takes a R. Camera tracks with her and keeps her in the frame until she reaches the bedroom, closes the door. Focus shifts towards the foreground with plants. Shot length: 88 seconds.

[5] 11:56 – Mui serves up food for the family for the first time. The camera quickly tracks with her L-R at a LS distance from the garden towards the house into the dining room.

[6] 13:05 – Mui serves up the food in a MS. R-L track to the table. Then she takes a plate up to grandmother. Track is reversed. Mui disappears upstairs. Focus shifts towards the extreme background where in the central module Khuyen appears and walks across the garden.

[7] 14:39 – Mui appears on top of stairs with table. L-R pan continues in a CU L-R track towards the mother. The tracks seem to take the viewer closer and closer to Mui.

[8] 15:15 – Mui walks from the table with mother to the old maid to eat through the house. The L-R track follows her in a FS, while Trung and Khuyen walk in the garden exactly behind Mui in a LS. Two-plane composition.

[9] 16:33 – Mother working in the R bottom. L up there is a window, through which—as focus shifts—we see a man carrying water. He walks closer to window and disappears R, and camera follows him although he is invisible behind the wall. L-R track travels through the sewing workshop and picks up the man again through a different window now in a 3-plane, 3-part modular composition.

[10] 18:57 – L-R MS pans picks up the maid and travels with her towards the second window of [9] where the water carrying man empties his bucket and walks back. Camera follows him in a reverse (R-L) of [9]. At the initial window that revealed him for the first time, he is paid by the maid.

[11] 20:40 – 3 plane shot with older boy in foreground, Mui in the middle and the younger boy (Tin) in the background. When Mui starts to mop the floor towards the background, this axis in depth is turned 90 degrees, and a quick R-L track follows her towards Tin in a modular track using 3 planes again (columns, Mui, garden.) As track and the mopping stops at Tin's feet and a bucket, a character moving across the opening of a door in the extreme background opens up the 4<sup>th</sup> plane. Tin starts to spill water from the bucket, ruining Mui's cleaning efforts. Cut back to initial shot, and the older boy in the out-of-focus foreground tells his brother to stop.

[12] 23:58 – Mui goes to buy cakes. A R-L pan picks her up inside the house and follows her out into the street. She proceeds towards the background of the shot. When walks back, the camera on a crane starts to rise up while tracking in, and pan L-R as Mui walks through the gate back into the garden. From a HA the camera offers an overview of the setting.

[13] 31:06 – the mother discovers that all the money is gone: the camera starts with a MS and pans with her as she's running, to the safe. Once she's at a few stairs, the movement changes into a quick L-R track with several plants in the foreground. The track stops with a 2-part modular shot of her from outside the window: she's framed by the window bars.

[14] 33:22 – maybe the most complicated camera movement of the film so far: starts with a 2-shot of Mui and the maid washing their faces in the morning after the house discovers that the father has left with all the money. (1) The camera track L-R diagonally in towards the maid. (2) A pan back R-L shows that they realize the mother is already awake. (3) They rush towards the fireplace diagonally R-L with the camera behind them shooting through the bushes. (4) She stands up and walks back L-R towards the house. Camera retreats on the same path then stops on a 3 plane 3-part modular shot framed by the plants and tells to the maid to get food for 4-5 days. (5) Then a L-R pan escorts her towards the R but she returns to the L and a (6) R-L diagonal track keeps her in the middle of the frame as she walks back to Mui and instructs her to get some food from the

market. The older son wakes up, behind them and walks out of his room, and in a (7) parallel L-R track he walks towards the house to the R. Length: 130 seconds.

[15] 42:25 – 3-plane 2-part modular shot with the old neighbor, Mr. Thuan on the other side of the garden wall in the background, Mui in the middle and a bare wall in the foreground. Camera starts to track L-R diagonally back towards to old man shooting at Mui from behind the plants. The two meet at the fence in a 2-plane (characters + Thuan's house) modular shot with roses forming the barriers. The old man gives an apple to Mui.

[16] 47:47 – as [5]. After Mui leaves the frame L, the family is one in sorrow (is this expressed by the tracking on the family home?) about the loss of the father. The mother talks about him having left openly to his two sons. The older son and the mother are united in the crying.

[17] 50:14 – The mother finally sells some textiles: as the money is handed over, we see a two-shot. The customer leaves, and the camera tracks on a circular path R-L to reveal her rickshaw on a second plane in the back. Movement stops. The small vehicle leaves after the maid hands over the package, and the depth of the shot is accentuated by the camera continuing the circular R-L movement, always keeping the mother in the R side of the frame, who is counting the money and sends the maid off to buy food for the family. The camera stops on a 3-part modular shot.

[18] 57:08 – maid discovers the father has returned. Parts of [14] repeated with the camera quickly tracking L-R from maid's room to the mother's bedroom across the garden, shooting from behind the plants. There is a break in the movement, when the maid discovers the father sleeping in his room. Without a cut, the camera tracks back R-L with mother to father's room.

[19] 1:01:46 – when the father dies, the family members gather at the entrance of his bedroom. Each approaches in modular tracking shots.

[20] 1:03:23 – 10 years later... Mui's person connects to two parts of the story. She moves across the house just like in the years ago in the story. The mother wants to see her: she washes her face, runs into the house, where she's framed by two windows in the front and backside of the house, and walks up to the house, with the camera following her from behind the green plants.

[21] 1:10:09 – Mui works now at Khuyen's house. She and the camera discover the new space with the modular tracking shots, always changing directions at points where her face is framed by a window, a fence, or some type of frame in the domestic sphere.

[22] 1:11:41 – Steadicam shot across the rooms of the house retreating in front of Mui as she serves up Khuyen's dinner.

[23] 1:20:41 – Khuyen's notices his fiancée's present. He walks with it across the house with a R-L tracking following him from outside. Once again, the plants, the windows

frame his character. As he stops in front of a mirror, Mui appears in the opposite end of the frame, watering the flowers. All the compositions follow the shapes and openings of the house, which function as modules.

[24] 1:22:43 – Mui dresses up. As she Khuyen discovers her putting on lipstick, she shyly runs away. Very quick (almost swish pan-like) tracking shots at 1:24:51 follow her from outside the house and behind the plants.

[25] 1:27:52 – Khuyen's fiancée's jealousy is expressed in a dual tracking shot starting from the garden shooting at the living room through the window in the rain. She walks out in to the garden in a L-R and then R-L tracking shot, just to return to the same shot with which the sequence started under an umbrella. Mui walks into the room while Khuyen is still playing the piano.

[26] 1:30:06 – Mui walks through house in a L-R tracking shot after having taken a bath

[27] 1:31:46 – Khuyen is looking for Mui in the house in a R-L tracking shot. Note: [26] and [27] are oppositional in direction. As he walks into her room, camera pans to a CU of a plant.

## **2. Tran Anh Hung: The Vertical Ray of the Sun (2000)**

[1] 1:02:21 – Suong with her lover in the hotel room. Diagonal L-R track towards the wall. She refuses to speak but is singing. The track ends on a CU of the wall.

[2] 1:19:31 – Lien and Hai waking up: their place is the interior where Tran uses the typical very slow tracking shot, which was the central stylistic trait of Papaya. The melancholy is further accentuated by Lou Reed's music. The complex mobile shot lasts until 1:23:19. WHY HERE?

[3] 1:23:21 – slow R-L track back in the hotel room with the lovers who are dancing. Connection here between Lien/Hai and Suong/lover via the dance. The shot culminates in the water bowl scene.

[4] 1:26:12 – several tracking POV shots as Suong arrives home and finds Quoc already there. Typical modular tracks are divided by the interior of the house.

[5] 1:28:42 – L-R track on writer and wife as he gets back from the hotel where the temptation scene took place.

[6] 1:36:08 – R-L track between Suong and lover. Separation and guilt expressed by the LL CU shot.

[7] 1:45:00 – like [2] Lien and Hai getting ready to leave for the memorial dinner again. Frame is closed by another family gathering.

### 3. Wong Kar-Wai: *In the Mood for Love* (2000)

“It is a restless moment,  
She has kept her head lowered...  
To give him a chance to come closer  
But he could not, for the lack of courage.  
She turns and walks away.”

[1] 00:55 – first shot of the film, track on several photos of movie stars hanging on the wall of the apartment building.

[2] 4:41 – the first occasion when the typical sideways tracking shot happens with Mrs. Chan bringing cigarettes for her husband. The modularity of the shot divides the frame into several segments that blocking the two sides. As soon as Mrs. Chan passes the camera it pulls back to reveal the “exchange” of the characters (Mrs. Chan in—Mrs. Chow in—Mr. Chow out) within the much lighter, inner portion of the composition.

[3] 8:06 – oval opening on the wall of the hotel lobby. Track reveals Mrs. Chow on the phone. Multi-plane action. Tracking includes a jump-cut. The oval might represent a complete relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Chow that is about to get disrupted. Thus the jump-cut. At 13:56, the shot remains static, and only the two halves can be seen without the connecting tracking movement. Then at 14:00 Chow appears in the opposite half, where her wife was previously.

[4] 11:28 – several office desks behind each other. Long lens separates Chow in the middle section as he is revealed by a rightwards track.

[5] 14:29 – Mrs. Chan with the dinner-can with only the lower part of her body in the frame. Backwards tracking (L-R) along the wall. As she takes the stairs down, just like in [3] the smooth track is disrupted by a jump-cut and the camera starts to track back (R-L) to reveal her once more. As she walks back up the stairs, the camera repeats (R-L) track and stops under the streetlight. Then Chow appears, walks down the same stairs. Camera again reverses (L-R). This move is continued across a cut: at 16:21 L-R track reveals him eating with an unrecognizable object in the extreme foreground. Finally the Chow and Mrs. Chan meet on the stairs. From the top of the stairs, R-L movements show them walking in opposite directions.

[6] 18:30 – Long lens show mirror in extreme foreground, blurry. L-R tracking reveals first Ping than Chow’s double reflection in the mirror, then it moves on to the real

characters. Meanwhile, Ping tells Chow about having seen Mrs. Chow with a guy in the street.

[7] 21:31 – slow L-R track in on the wall (like [1]) to a mirror, then camera pans left to look in mirror, a woman sobbing under the shower. From her hair, it looks like its Mrs. Chow, but it's unclear at this point.

[8] 24:13 – like [5] Chow and Mrs. Chan meet on the stairs towards the food market. As soon as they pass, it starts raining. The montage lets the two appear several times. Condensation of time. Several variations: 25:06 Chow alone smoking on the top of the stairs with a R-L tracking. Movement continues across a cut, which reveals Mrs. Chan waiting out the rain on the market. Tracking continues in a third shot this time showing the rain falling on the ground. The two arrive home together, and open their doors while they talk about the absence of their husband/wife.

[9] 30:56 – the pair walks home. R-L tracking shot follows them on a wall, with only the lower parts of their bodies in frame. At 31:45 this is repeated in a full shot, the two characters are behind bars: its filmed from behind windows that block our view repeatedly but also open it up again so we get a glimpse at them.

[10] 34:30 – R-L CU-track from her plate to his, as they role play in the restaurant, then back L-R. Similarly, R-L CU-track brings her into the frame starting from the empty booths behind her moving on to his CU.

[11] 43:23 – [cross-cut from Chow in the office] slow L-R track on Mrs. Chan in the office working. She is behind a curtain on which there is only a very small opening at the middle, allowing the viewer to briefly look at her unhindered. Cut back to Chow working: tilt comes down on him from the ceiling.

[12] 44:10 – slow L-R track shows both characters at home in the kitchen framed by the tight corridor. She's reading, he's making coffee in the same space.

[13] 50:56 – same as [9] while the Chow suggests that they work at another hotel room to avoid gossip.

[14] 51:56 – Chow walks down a hotel corridor. Ground level forward track follows him, with only his lower feet in the shot. It's hotel where rents a room to work in.

[15] 52:51 – slow pan/track around Chow's office, which ends in a medium shot of his boss telling Mrs. Chan that he hasn't seen Chow for several days. The office is divided into several modules by the doors, the walls and the curtains, which the mobile camera crosscuts.

[16] 53:54 – a montage of several full shots of Mrs. Chan running up and down stairs and corridors of the hotel where Chow is writing. Each of the shots is a low level slow track in multiple directions. The shots are joined by jump-cuts.



[17] 55:18 – Mrs. Chan leaves room 2046: she walks down a long corridor away from the camera, which tracks back at about the same speed: vertigo effect.

[18] 55:32 – L-R track in the hotel room where the two characters are writing the martial arts novel. Starts with a medium of the two at the table (Chow in the foreground out of focus initially blocking out her, she is then slowly revealed by the moving camera). Then an invisible, or matched edit (much like the technique that Bordwell describes as *wipe-by cut*, but here it's a real cut: the very end of the outgoing shot is out of focus and dark, just like the very beginning of the incoming shot) shows Chow in a CU eating with Mrs. Chan in the background waving to him to come to look at what she has just written. The shot is a reflection framed by a mirror and a curtain on the sides, creating the modules as separate areas of the frame. As Chow walks to Mrs. Chan, the camera tracks R-L behind the curtain (outside of the building?) as he reads out what she has written.

[19] 56:04 – L-R then R-L track from behind the two, who are sitting in front of a mirror. The real bodies out of focus, the reflection in focus. Chow sits at desk close to mirror writing, she sits on bed reading. The visual reflection created by the mirror is repeated with the symmetrical camera movements.

[20] 56:55 – similar to [19] with both characters sitting on bed listening to a record.

[21] 1:01:57 – CU on curtains in Mrs. Chan's office continues in a R-L track which ends with a doorsill blocking her lower body while only a telephone and her right arm can be seen. She tells him they can't see each other that often.

[22] 1:02:40 – Modular shot from behind the door of the living room, track in towards Mrs. Chan's figure opens up the modules and unites the frame's surface. However, her standing around a table where everyone is sitting, body posture and the distribution of light still communicates her loneliness. When the camera is in a medium shot proximity, she turns away from the table, walks to the window and looks through the curtains, sips on her drink.

[23] 1:04:26 – L-R track from behind the office window showing Chow working then turning towards the camera assuming the same position as she in the end of [22]. They look at each other across the cut.

[24] 1:10:09 – same as [9] at 31:45: the two rehearse separation and good-bye; camera behind bars. At 1:12:18 same movement: she cries in his arms.

[25] 1:13:58 – 3-module long shot of her sitting towards the R in profile in kitchen. Camera tracks L, he sits in the opposite position towards the L. They are by a blurred out module, with their backs towards each other. Meanwhile, there is a song on the radio that Mr. Chan sent her wife from a business trip in Japan, as the announcer explains. He stops for a beat, while the camera tracks back to the R. They lean against the wall/each other's back.

[26] 1:15:43 – R-L track on wall in Chow’s hotel room towards a mirror, in front of which he stands. His room, where they wrote behind him: he observes it resignedly. Then turns around, turns off the light and walks out. Mirror becomes completely dark except for its golden rim and a piece of the red curtain. He opens the door; his silhouetted figures steps out.

[27] 1:16:57 – same as [17] with Chow not moving.

Singapore episode: no tracks!

[28] 1:27:06 – same as [9] with Chow’s hand in CU holding a present.

[29] 1:30:04 – Cambodia-scene: Chow stands amongst the Angkor Wat ruins. Camera tracks around him. The columns, openings and hallways divide the setting into modules even here. Cut to medium back shot tracking closer to his back head: he whispers his secret into a hole. Several shots show the doorways in the ruins, evoking the modular composition once again.

#### **4. Wong Kar-Wai: 2046 (2004)**

[1] 9:24 – Red tinted shot starts with a slow motion R-L track: the camera seems to come out from behind the corner. It reveals Chow at a party surrounded by women. As he says “Nothing lasts forever” the tracks reverses L-R and closes the scene by disappearing behind the out-of-focus wall, like a Kurosawa wipe.

[2] 11:13 – very slowly the third module of the shot starts to move towards the L. Here the foreground module is literally a curtain, which opens. The LL compresses the space between the characters. Camera tracks in. Cut to reverse shot, right-third module shifts towards the R emphasizing the geometrical tri-part pattern of the shot, with the faces of the characters nearly touching. Then curtain module closes the shot.

[3] 30:17 – curtain being “pulled” to the L by the R track.

[4] 39:19 – another curtain shot: L track reveals Chow’s room.

[5] 43:27 – direct reference to [5] 43:27 – direct reference to In the Mood... [5]

[6] 46:57 – this scene consists of several tracks, all of which slide behind some transparent, colored curtain-like textile. The narrative content of the scene: Bai Ling will not show up.

[7] 54:24 – similar to [6] now with Bai Ling present. The textiles are darker.

[8] 1:06:51 – like [6] with Chow and Bai Ling meeting at parties.

[9] 1:14:38 – Chow is ill. Ms. Wang writes for him. Slow tracks on the desk where she sits writing. The out-of-focus objects on the desk close to the camera function as the curtain. Cut to track with Chow in a booth. Here the vertical module-segmentation of the frame is renewed by horizontal lines that cut across the frame, and hide the elements of the background that are in focus.

[10] 1:23:03 – train sequence: L-R track with the curtain effect. The time traveler is kissing the Ms. Wang-android.

[11] 1:29:44 – like [10] only more spectacular. Curtain opens and closes and is interrupted by a hardly visible jump-cut. Narration: “finally I got it: she didn’t love me!”

[12] 1:31:58 – double exposure overlap wipes put Ms. Wang’s face right next to Chow’s in a restaurant scene. The wipes reverse direction and the scene reaches complete symmetry.

[13] 2:01:02 – the final encounter with Bai Ling. Several tracking shots with the closing curtain effect.