Basistext Narratologie 1

Bordwell, David: Principles of narration. In: Philip Simpson ... [et al.] (eds.): Film theory: critical concepts in media and cultural studies. Vol. 2. London [etc.]: Routledge, 2004, S. 245-267. [Ursprünglich in: David Bordwell: Narration in the fiction film. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, S. 48-62]

PRINCIPLES OF NARRATION

David Bordwell

My account of *Rear Window* does not constitute a critical interpretation. I have not labeled Jeff a voyeur, judged his peeping nice or naughty, or sought to establish him as a "castrated" adventurer fantasizing the dismembering of a woman's body. Indeed, my sketch is not even an analysis of the film, since specifying the spectator's activity cannot itself provide that. For the viewer, constructing the story takes precedence; the effects of the text are registered, but its causes go unremarked. This is not to say that these activities are, strictly speaking, unconscious; most work of narrative comprehension seems to occur in what Freud called the *pre*conscious, the realm of elements "capable of entering consciousness."[1] The spectator simply has no concepts or terms for the textual elements and systems that shape responses. It is the job of theory to construct them, the job of analysis to show them at work. A full theory of narration must be able to specify the objective devices and forms that elicit the spectator's activity. That is the task of this and the next three chapters. Theory must also go beyond the perceiver's relation to the text by situating the text within contexts of which the perceiver is seldom explicitly aware. These contexts are historical ones, and I shall consider those most pertinent to narration in Part 3. What an account of the spectator's work has taught us is that theory and analysis must explain not only localized effects but whole films, treating them as eliciting the spectator's ongoing construction of the story. Eisenstein's advice to his students holds good for the study of narration as textual form: "Think in stages of a process."[2]

From this chapter forward, my focus is on how film form and style function in relation to narrational strategies and ends. As an alternative, we could undertake empirical investigations of how actual spectators construe particular films. While worthwhile, this enterprise would not necessarily lead to insights into how films encourage, sustain, block, or undercut specific viewing operations. As I have said throughout, formal systems both *cue* and

[245]

constrain the viewer's construction of a story. The theory I propose cannot predict any actual response; it can only construct distinctions and historical contexts which suggest the most logically coherent range of conventionally permissible responses.

We have seen theories of narration founder upon superficial analogies between film and other media-literature or theater (the mimetic approach); literature, speech, or writing (the diegetic approach). The theory I propose sees narration as a formal activity, a notion comparable to Eisenstein's rhetoric of form. In keeping with a perceptual-cognitive approach to the spectator's work, this theory treats narration as a process which is not in its basic aims specific to any medium. As a dynamic process, narration deploys the materials and procedures of each medium for its ends. Thinking of narration in this way yields considerable scope for investigation while still allowing us to build in the specific possibilities of the film medium. In addition, a formcentered approach sets itself the task of explaining how narration functions in the totality of the film. Narrational patterning is a major part of the process by which we grasp films as more or less coherent wholes.

Fabula, syuzhet, and style

In previous chapters I have assumed a difference between the story that is represented and the actual representation of it, the form in which the perceiver actually encounters it. This crucial distinction may go back to Aristotle,[3] but it was most fully theorized by the Russian Formalists, and it is indispensable to a theory of narration.

Presented with two narrative events, we look for causal or spatial or temporal links. The imaginary construct we create, progressively and retroactively, was termed by Formalists the *fabula* (sometimes translated as "story"). More specifically, the fabula embodies the action as a chronological, cause-and-effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and a spatial field. In *Rear Window,* as in most detective tales, there is an overt process of fabula construction, since the investigation of the crime involves establishing certain connections among events. Putting the fabula together requires us to construct the story of the ongoing inquiry while at the same time framing and testing hypotheses about past events. That is, the story of the investigation is a search for the concealed story of a crime. By the end of the typical detective tale, all story events can be fitted into a single pattern of time, space, and causality.

The fabula is thus a pattern which perceivers of narratives create through assumptions and inferences. It is the developing result of picking up narrative cues, applying schemata, framing and testing hypotheses. Ideally, the fabula can be embodied in a verbal synopsis, as

general or as detailed as circumstances require. Yet the fabula, however imaginary, is not a whimsical or arbitrary construct. The viewer builds the fabula on the basis of prototype

[246]

schemata (identifiable types of persons, actions, locales, etc.), template schemata (principally the "canonic" story), and procedural schemata (a search for appropriate motivations and relations of causality, time, and space). To the extent that these processes are intersubjective, so is the fabula that is created. In principle, viewers of a film will agree about either what the story is or what factors obscure or render ambiguous the adequate construction of the story.

It would be an error to take the fabula, or story, as the profilmic event. A film's fabula is never materially present on the screen or soundtrack. When we see a shot of Jeff looking out his window, his action is a representation which signals us to infer a story event (Jeff looks out his window). The same piece of information might have been conveyed many other ways, many of them requiring no sight or sound of Jeff at all. The staging of the action, as Eisenstein showed, is itself a representational act. This theoretical move lets us avoid that a priori favoring of certain film techniques characteristic of mimetic theories.

The fabula, writes Tynianov, "can only be guessed at, but it is not a given."[4] What is given? What sorts of phenomenally present materials and forms do we encounter? We can analyze the film as consisting of two systems and a remaining body of material, diagramed in figure 1. The *syuzhet* (usually translated as "plot") is the actual arrangement and presentation of the fabula in the film. It is not the text in toto.[5] It is a more abstract construct, the patterning of the story as a blow-by-blow recounting of the film could render it. The syuzhet is a system because it arranges componentsthe story events and states of affairs-according to specific principles. As Boris Tomashevsky puts it: "The fabula is opposed to the syuzhet, which is built out of the same events, but the syuzhet respects their order in the work and the series of information processes which designate them."[6] "Syuzhet" names the architectonics of the film's presentation of the fabula; hence the rightward arrow in the diagram.[7] Logically, syuzhet patterning is independent of the medium; the same syuzhet patterns could be embodied in a novel, a play, or a film.

Style also constitutes a system in that it too mobilizes componentsparticular instantiations of film techniques-according to principles of organization. There are other uses of the term "style" (e.g., to designate
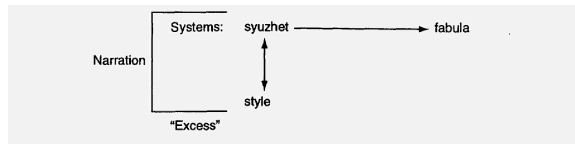
Figure 1 Film as Phenomenal Process.

[247]

recurrent features of structure or texture in a body of films, such as "neorealist style"), but in this context, "style" simply names the film's systematic use of cinematic devices. Style is thus wholly ingredient to the medium. Style interacts with syuzhet in various ways; hence the two-way arrow in the diagram.

An example may illustrate how syuzhet and style differ. In *Rear Window,* the syuzhet consists of the particular pattern of events (actions, scenes, turning points, plot twists) depicting the tale of Mrs. Thorwald's murder and its investigation and the tale of Lisa and Jeff's romance. When in the preceding chapter I described formal patterns of withheld knowledge or abrupt revelation, I was referring principally to the construction of the syuzhet. The same film, however, can be described as a steady flow of applications of cinematic techniques-mise-en-scêne, cinematography, editing, and sound. In one scene, Jeff and Stella are spotted by Thorwald. They step quickly back into Jeff's room (figure movement, setting); they whisper (sound) and douse the lamp (lighting); the camera tracks quickly back to a long shot (cinematography); and all of this occurs after the crucial shot of Thorwald turning to look out his window (editing).

Note that in a narrative film these two systems coexist. They can do this because syuzhet and style each treat different aspects of the phenomenal process. The syuzhet embodies the film as a "dramaturgical" process; style embodies it as a "technical" one. While it would often be arbitrary to separate the two systems in the process of perception, the distinction has precedent in much narrative theory.[8] Indeed, we shall discover one mode of narration that requires us to keep syuzhet and style conceptually separate. Assuming that the distinction is warranted, I want now to spell out the relations between syuzhet and fabula, and syuzhet and style.

In discussing the spectator's activity, I stressed the role of narrative schemata.[9] The theoretical concept of the syuzhet offers a way of analyzing the aspects of a film that the spectator organizes into an ongoing story. It should be clear, though, that the syuzhet is not identical with what Chapter 3 called the canonic story format. The latter, we can now see, comprises schematic assumptions about both the fabula and the syuzhet. The viewer's tendency to as-

sume that characters have goals pertains to causality in the fabula; it does not imply anything about syuzhet organization. But the assumption that the spectator will encounter an exposition or an ending pertains to the organization of the syuzhet. The "canonic story" nonetheless offers an example of how assumptions about syuzhet and fabula factors play a considerable role in narrative comprehension.

As a distinction, the fabula/syuzhet pair cuts across media. At a gross level, the same fabula could be inferred from a novel, a film, a painting, or a play. Thus one difficulty of enunciative theories-the forced analogy between linguistic categories and nonverbal phenomena-vanishes. As Meir Sternberg puts it, any narrative medium utilizes "a largely extraverbal

[248]

logic" that includes "the twofold development of the action, as it objectively and straightforwardly progresses in the fictive world from beginning to end (within the fabula) and as it is deformed and patterned into progressing in our mind during the reading-process (within the syuzhet)."[10]

The conception of syuzhet avoids surface-phenomena distinctions (such as person, tense, metalanguage) and relies upon more supple principles basic to all narrative representation. Consequently, and contrary to what some writers believe, the fabulalsyuzhet distinction does not replicate the *histoire/discours* distinction held by enunciation theories.[11] The fabula is not an unmarked enunciative act; it is not a speech act at all but a set of inferences.

I asserted that the syuzhet composes story situations and events according to specifiable principles. Chapter 3 showed that when we perceive and comprehend a narrative text, we tend to construct certain patterns among events. We can now see how the film's syuzhet provides a basis for this activity. Three sorts of principles relate the syuzhet to the fabula.

1. *Narrative "logic."* In constructing a fabula, the perceiver defines some phenomena as events while constructing relations among them. These relations are primarily causal ones. An event will be assumed to be a consequence of another event, of a character trait, or of some general law. The syuzhet can facilitate this process by systematically encouraging us to make linear causal inferences. But the syuzhet can also arrange events so as to block or complicate the construction of causal relations. This happens with the false clues in *Rear Window*. Narrative logic also includes a more abstract principle of similarity and difference which I call *parallelism*. Thorwald's murder of his wife has no significant effect on most of his neighbors; one function of the courtyard vignettes is to parallel the romantic relations of

Jeff and Lisa with other male/female relations. What counts as an event, a cause, an effect, a similarity, or a difference-all will be determined within the context of the individual film.

2. *Time*. Narrative time has several aspects, well analyzed by Gerard Genette. The syuzhet can cue us to construct fabula events in any sequence (a matter of *order*). The syuzhet can suggest fabula events as occurring in virtually any time span *(duration)*. And the syuzhet can signal fabula events as taking place any number of times *(frequency)*. These aspects can all assist or block the viewer's construction of fabula time. Again, temporal representation will vary with historical convention and the context of the individual film.

3. *Space*. Fabula events must be represented as occurring in a spatial frame of reference, however vague or abstract. The syuzhet can facilitate construction of fabula space by informing us of the relevant surroundings and the positions and paths assumed by the story's agents. The confinement to Jeffs courtyard in *Rear Window* is an instance of the use of syuzhet devices to advance our construction of fabula space. But the film could also

[249]

impede our comprehension by suspending, muddling, or undercutting our construction of space.

Depending on how the syuzhet presents the fabula, there will be particular spectatorial effects. Armed with the notion of different narrative principles and the concept of the syuzhet's distortion of fabula information, we can begin to account for the concrete narrational work of any film. It is obvious, for instance, that *Rear Window* depends upon withholding certain fabula information; we can now see that our schematizing and hypothesizing activities are guided by the syuzhet's cues about causality, time, and space. The basic-training aspect of the film's early portions-its tendency to give visual cues, let us draw inferences, and then confirm or disconfirm them by verbal statement-arises from manipulation of causal information. To take a specific scene: while Jeff is asleep, we see a woman leave with Thorwald and wonder if she is his wife; the syuzhet has generated this suspicion that Mrs. Thorwald is still alive by not showing us this woman (who is not Mrs. Thorwald) entering the apartment. The syuzhet of *Rear Window* also blocks our knowledge by limiting space; we can use only narrowly restricted views of the courtyard to construct the fabula. And *Rear Window* is not exceptional in its limitations, concealments, and revelations. For theoretical purposes it may sometimes be convenient to take as an ideal baseline an instance in which the syuzhet is constructed so as to permit maximum access to the fabula. But every syuzhet uses retardation to postpone complete construction of the fabula. At the very least, the end of the story, or the means whereby we arrive there, will be withheld. Thus the syuz-

het aims not to let us construct the fabula in some logically pristine state but rather to guide us to construct the fabula in a specific way, by arousing in us particular expectations at this or that point, eliciting our curiosity or suspense, and pulling surprises along the way.

In some cases, the syuzhet will include masses of material that block our construction of the fabula. Such material may encourage us to treat the syuzhet as interpreting or commenting on the fabula. In *October,* both Kerensky and General Kornilov appeal to the slogan "For God and Country." Suddenly we cut to a series of statues of gods from many cultures. These shots do not help us to construct the spatial, temporal, or logical connections among story events; in fabula terms they are a digression. Nonetheless, the sequence constitutes syuzhet manipulation. As a little dissertation on the very idea of God, the passage emphasizes the cultural variability of religion and suggests that an appeal to the holy often veils political opportunism. The inserted material insists in its patterned development that we motivate it transtextually, as a species of rhetorical argument. A novelist's commentary, however digressive, forms an integral part of the syuzhet, and so do Eisenstein's essayistic interpolations.

The syuzhet, then, is the dramaturgy of the fiction film, the organized set of cues prompting us to infer and assemble story information. As the

[250]

diagram on p. [247] suggests, the film's style can interact with the syuzhet in various ways. Film technique is customarily used to perform syuzhet tasksproviding information, cueing hypotheses, and so forth. In the "normal" film, that is, the syuzhet system controls the stylistic system-in Formalist terms, the syuzhet is the "dominant." For example, patterns in the syuzhet's presentation of story information will be matched by stylistic patterns, as when at the close of *Rear Window* a camera movement homologous to that in the opening underlines the changes in the lives of the courtyard's inhabitants.

Still, this is not to say that the systematic employment of film techniquesthat is, the film's style-is wholly a vehicle for the syuzhet. When alternative techniques exist for a given syuzhet purpose, it may make a difference which technique is chosen. For instance, the syuzhet may require that two story events be cued as occurring simultaneously. The simultaneity may be denoted by crosscutting from one event to the other, by staging the two actions in depth, by use of split-screen techniques, or by the inclusion of particular objects in the setting (such as a television set broadcasting a "live" event). Whatever stylistic choice is made may have different effects on the spectator's perceptual and cognitive activity. Style is thus a notable factor in its own right, even when it is "only" supporting the syuzhet.

Film style can also take shapes not justified by the syuzhet's manipulation of story information. If in *Rear Window* Hitchcock systematically cut from Jeff's gaze to closeups of misleading or irrelevant objects which he could not see, then the stylistic procedure itself could vie for prominence with the syuzhet's task of presenting the story. True, we might take this stylistic flourish as a syuzhet maneuver to baffle us about causality or space; but if the device were repeated systematically across the film with no clear link to the developing syuzhet and fabula, then the more economical explanation would be that style has come forward to claim our attention independent of syuzhet/fabula relations. Chapter 12 will show how this happens in a variety of films. For analytical purposes, then, we must grant a potential disparity between the stylistic system and the syuzhet system, even if such a tendency is rare.

It is evident that both syuzhet and style invite the spectator to apply the motivational rationales discussed in Chapter 3. At the syuzhet level, when Jeff and Stella recoil from Thorwald's look, the audience justifies this event as psychologically plausible and compositionally necessary for what follows. At the stylistic level, when Jeff scans the apartment block and the next shot is of Thorwald's windows, we assume the shot to be compositionally relevant, grant it a certain realism (Jeffs point of view), and acquiesce to a generic convention (this could be a suspenseful buildup). In the hypothetical example of patterned cutaways to irrelevant objects, we would try to motivate them compositionally, realistically, or transtextually; but if all were **unequal to the task set by** the style, we would have a case of "artistic

[251]

motivation," whereby the materials and forms of the medium constitute the chief object of interest.

It is time for a formal definition. In the fiction film, narration is *the process whereby the film's syuzhet and style interact in the course of cueing and channeling the spectator's construction of the fabula*. Thus it is not only when the syuzhet arranges fabula information that the film narrates. Narration also includes stylistic processes. It would of course be possible to treat narration solely as a matter of syuzhetlfabula relations, but this would leave out the ways in which the filmic texture affects the spectator's activity. We have already seen that the spectator possesses stylistic schemata as well as others, and these invariably affect the overall process of narrative representation. Moreover, by including style within narration, we can analyze stylistic departures from the syuzhet's project. In an earlier example, a cut from Jeff's gaze to irrelevant objects would be a narrational act as much as would a cut to

relevant ones. Narration is the dynamic interaction between the syuzhet's transmission of story information and what Tynianov called "the movement, the rise and fall of the stylistic masses."[12]

Is there anything in a narrative film that is not narrational? Any image or sound can contribute to narration, but we can also attend to an element for its sheer perceptual salience. Roland Barthes has spoken of a film's "third meaning," one lying beyond denotation and connotation: the realm in which casual lines, colors, expressions, and textures become "fellow travelers" of the story.[13] Kristin Thompson has identified these elements as "excess," materials which may stand out perceptually but which do not fit either narrative or stylistic patterns.[14] (See fig. 1.) As we have seen, the spectator's categories push her or him to construct objects and denotative meaning from the outset. The canonic story in particular favors the dominance of storyworld factors. From this standpoint, it is as if nothing but narration matters. But in the first shot of *Rear Window,* we can choose not to construct a story world and instead savor random colors, gestures, and sounds. These "excessive" elements are utterly unjustified, even by aesthetic motivation. Now, this attitude is actually quite difficult to maintain over a long period, since it offers little perceptual and cognitive payoff. The *trouvailles* will never add up. Nonetheless, there may be aspects of a film that we cannot attribute to narration. In some cases, as Thompson shows with *Ivan the Terrible,* "excess" may offer a useful way into the film's overall formal work. "A perception of a film that includes its excess implies an awareness of the structures (including conventions) at work in the film, since excess is precisely those elements that escape unifying impulses. Such an approach to viewing films can allow us to look further into a film, renewing its ability to intrigue us by its strangeness."[15]

Whatever its suggestiveness as a critical concept, excess lies outside my concern here. The rest of this book is devoted to the process of narration. In the rest of this chapter and in all of the next, I will concentrate on basic

[252]

principles of syuzhet patterning. We need to examine how a syuzhet may organize story material, how it may limit or expand our access to fabula information. We also need to understand overall narrational strategies, the broad aims that syuzhet tactics and film style may fulfill. Subsequent chapters will concentrate on how narration may render fabula time and space, and there we will take up specific stylistic procedures.

Tactics of syuzhet construction

The analysis of narration can begin with the syuzhet's tactics for presenting fabula information. We must grasp how the syuzhet manages its basic task the presentation of story logic, time, and space-always recalling that in practice we never get ideally maximum access to the fabula. In general, the syuzhet shapes our perception of the fabula by controlling (1) the quantity of fabula information to which we have access; (2) the degree of pertinence we can attribute to the presented information; and (3) the formal correspondences between syuzhet presentation and fabula data.

Assume that an ideal syuzhet supplies information in the "correct" amount to permit coherent and steady construction of the fabula. Given this hypostatized reference point, we can distinguish a syuzhet which supplies too little information about the story and a syuzhet which supplies too much: in other words, a "rarefied" syuzhet versus an "overloaded" one.

Now at any given point an ordinary narrative may give us more or less information than the hypostatized ideal. A detective tale might bamboozle us with a plethora of clues and a paucity of motives. Our normal syuzhet, then, reduces to a demand for enough information for the construction of a fabula according to conventions of genre or mode. *Rear Window* holds back some data and sometimes gives us "too much" to assimilate at the moment, but eventually the quantity proves "just right" for generic needs. The momentarily overloaded or rarified approach of the mystery film is in fact normal for syuzhet construction in its genre. But our detective story would leap out of its genre if it were radically to pursue either strategy in its recounting of the detective's investigation or in its construction of the solution. For example, Antonioni's Blow-Up fails as a detective story: it presents too few pieces of information to enable the protagonist, or us, to solve the crime (or even to determine what the crime involves). Two conclusions follow. At local points, "ordinary" films can indulge in either overload or rarefaction tactics; and extraordinary films can indulge in either, or both, consistently and throughout.

Again, assume an ideal syuzhet which supplies information which is relevant to the coherent and steady construction of the fabula. Opposed to this, we can situate any syuzhet which indulges in information not relevant to such construction. Godard's films, for instance, are often peppered with citations, skewed allusions, and interruptions which cannot be clearly related

[253]

to the story. We tend to take these as digressions. It is of course often difficult to judge the pertinence of a piece of information at the moment it emerges. Something which seems out

of place may eventually slot itself neatly into the total fabula. (Here we touch on the problem of gaps, to be taken up shortly.) In any case, in judging the pertinence of information as in judging its quantity, the analyst will need to specify generic and other transtextual constraints. The criteria of relevance in a drama will not be appropriate to a farce. And some films, such as *L'année dernière* a *Marienbad* or *Not Reconciled,* make it hard to determine a main fabula path from which we could measure deviations-exactly a point which characterizes these films' formal operations.

The most analytically important variable is the set of formal correspondences between fabula and syuzhet. That is, to what extent does the unfolding syuzhet correspond to the logical, temporal, and spatial nature of the fabula we construct? Are there disparities, incompatibilities, lacks of synchronization? Any syuzhet selects what fabula events to present and combines them in particular ways. Selection creates gaps; combination creates composition.

No syuzhet explicitly presents all of the fabula events that we presume took place. A princess is born; in the next scene she is eighteen years old. In leaving a gap in the syuzhet, the narration implies that nothing extraordinary took place in those intervening years. We will assume that the princess had an infancy, a childhood, and an adolescence. (Knowing the conventions of fairy tales, we might also expect that she will soon meet a prince.) Temporal gaps are the most common sort, but any mystery or riddle narrative may also contain causal gaps. (Why is Mrs. Thorwald missing?) The syuzhet can present us with spatial gaps too, as when it withholds knowledge about a character's whereabouts or neglects to define the action's locales. Gaps are among the clearest cues for the viewer to act upon, since they evoke the entire process of schema formation and hypothesis testing.

Sternberg points out that gaps can be *temporary* or *permanent*.[16] That is, the informational hole in the fabula can be plugged (quickly or eventually) or never plugged. In our fairy tale, the gap is fleeting: we leave the princess's cradle and then see her as a young woman; we very rapidly fill in the gap. In a detective story, the crucial causal gap-e.g., what became of Mrs. Thorwald-is maintained much longer, but it too is eventually plugged. In some narratives, however, a gap remains open to the end; Iago's motive is the classic example. We can characterize syuzhet processes as working to open, prolong, or close gaps in fabula events.

We can also describe a gap as relatively *diffuse* or *focused*. How the princess passed those eighteen years is unspecified; we can fill the gap only with general and typical assumptions. But "Did Thorwald kill his wife?" is a clear-cut question demanding a precise answer. Sometimes a syuzhet will conjure up a diffuse gap only to bring it into focus later. For instance, a

[254]

flashback might jump back to an otherwise unremarked interval and sharpen our sense of what information might fill the gap.

The syuzhet can also *flaunt* or *suppress* gaps in the fabula. A gap is flaunted when we know that there is something we need to know. Our fairy tale calls the temporal gap to our attention, demanding that we fill the eighteen years of the princess's life with the help of our conventional assumptions. A detective story also typically calls attention to its gaps, making us fret over our lack of certain data. Other syuzhets do not call attention to their gaps. That *Rear Window* does not show Thorwald's mistress enter his apartment is a striking case of a suppressed gap. At the time we see her leave, we do not know that her entry has been omitted.

It should be evident that selections of fabula events shape the constructive activities of the spectator. Temporary gaps point us forward and build up surprise; a permanent gap invites us to apply a "scanning" strategy, sorting back through single episodes looking for information we might have missed. A focused gap obviously tends to solicit exclusive and homogeneous hypotheses, while a diffuse gap yields room for more open-ended inferential work. A flaunted gap may warn us to pay attention: either the omitted fabula information will become important later, or the narration is misleading us by stressing something that will prove insignificant. If a gap is suppressed, however, surprise is the likely result, especially if the omitted information ranks low on a scale of probabilities. These are only general indications, but they suggest the range of effects that "gapping" tactics can achieve. In each case, it must be remembered, the viewer will strive to justify the very presence of the gap by appeal to principles of compositional, realistic, transtextual, and artistic motivation.

Gaps are created by choosing to present certain pieces of fabula information and to hold back others. The pieces of information selected can be combined in a great variety of ways.

In cinema, the narration can arrange fabula information temporally or spatially, as we shall see in Chapters 6 and 7. For now we can look at two general principles that govern syuzhet composition in any medium: retardation and redundancy. Both offer clear-cut instances of how textual form both triggers and constrains spectator activity.

We have already noted the overall importance of retardation in cueing the spectator's comprehension. Only by delaying the revelation of some information can the syuzhet arouse anticipation, curiosity, suspense, and surprise. For example, *Rear Window* lays out its fabula information so that (a) the crucial murder evidence emerges piecemeal and the case is not solved too quickly, and (b) the murder investigation suspends and (possibly) resolves Jeff

and Lisa's romantic problems. The "God and Country" sequence of *October* breaks off from presenting the fabula and interpolates material that not only retards the outcome of the story action (how will the battle between Kornilov and Kerensky turn out?) but also has its own miniature retardatory

[255]

curve: the point could have been made by an intertitle rather than dozens of shots which form, to say the least, a fairly difficult passage.

The very centrality of retardation as a principle demands that we make some distinctions. Meir Sternberg has shown that retardatory material can be considered from many angles: the nature of the material (action, description, commentary, etc.), the magnitude of it, its location (how annoying is it here?), its relation to what it retards, how it is motivated, how it functions, its relation to transtextual norms, and its relation to basic properties of the medium.[17] We could then characterize *Rear Window's* red herrings-the false leads of Thorwald's trunk and the zinnia garden-as retardatory material which is action centered, large-scale (each false lead takes several scenes to work out), positioned to maximize suspense, motivated compositionally and generically, and, because manifested in props and setting, conforming to a conception of the film medium as one suitable for revealing dramatic situations through significant objects (Hitchcock's well-known adherence to Pudovkin's dictum about "plastic material"). The "God and Country" sequence, on the other hand, represents commentary and not fabula action; though it is of relatively short duration, its nondiegetic motivation subscribes to different conventions of genre and mode (the Soviet montage film); it is more annoying in its placement and even more so in its cryptic working out; and its rebus-like syntax links it to a quite different conception of film (Eisenstein's "intellectual cinema"). In any given case, we can apply these distinctions to characterize how the syuzhet impedes the viewer's acquisition of fabula information.

Retardation may occur when the syuzhet postpones revealing certain items of fabula information. Because this postponement stands out most sharply in expositional passages, Sternberg has studied them most closely, and his efforts show how overall patterns of retardation have perceptual and cognitive consequences.

Exposition is measured with respect to what theorists of drama call the "point of attack," that juncture in the fabula that forms the initial "discriminated occasion" in the syuzhet. But the receiver of the narrative must be informed of the fabula events previous to this initial scene. The transmission of this information is the task of the exposition, and several choices present themselves. At some point in the syuzhet we might be given the prior fabula infor-

mation in a lump, a practice Sternberg calls *concentrated* exposition. Or the narration might scatter the information through the syuzhet, interweaving it with ongoing present action. This is *distributed* exposition. *Rear Window* utilizes concentrated exposition in its first two scenes. We are provided, visually in the first sequence and both visually and sonically in the second, with the pertinent background to Jeffs situation. The exposition can also be put at any syuzhet point: in the beginning *(preliminary* exposition, as in *Rear Window)* or later *(delayed* exposition). We have then three general expositional possibilities. The classic fairy tale employs preliminary and

[256]

concentrated exposition: "Once upon a time" usually signals it. Popular fiction and film typically weave all the exposition into the first scene or two, thus employing preliminary and fairly concentrated exposition. The crime plot in the detective tale is usually revealed through delayed and concentrated exposition, a long scene near the end of the syuzhet recounting the events leading up to the crime. And Ibsen's practice of "continuous exposition" constitutes an adherence to both delayed and distributed principles: prior fabula events come to light gradually throughout the entire play.

As Sternberg shows, each of these options triggers different inferential activities on the part of the spectator. Concentrated and preliminary exposition supplies a strong primacy effect, solid grounds for confident hypothesis formation. Distributed and delayed exposition encourages curiosity about prior events and can lead to a suspension of strong or absolute hypotheses. There is also that exposition peppered with warning signals, which Sternberg calls a "rhetoric of anticipatory caution."[18] In a limit case, our primacy effect might be completely undermined by the suppression of key fabula information; we would then be forced to revise our assumptions and hypotheses when the data come to light. Sternberg calls this "the rise and fall of first impressions."[19]

 The syuzhet also repeats. In cinema, an intertitle may describe an action, and then we see that action; or scenes will be presented that allude, visually or sonically, to events already completed. Such repetitions reinforce assumptions, inferences, and hypotheses about story information. Let us call this sort of functional, significant repetition "redundancy."
The possibilities of redundancy in any narration have been exhaustively surveyed by Susan R. Suleiman; I abbreviate and modify her categories.
1. At the level of the fabula, any given event, character, quality, story function, environment, or character commentary may be redundant with respect to any other. For example, A may declare B to be a rake; that statement can be redundant in view of B's overt behavior

(he tries to seduce women), or his story function (he is put there to seduce the heroine), or his name, or his surroundings, or other characters' judgments, or all of these.
2. At the level of the syuzhet, the narration can achieve redundancy by reiterating its relation to the perceiver; by repeating its own commentary about an event or character; or by adhering to a consistent point of view. In *October,* the mock-heroic comparison of Kerensky to historic figures achieves redundancy by all these means: reiteration of direct address; constant comparison between him and the statuary, architecture, and bric-a-brac of the Winter Palace; and adherence to a satiric omniscience throughout.
3. At the level of the relations between syuzhet and fabula, redundancy can be achieved by representing an event more than once (as Todorov puts it, "Each event is narrated at least twice"[20]), or by making any fabula event, character, quality, story function, environment, or character commentary redundant with respect to narrational commentary. At the start of *Rear*

[257]

Window, the furnishings of Jeffs apartment tell us that he is adventurous; in the second scene, Jeff tells his editor (and us) the same thing.
In most narrative texts, redundancy operates so completely on all these levels that we scarcely notice it-until we encounter a text that is not so redundant, or not redundant in ways that we are used to. Suleiman's scheme lets us spell out exactly how a film can reinforce important information and thus guide our grasp of the syuzhet.
To sum up: In any narrative text in any medium, the syuzhet controls the amount and the degree of pertinence of the information we receive. The syuzhet creates various sorts of gaps in our construction of the fabula; it also combines information according to principles of retardation and redundancy. All of these procedures function to cue and guide the spectator's narrative activity.

Knowledge, self-consciousness, and communicativeness

Choosing what to include in the syuzhet and what to leave tacit, deciding how to retard the syuzhet and where redundancy is needed-such particular syuzhet tactics depend on broad narrational strategies. How can we characterize these strategies? Meir Sternberg has suggested three categories that will prove helpful. Although his terms are ones usually reserved for conscious agents, they can be applied to narrative processes with the same legitimacy with which we call a picture "graceful." I should add that these characteristics are properly

narrational in that they not only shape syuzhet processes but often involve stylistic options too.

A film's narration can be called more or less *knowledgeable* about the fabula it represents. Every film will employ norms of relevant knowledge for our construction of the fabula. In a mystery film, circumstantial information divulged about past events can have more structural centrality than information about a character's current state of mind. In a musical or melodrama, however, information about immediate states of mind might take priority. We know these norms through acquaintance with genre conventions and through qualitative and quantitative factors in the given film (placement of information in a highlighting context, repetition of information across the film). But knowledgeability has other aspects as well.

First, what *range* of knowledge does the narration have at its disposal? The narration can be more or less *restricted*. *Rear Window,* for instance, confines itself almost wholly to what Jeff knows (with a few significant exceptions). In *The Birth of a Nation,* on the other hand, the narration presents more information about the overall story action than any character has.

Unlike prose fiction, the fictional film seldom confines its narration to what only a single character knows. Most commonly, portions of the syuzhet will be organized around one character's knowledge and other portions will confine themselves to the knowledge held by another character. Such

[258]

restrictions and divisions will inevitably create gaps in the fabula. We tend to motivate restricted narration realistically ("After all, we know as much as she plausibly could") but to motivate more unrestricted narration transtextually ("In films of this sort, you always know more . . ."). Both sorts of narration are, of course, fundamentally motivated by compositional requirements.

We can ask a second question. How profound is the knowledge available to the narration? This is a matter of *depth,* of degrees of subjectivity and objectivity. A narration may present the whole of a character's mental life, either conscious or unconscious; it may confine itself to the character's optical or auditory experience; it may eschew any but behavioral indications of psychological states; it may even minimize those. For example, although the narration of *The Birth of a Nation* is relatively unrestricted in range, it penetrates the characters' minds less deeply than does the narration of, say, *Secrets of a Soul,* which represents the protagonist's dreams. *The Maltese Falcon,* which contains one shot cued as being through Spade's eyes, is less subjective than *Rear Window,* with its many optical point-of-view

shots. Again, depth of knowledge can be justified on compositional, realistic, and/ or transtextual grounds.

Range and depth of information can be related in various ways. Restricted narration does not guarantee greater depth, nor does depth at any point guarantee that the narration will stay constantly limited. Hitchcock's films alternate between sequences of great subjectivity and sequences that flaunt the narration's unrestricted knowledge. In general, narrative films are constantly modulating the range and depth of the narration's knowledge. Such shifts provide strong cues for hypothesis formation.

Narration also relates "rhetorically" to the perceiver, and this opens up other areas of inquiry. To what extent does the narration display a recognition that it is addressing an audience? We can call this the degree of *selfconsciousness*. For example, Eisenstein's films often intensify an emotional climax by having characters look at or gesture to the audience. Similarly, a retrospective voice-over commentary can push the narration toward a greater self-consciousness, especially if the addressee is not another fictional character. We can see many tactics of redundancy, such as repetition of fabula information by the syuzhet, as evidencing a degree of self-consciousness (e.g., Eisenstein's repeated intercutting of Kerensky with statues). At the beginning of *Rear* Window, the camera movement presents aspects of courtyard life for purposes of quick exposition. In contrast, the artificial but relatively inoffensive frontality of figure position we observed in figure 1 earlier is less self-conscious than these cases. When we speak of being "aware of manipulation" in a Lang film and "unaware" of such manipulation in a Hawks film, we are usually referring to the narration's greater or lesser acknowledgement that a tale is being presented for a perceiver.

The concept of self-consciousness offers distinct advantages over "enunciative" accounts of speaker-listener relations, such as the applications

[259]

of Benveniste's grammatical theory. For one thing, self-consciousness is a matter of degree, not of absolutes (as, say, "first person" and "third person" are). All filmic narrations are self-conscious, but some are more so than others. Furthermore, "self-consciousness" varies in degree and function within different genres and modes of film practice. Groucho Marx's asides to the audience are more self-conscious than Popeye's muttered imprecations, but the patriotic voice-over of Capra's Why *We Fight* is more self-conscious than either. The staging of most Hollywood shots reveals a moderate selfconsciousness by grouping characters for our best view. In a musical, characters may sing directly to us-a moment of stronger narrational self-consciousness codified by the genre. By contrast, Antonioni will stage scenes

with characters turned away from us, and the overt suppression of their expressions and re-actions becomes in context a token of the narration's awareness of the viewer. In the cele-brated filling station sequence of Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle, Godard's voice-over commentator is so acutely aware of the audience that he is at a loss to decide what to show us next. As a critical category, self-consciousness helps us consider to what extent and with what effects the film lets a recognition of the audience's presence shape the syuzhet.

At one point in Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt (1943),* the sinister Uncle Charlie settles down to read the evening paper. Earlier in the film our knowledge has occasionally been re-stricted to his knowledge (as in the first scene, when he learned that two men were shad-owing him). There has even been some depth of subjectivity, with certain shots being framed from his optical point of view. Now, while he reads, he is filmed from a low angle, the outspread newspaper blocking his face. There is silence. A puff of cigar smoke. Slowly the paper is lowered, and Charlie is now frowning thoughtfully. He looks off right. Cut to his optical point of view of the opposite end of the room: no one notices him. Cut back to Uncle Charlie, who calls his niece Ann to him. He proceeds to make a toy house out of newspaper and, in tearing out a portion, folds it up and slips it into his pocket.

This short passage shows how a narration shifts its depth of knowledge (objective to more subjective) and how it can gain a degree of selfconsciousness (the pause in telling us Uncle Charlie's reaction). The scene also illustrates another aspect of narration-what Sternberg calls its *communicativeness*. Although a narration has a particular range of knowledge available, the narration may or may not communicate all that information. In literature, for example, a diarist-narrator will have a very restricted ken, but she or he can be completely communicative about what she or he knows. In *Shadow of a Doubt,* the narration has estab-lished itself as restrictive (frequently limited to Charlie's knowledge) and potentially sub-jective (e.g., previous optical point-of-view shots). Now, however, the low-angle shot of Charlie reading does not reveal the newspaper article that he sees. It is not just that the nar-ration flaunts this curiosity gap, though it certainly does. The

[260]

narration holds back exactly the sort of information to which it has earlier claimed complete access. The suppressiveness of the newspaper shot is emphasized all the more when, after Charlie lowers the paper, the narration immediately switches to his optical point of view. If we had been permitted to share his vision an instant sooner, we would have seen the of-fending article. As it is, the film will make us wait some time to find out.

The degree of communicativeness can be judged by considering how willingly the narra-tion shares the information to which its degree of knowledge entitles it. The unrestricted narration of *The Birth of a Nation* is highly communicative; the only information withheld is of a "suspense" variety (i.e., what will happen next). The sharply restricted narration of *Rear Window* is likewise generally communicative in that (on the whole) it tells us all that Jeff knows at any given moment. If *The Birth of a Nation* were suddenly to conceal the fact that the Little Colonel founds the Ku Klux Klan, or if *Rear Window* were to withhold some crucial action of Jeff's, the narration would tend toward a lesser degree of communicative-ness. That a highly "omniscient" narration and a highly restricted narration may both be considered communicative shows the importance of context.

As with self-consciousness, every film is uncommunicative to at least a slight degree; there may be a fluctuating relation between the film's overall informational norm and the extent of concealment at various moments. In one sense, any deviation from a film's internal norm of communicativeness becomes a mark of suppressiveness. The narration could tell more, but it doesn't. Transtextual motivation, however, can make the suppression less overt. When Jeff is asleep, we see Thorwald leave his aparment with the woman in black. This violates the narration's restriction to Jeff's knowledge, and it might be seen as unmasking what the film suppresses all along (that is, what Thorwald is up to). But now generic norms take over. It is a convention of mystery and detective tales that the narration can inject hints, clues, and false leads which the detective does not recognize at the moment, as long as the detective eventually learns or infers the information and as long as the solution to the mys-tery is not given away prematurely. In *Rear Window,* both conditions are satisfied. To put it more technically, the detective tale tones down its occasional suppressive operations by re-alistic motivation (restricting the bulk of the narration to what the detective could plausibly know) and by generic convention. A different norm of communicativeness can be found in the melodrama, where more omniscient narration tends to emphasize communicativeness so as to play up ironic and pathetic twists of which the characters are unaware. In general, we must distinguish between generically codified shifts in the range or depth of knowledge and more or less overt indications of suppressiveness.

The best critical solution to the problem of communicativeness is to weigh transtextual norms against intrinsic structural demands. Withholding key pieces of information is a con-vention of the mystery film, so to some extent

[261]

Shadow of a Doubt obeys generic rules in the scene we have considered. But the flagrancy with which the narration indicates its suppressiveness must be seen as playing a role within the film's overall form. The film begins by being restricted to Uncle Charlie's knowledge but soon starts to undermine that when he escapes from the police by means not shown to us. In the course of the film Little Charlie gradually replaces Uncle Charlie as the principal agent of knowledge; it is she who solves the mystery surrounding her uncle. The scene we have considered is pivotal here, marking another stage in the "weaning away" of the audience from Uncle Charlie's range of knowledge. Thereafter, the film will modulate quite carefully from restricted to unrestricted states, and from overt communicativeness to momentary but overt suppressiveness and back again. At certain moments our knowledge is greater than that of the characters, and the narration may call attention to the fact; at other moments (e.g., the newspaper scene), we know less than the character, and the narration points that out too. The final effect of these manipulations is double: to make the spectator play with simultaneous hypotheses about Uncle Charlie's past and motives; and to create in the viewer the shadow of a doubt about the narration's own trustworthiness. In at least some cases, then, overt marks of communicativeness or suppressiveness can also convey a degree of self-consciousness.

The categories of knowledgeability, selfconsciousness, and communicativeness can be used to clarify two common but imprecise critical concepts. In cinema, the concept of "point of view" has usually been loosely employed, especially within the mimetic tradition. When critics speak of a character's point of view, they are usually referring to the range and/or depth of knowledge which the narration supplies.. With respect to range, *Rear Window* comes close to Jeff's "point of view." With respect to depth, a film like *La guerre estfinie,* which plunges us into the protagonist's inner life, may be considered to give us Diego's subjective "point of view." More broadly, when critics discuss narrational "point of view" (or the narrator's point of view), they are usually referring to any or all of the properties I have picked out-knowledgeability, self-consciousness, and communicativeness. Speaking of Hitchcock's "point of view" as intruding on a scene usually implies a great range of knowledge, a high degree of self-consciousness, and perhaps some overt manipulations of communicativeness. To avoid blurring these distinctions, I will use the term "point of view" only to refer to the optical or auditory vantage point of a character; thus "point-of-view shot" is synonymous with "optically subjective shot."

Similarly, these concepts can specify the term "unreliability" a little more. If "reliable" means "forthcoming," the more communicative the narration, the more reliable it is. In the *Shadow of a Doubt* scene, the suppression of Charlie's view of the newspaper article causes

us to mistrust the narration to some degree; henceforth we must be on our guard for what it might withhold. "Reliability" can also imply objective accuracy, in which case the range and depth of knowledge can become factors. A narration which confined itself to a character's mental states might be highly communicative but it would not necessarily inspire confidence in its veracity. The framed story of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is a case in point. We also spot "unreliable" narration as it is occurring or recognize it only after the fact. In *Rashomon,* the flashbacks are motivated as representations of various character's court testimony; since we are warned at the outset (through an "anticipatory caution" in the exposition) that the accounts are incompatible, we view each flashback as at best an overall hypothesis and at worst a fabrication. The characters must take the responsibility for the "unreliability" of their narration. But in *Stage Fright*, probably the canonic case of unreliable narration in classical cinema, we are given a flashback putatively both trustworthy and accurate but which turns out to have been the visual and auditory representation of a lie. It is not just the character's yarn that is unreliable. The film's narration shows itself to be duplicitous by neglecting to suggest any inadequacies in Johnnie's account and by appearing to be highly communicative-not just reporting what the liar said but showing it as if it were indeed objectively true.

As categories of information transmission, knowledgeability, selfconsciousness, and communicativeness all bear on how film style and syuzhet construction manipulate time, space, and narrative logic to enable the spectator to construct a particular unfolding fabula. I should add, however, that other, less central narrational factors may be present. These are *judgmental* factors, often called "tone" by literary critics. When we say that a film takes pity on its characters or has contempt for its audience, we are talking, however loosely, about ways in which a film's narration can strike an attitude with respect either to the fabula or to the perceiver. The "God and Country" sequence of *October* would exemplify a strikingly judgmental syuzhet passage. We cannot list such attitudes exhaustively, and many acts of narration probably do not possess them, but for our survey to be complete we should mention some clear cases.

We are most familiar with narrational judgment as a function of particular stylistic devices. In a silent film, an expository intertitle may make no bones about the narration's attitude. A title in *The Birth of a Nation* identifies an old man as "the kindly master of Cameron Hall." Music can indicate narrational attitude in a similarly direct way: sympathetic (the "Diane" tune in *Seventh Heaven*), ironic ("We'll Meet Again" at the close of *Dr. Strangelove*), or

comic (Irish folk tunes in *The Quiet Man*). It is a cliché of some films that a distant high angle at the end connotes a compassionate, detached attitude. Within given styles and conventions, many devices can imply judgments on the story action.

It is generally more fruitful, though, to look for attitudes as emergent qualities of the systems at work within entire films. For instance, the narrational attitude toward Uncle Charlie in *Shadow of a Doubt* is less a matter

[263]

of camera angle or figure placement at any one moment than a function of an overall narrational strategy that presents certain aspects of his conduct as both fascinating and inexplicable. In *The Birth of a Nation*, the narration's attitude toward the Cameron household is governed by its role in the film's total narrative economy: the family is the causal, spatial, and temporal center of the film. Similarly, any narration's "attitude" toward the perceiver usually emerges from the general properties of narration. A highly suppressive narration, as in Lang or Hitchcock, might be considered to look down on the audience. A more communicative narration, such as is found in Ford or Capra, makes more straightforward and "sincere" appeals. While our critical vocabulary for narrational judgment remains weak, we can usually ground our intuitions in the formal properties of narration I have indicated.

Narrator, author

Throughout my discussion, one particular question may have nagged the reader. I have not referred to the narrator of a film. In what senses can we speak of a narrator as the source of narration?

If a character is presented as recounting story actions in some fashion (telling, recollecting, etc.), as Marlowe does during most of *Murder My Sweet*, the film possesses a character-narrator. Or a person not part of the story world may be identified as the source of parts of the narration. In *Jules and Jim,* a voice-over commentary points up the diegetic world; in *La ronde,* a *meneur de jeu* appears in flesh and blood to address the audience. Such films contain explicit, noncharacter narrators. But, as Edward Branigan has demonstrated, such personified narrators are invariably swallowed up in the overall narrational process of the film, which they do *not* produce.[21] So the interesting theoretical problem involves an implicit, nonpersonified narrator. Even if no voice or body gets identified as a locus of narration, can we still speak of a narrator as being present in a film? In other words, must we go beyond the process of narration to locate an entity which is its source?

Some theorists believe so. Diegetic theories often identify the narrator as the enunciator, the film's "speaker," but we have already seen that the analogy to speech fails because of the weak correspondences between verbal deixis and the techniques of cinema. Other theorists suggest that the source of narration is akin to Wayne Booth's "implied author." The implied author is the invisible puppeteer, not a speaker or visible presence but the omnipotent artistic figure behind the work.[22] In film, Albert Laffay speaks of *le grand imagier,* the master of images: a fictional and invisible personage who chooses and organizes what we shall perceive.[23] On Laffay's account, at the center of a narrative film stands a ghostly master of ceremonies, invisible twin of the *meneur de jeu* of *La ronde.*

Since any utterance can be construed with respect to a putative source, literary theory may be justified in looking for a speaking voice or narrator.[24]

[264]

But in watching films, we are seldom aware of being told something by an entity resembling a human being. Even with the dissective attention of criticism, we cannot construct a narrator for Vidor's film *War and Peace* with the exactitude with which we can assign attributes to the narrator of Tolstoy's original novel. As for the implied author, this construct adds nothing to our understanding of filmic narration. No trait we could assign to an implied author of a film could not more simply be ascribed to the narration itself: it sometimes suppresses information, it often restricts our knowledge, it generates curiosity, it creates a tone, and so on. To give every film a narrator or implied author is to indulge in an anthropomorphic fiction.

There is a fairly important theoretical choice involved here. Literary theories of the implied-author, such as Seymour Chatman's, take the process of narration to be grounded in the classic communication diagram: a message is passed from sender to receiver.[25] This has committed theorists to seeking out noncharacter narrators and implied authors, not to mention "narratees" and "implied readers." These entities, especially the latter two, are sometimes very hard to find in a narrative text. I suggest, however, that narration is better understood as the organization of a set of cues for the construction of a story. This presupposes a perceiver, but not any sender, of a message. This scheme allows for the possibility that the *narrational process may sometimes mimic the communication situation more or less fully*. A text's narration may emit cues that suggest a narrator, or a "narratee," or it may not. This explains the range of examples, and the asymmetrical structures, that we often find: some texts do not signal a narrator, or a narratee; others signal one, but not the other. For instance, Robert Bresson's film *Pickpocket* starts with a prologue asserting that the "author" is presenting images and sounds to explain the story. As we shall see in Chapter 12, this is a way

of marking stylistic factors as having an overt, dynamic relation to the syuzhet. Most films, however, do not provide anything like such a definable narrator, and there is no reason to expect they will. On the principle that we ought not to proliferate theoretical entities without need, there is no point in positing communication as the fundamental process of all narration, only to grant that most films "efface" or "conceal" this process. Far better, I think, to give the narrational process the power to signal under certain circumstances that the spectator should construct a narrator. When this occurs, we must recall that this narrator is the product of specific organizational principles, historical factors, and viewers' mental sets. Contrary to what the communication model implies, this sort of narrator does not create the narration; the narration, appealing to historical norms of viewing, creates the narrator. In Part 3, we will consider how this might work. For now, I need only signal that we need not build the narrator in on the ground floor of our theory. No purpose is served by assigning every film to a *deus absconditis.*

[265]

Notes

1   Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious" (1915), in *Collected Papers,* Vol. 4, cd. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1956), 106. On this point, see also Noel Carroll, "Address to the Heathen," *October* no. 23 (Winter 1982): 130-134.

2   Vladimir Nizhny, *Lessons with Eisenstein,* trans. and ed. Ivor Montagu and Jay Leyda (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), 110.

3   See Aristotle, *Poetics,* commentary by D. W. Lucas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 53-54, 100.

4   Yuri Tynianov, "Plot and Story-Line in the Cinema," *Russian Poetics in Translation* 5 (1978): 20.

5   Since writing Chapters 1-7 of David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), I have reconsidered the plot/story distinction. There Chapter 2 asserted that plot (syuzhet) consists of "the totality of formal and stylistic materials in the film," and Chapter 3 called narration that aspect of plot which transmits story information. This formulation now seems to me inadequate, both as a reading of the Formalists and as an account of film form. For the reasons presented in the present chapter, I take narration to be the all-inclusive process which uses both *syuzhet* and style to cue spectators to construct a *fabula,* or story. This revision of theoretical terms does not

seem to me to affect the analytical and descriptive claims I make in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema,* but it does offer greater theoretical precision.

6   Boris Tomashevsky, "Thematics," in Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, eds., Russian Formalist Criticism. Four Essays, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 66-67.

7   My emphasis upon the fabula as an emergent spectatorial construct is characteristic of "late" Russian Formalist poetics; the early writings of Shklovsky in particular tend to treat the fabula as a preexistent raw material for artistic elaboration. Nonetheless, at times we must use the language of carpentry or sculpture in describing the syuzhet's operations. For the narrative artist does in some sense work "on" the fabula *as he may assume that the perceiver will construct it.* In the previous chapter, I claimed that the narrative film is so made as to encourage the spectator to execute story-constructing activities. These activities can in turn be presupposed by the filmmaker. For the artist, presenting a story "out of' chronological order is just that: a transformation of that arrangement which a spectator would presumably make when presented with more "linear" cues. (Here a theoretical approach emphasizing narrative as a *structure* overlaps with that treating narration as a temporal *activity.)* The perceiver, given a narrative text, is invited to recognize a syuzhet and infer a fabula from it, whereas the artist constructs a syuzhet according to assumptions about how the spectator could infer a fabula from it. And these assumptions will form part of the artist's material.

8   Most Russian Formalist narrative theory assumes a distinction between syuzhet and style, as witnessed in the title of Viktor Shklovsky's 1919 essay, "On the Connection Between Devices of Syuzhet Construction and General Stylistic Devices" *(Twentieth-Century Studies* nos. 7/8 [December 1972]: 48-72). Although Shklovsky believed that syuzhet construction and stylistic elements often parallel each other, he presupposed them to occupy distinct domains. Boris Tomashevsky and Boris Eichenbaum also held this view. More recently, both Meir Sternberg and Seymour Chatman exclude style from the realm of the syuzhet. See Sternberg, Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 34; and Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative*

Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 10-11, 24. Yuri Tynianov speaks of the syuzhet as "the story's dynamics, composed of the interactions of all the linkages of material (including the story as a linkage of actions)-stylistic linkage, story linkage, etc." ("On the Foundations of Cinema," in Herbert Eagle, cd., *Russian Formalist Film Theory* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Slavic Publications, 1981], 96). The passage is cryptic, but it suggests that the syuzhet includes both "story linkage" and style, in

which case Tynianov's conception would be structurally congruent with mine: what I and others call "syuzhet," he calls "story linkage," and what he calls "syuzhet" I call narration.

9 See p. 31, above.

10 Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction,* 34.

11 Cf. Chatman, *Story and Discourse,* 19-20; Gerard Genette, *Figures II* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 66.

12 Tynianov, "Plot and Story-Line in the Cinema": 20.

13 Roland Barthes, "The Third Meaning," *Image Music Text,* trans. and cd. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 64.

14 Kristin Thompson, *Ivan the Terrible: A Neoformalist Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 287-295.

15 Ibid., 302.

16 Sternberg's term "gap" does not coincide with the usage of phenomenological theorists of narrative like Wolfgang Iser. For Iser, a gap is any "indeterminate" portion of a text which calls forth "a free play of interpretation" ("Indeterminacy. and the Reader's Response," in J. Hillis Miller, cd., *Aspects of Narrative* [New York: Columbia University Press, 19711, 11). He finds gaps between action segments, between character thought and deed, between different points of view. For Sternberg, however, gaps arise only from the relation of syuzhet to fabula. I shall suggest that they are usually quite determinate, especially given the canonic schemata of story construction.

17 Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction,* 161-162.

18 Ibid., 129.

19 Ibid., 98-99.

20 Tzvetan Todorov, "La lecture comme construction," *Les genres du discours* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), 89.

21 Edward Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film* (New York: Mouton, 1984), 40-49.

22 Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 71-75.

23 Albert Laffay, *Logique du cinema: Creation et spectacle* (Paris: Masson, 1964), 81.

24 But not necessarily. The works of S. Y. Kuroda, Ann Banfield, and others suggest that literary narration may be defined by its inability to be taken as proceeding from a speaker. See Ann Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).

25 Chatman, *Story and Discourse,* 147-151.