

The cutting edge:
deviant realisms and cinematic
disruption

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Abstract

At the core of this study is the question of how film conveys experience that resists representation through closed, linear narratives. This thesis explores two possibilities and relates them to each other: infusions of fantasy (or magic, the dream, the marvellous) which undermine realism and the use of disruption as a specific strategy for communicating disorder or elusive experience. It examines the expression of both fantasy and disruption with an emphasis on film editing. This study considers editing as the foundation of narrative structure in film, and explores the effects of alternative articulations of space, time and the body in film that deliberately subvert the norms of continuity editing.

The first chapter unpacks the concept of realism in relation to film and examines the dominant practice of editing, continuity editing, as one of the primary ways through which cinematic realism is constructed. Chapters two and three consider two alternative realisms in art: surrealism and magical realism, which both, in different ways, integrate the real and the fantastic, and explore the expression of these modes through film form. Without necessarily claiming a direct influence of surrealism and magical realism, chapters four to six read three examples from contemporary world cinema through the lens of these two deviant realisms. These chapters explore the representation of surreality in early French surrealist film and in the work of contemporary Czech surrealist, Jan Švankmajer; of township experience in South Africa in the transition years; and of space in the context of Palestine.

This study traces how disrupted editing in certain contexts complicates and refuses a coherent, linear narrative. It acknowledges a body of films that present deviant realisms through the subversion of the norms of continuity editing, and through the integration of the real and the fantastic, thereby rejecting the totalising effects of seamlessness, and reconciling experience and representation through non-linearity. Combined with injections of fantasy, disruption begins to offer new possibilities for the articulation and negotiation of subjective states and of disordered or traumatized social experience.

Introduction

In order to make a film, one must cut, stick and discard images. As a result of those operations, and of the work which is produced, there are always remainders, traces, and in a much more explicit and material way than in the case of spoken or written language.

(Wills 1996, p. 87)

Editing, in the context of film, usually refers to the process of joining shots in sequence. The term is also used to indicate the overall arrangement of images that determines how a film may construct spatial and temporal coherence. Mainstream narrative film establishes, or attempts to establish, coherence and seamlessness, through the dominant practice of continuity editing, and this is one of the key ways in which cinematic realism is constructed.¹ There is a strong emphasis on continuity within sequences; on the ordered chronology of sequences; and on the smoothness of the transitions between shots and sequences. But, by its nature, editing through emphasising linkage, alludes at the same time to the implicit gaps between shots; joining and arranging leave traces of what has been discarded and concealed, as Wills suggests. This thesis probes the ways in which editing can be used to disrupt the cinematic realism that continuity editing works to create and thereby establish alternative modes of representation.

This study traces multiple sites of disruption in the usual use of continuity editing. It draws together, in a suggestive montage, films that share an interrupted realism brought

¹ Bordwell and Thomson (2004, p. 310) summarise the function of continuity editing: “The basic purpose of the continuity system is to create a smooth flow from shot to shot ... Since the continuity style seeks to present a story, however, it is chiefly through the handling of space and time that editing furthers narrative continuity”. Pam Cook describes how continuity editing has been codified in order to bridge ellipses in space and time (1985, p. 213). Don Fairservice also discusses how editing achieves the perception of unbroken continuity (Fairservice 2001). Dancyger (2002) and Button (2002) both give more practical accounts of continuity editing in the service of narrative clarity.

on by a deviation from the norms of continuity editing. The places where cinematic realism falters and the seamlessness of conventional film narrative is fissured or disturbed, serve as encoded instructions – glitches in the matrix, as it were – for reading the relationship between film as representation and the object world it attempts to represent. Realism as a mode of cinematic representation has frequently been considered wanting.² Firstly, there is the shifting understanding of the term itself, which has inherited a slipperiness from its origins in literary realism, which is compounded by the way that film, through its moving images, resembles the world it attempts to represent. Various cinematic movements have emerged over time in dialogue with the unifying tendencies of cinematic realism as an aesthetic. Traced historically: *cinéma vérité*, surrealism, poetic realism, neo-realism, the cinefantastic all speak to realism as they forge a relationship between the aesthetic and the object of representation.³

This is perhaps motivated, at least in part, by a feeling that the totalising effects of seamless narratives often fail to represent certain experiences, contexts or events. The idea that narrative cinema is inadequate to account for much of contemporary experience is not new. Hayden White discusses the incompatibility of the contemporary world and traditional representation, particularly by focusing on modernist narratives:

The outside phenomenal aspects, and insides of events, their possible meanings or significances, have been collapsed and fused. The “meaning” of events remains indistinguishable from their occurrence, but their occurrence is unstable, fluid, phantasmagoric – as phantasmagoric as the slow-motion, reverse angle, zoom and rerun of the video representations of the Challenger explosion. This is not to say that such events are not representable, only that techniques of representation somewhat different from those developed at the height of artistic realism may be called for (White 1996, p. 29).

² Hayden White discusses how the “dissolution of the event as a basic unit of temporal occurrence and building-block of history ... undermines a founding presupposition of Western realism”(1996, p. 18). Laura Marks also questions the presumed relationship between realism and cinema (Marks 2000).

³ For a discussion of *cinéma vérité*, see Beitrose (1964); for poetic realism see Austin (1996); Vincent Floydd Rocchio (1999) discusses Italian Neo-realism and James Donald (1989) writes on the cinefantastic.

A cohesive narrative may attempt to circumscribe those experiences that cannot always be contained; to put experience into a neatly told story involves an attempt to master an unsettled underlying social anxiety and create the illusion of wholeness and resolution where, in reality, there is none. This suggests a further reconsideration of what realism means, and also of the formal techniques that constitute it. Canadian critic, Bill Nichols, in attempting to articulate a realism that represents a more inclusive experience, talks about a “reconstituted realism” that “derails narrative without destroying it” through the use of:

[r]etardations, delays, slippages, diversions, incomplete reasonings, unfinished arguments, partial proposals, competing claims, jarring or strange juxtapositions, fissures, jumps, gaps, or other perepetias... (Nichols 1996, p. 58).

In his discussion of *Who Killed Vincent Chin* (1987), Nichols defers to these techniques because “realism alone clearly will not suffice” because of the “failure of the classic realist narrative modes to convince us of their commensurability with the reality we experience beyond them” (1996, p. 58). Following Hayden White, Nichols considers that “disasters, catastrophes and social holocausts” cannot be conceptualised in a “traditional historical understanding” (p. 58). Nichols’s terminology – delays, fissures, jarring – all coincide with White’s paraphrase of Jameson, referring to the psychopathologies of modernist writings and film: “artificial closures, blockages of narrative, deformation and formal compensations, the dissociation or splitting of narrative functions” (White 1996, p. 32). White considers these to offer opportunities to represent “traumatic events as being produced by the monstrous growth and expansion of technological modernity” (1996, p. 32). The unravelling of narrative described by Nichols, White and Jameson specifically involves disruptive editing techniques. These are the stories with “black holes” to which Mary Ann Caws refers in her discussion of textual interference. For Caws, interference or interruption is “something positive: it works towards openness and struggles against the system as closure, undoing categories” (Caws 1989, p. 6).

Continuity editing usually coheres and binds its representation, thereby positing a singular account of the world and attempting to erase any traces of things

that do not quite fit. With its clear causality, temporal linearity and invisible seams, continuity editing is one of the foundations of twentieth-century cinematic realism, and by formally interrupting narrative and resisting a linear history (if we accept White's conflation of historiography with narrative techniques in relation to the broader questions of recording the world) films that employ interrupted editing techniques simultaneously reject realism.

In a similar vein, I am interested in how editing and film form can suggest a material world infused with subjective experience and how this may function as potentially subversive expression. This thesis considers how the marvellous, the magical, the fantastic, the dream – which can be loosely summed up as phantasmagoria – may be communicated through disrupted narrative. My discussion of disruption refers to the specific kind of textual interference that marks the techniques and effects of surrealism and magical realism and is evident in the three case studies; disruption may be plotted along the aesthetic and the psychic, the social and the political.

Surrealism sought psychic disruption through aesthetic disjuncture, and the effect was to undermine the ordinary. While surrealism has always insisted on surreality as its primary aim rather than the aesthetics of art, it is through aesthetic disjuncture that surreality may be accessed. Later surrealism, exemplified in this thesis through the work of Jan Švankmajer, further insists on a redefinition of the quotidian through the articulation of unconscious thought. Both Švankmajer and Breton grant surrealism an underlying political significance; while the subversive quality of surrealism is not explicitly political, by redefining the quotidian through the dream, surrealism has political implications.⁴ Breton's attempt to explore the convergence of the political with the psychic, shows that there is a natural progression in his original conceptualisation of surrealism as a concern which emphasises the psychic, to the political and I discuss this in Chapter Two.

My interest in this aspect of surrealism coincides with broader questions about the relationship between interiority and exteriority. I argue that disruption is a means of reading the interior through the exterior and the effect is necessarily subversive. I explore

⁴ See Chapter Four, footnote five for Švankmajer's definition of politics, which is a broader, more generalised view.

different kinds of subversions – the subversive element in surrealism is not the same as in magical realism. Similarly, while all three case studies are clearly subversive, their aims and methods are different. While surrealism focuses on the psychic and works outward to the political, magical realism, on the other hand, has more consistent socio-political concerns, and disruption in these texts are usually more immediately political; my discussion of Teboho Mahlatsi and of Elia Suleiman focus more specifically on socio-political subversion by considering how political trauma impacts on social experience.

In some ways, this is a study of film borders, specifically the borders of the shot as each shot functions in relation to the next. It is also a study of how these borders may be stressed and the places where they rupture or fracture. I draw these filmic borders together for consideration with a different kind of border space: the places where the boundaries between the fantastic and real are blurred. Magical realism and surrealism, through their fusion of realism and fantasy, offer alternative ways of understanding the real through the presentation of its artefacts (objects) and its bodies. This fascination with objects is deeply connected to the modernist preoccupation with the mechanical and is further indicated in the mechanical nature of film, the monster that was being mastered in the early part of the last century. Continuity editing is effectively the taming of the beast, the unknown possibilities of the machine are harnessed and become as domestic as a vacuum cleaner, and is used to similar effect: erasure. But there is always debris, and my interests lie particularly in what falls between the cracks. An underlying thread of this study is concerns how objects may be represented as disruptive. Both magical realism and surrealism redefine objects, as I discuss later, and in all three of my case studies, there is clear evidence of how these filmmakers inscribe the objects in their films as disruptive. This is, in some ways, a defamiliarisation of objects which becomes possible through the use of discontinuity editing; these are two converging sources of disruption.

In editing, the “cut” refers simultaneously to the actual snipping or disconnection of film, but also to the joined film as the cut refers to the process of joining. It also refers to the whole film in terms of its stages: the rough cut, the fine cut, the director’s cut. Although the most basic understanding of editing is the joining of shots, editing also signifies a broader process of the arrangement of images to structure a film. Aumont, Bergala, Marie and Vernet (1992) distinguish between a narrow definition of editing

which can be summarised as “the organization of a film’s shots according to certain principles of ordering and duration” (Marcel Martin cited in Aumont et al. 1992, p. 38) and a larger understanding:

We therefore propose the following definition, which we will subsequently designate as the “large” definition of editing or “montage”: “Montage is the principle governing the organization of film elements, both visual and audio, or the combination of these elements, by juxtaposing them, connecting them, and/or controlling their duration” (Aumont et al. 1992).

Aumont et al. assign a specific meaning to the term “montage” to identify their broader understanding of the function of editing. In this understanding, editing (or montage) refers to the organising principle of film thereby implying that it is the structural foundation of film, specifically through its ability to juxtapose, combine and control images in relation to each other. Each image has a spatial and temporal dimension, and this study emphasises the narrative construction of film time and film space through the organisation and arrangements of shots and sequences. As Aumont et al. (1992) suggest, a discussion of editing may extend to the integration of music, sound and dialogue but this study focuses primarily on editing as visual combination and arrangement.

The term “montage” for Aumont et al. indicates this broader function of editing, but implicit in the above quotation is the idea that the terms editing and montage are in some ways interchangeable. While the term montage has been used as an alternative to continuity editing, particularly with regard to Soviet montage and associative sequences within continuity editing, Aumont et al. use the term more inclusively to refer to the combination of shots regardless of whether they are continuous or associative. My use of the term montage generally corresponds to the broader use by Aumont et al. and regards editing as montage unless specifically referring to “montage sequences” within continuity editing, or Soviet montage. There is also a more specific use of the term montage in relation to surrealism: this draws on surrealist practices of collage and montage in other art forms and in film, it integrates aspects of continuity editing while necessarily including elements of association or juxtaposition. Similarly, continuity editing signals a specific style of editing which I will discuss in Chapter One.

The first chapter considers cinematic realism and its history and locates it in terms of formal techniques, particularly continuity editing. In order to understand the significance of editing in relation to realism, I trace some of the key debates in film theory and history, including the tendency to an emphasis on camera or on editing, while attempting to unpack some of the different conceptions of realism. My emphasis in this chapter is on the construction of cinematic realism through continuity editing in mainstream cinema. Editing not only organises space and time, it also considers the graphic qualities of the relationship between shots; it pieces together the human figure and other bodies; it manipulates point-of-view and perspective through the arrangement of shots; and it constructs the underlying narrative pace and rhythm of the film. I examine conceptualisations of editing in order to explore how the idea of seamlessness has become normalised.

In Chapter Two, I examine surrealism and film: film was an important medium for the surrealists because of its resemblance to the dream. I consider the concept of surrealist montage, and relate this to editing through a discussion of *Un Chien Andalou* (1929). I also consider how psychoanalytic techniques potentially correlate with surrealist film form. Chapter Three traces the history of magical realism and draws on the link between the visuality of the earliest version of magical realism in Weimar Germany and film. I consider the ways the term has migrated from literature into film by identifying three specific applications of the term to film, but conclude that while there is an undoubted influence of magical realism on film, there is no definitive body of films that rest easily in this category.

The last three chapters consider specific case studies in which I examine the work of three filmmakers in light of surrealism and magical realism, and the relationship between film form and representation. My discussions highlight film editing and each chapter places particular emphasis on one specific aspect of discontinuity in editing: space, time and the body in frame. Chapter Four focuses on Czech animator and surrealist, Jan Švankmajer and I explore his surreality in relation to his representation of the body. The integration of different styles of animation, as well as the merging of live-action and animation facilitate the interrogation of the body on screen and communicate an underlying transgression. In Chapter Five, I highlight the temporal dimension of

editing in my discussion of memory and fantasy in relation to trauma in a recent South African film, *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* (1999) by Teboho Mahlatsi. The film is marked by a persistent interruptions which communicate a traumatic past and violent present. Chapter Six also examines intrusions of fantasy in relation to the representation of contested space in Palestinian film, by considering Elia Suleiman's *Divine Intervention* (2003). I identify different layers of filmic space and consider these in relation to the socio-political experience in Palestine; I also consider the idea of "psychological occupation" as the place where the psychological and the spatial meet.

Disruptive narrative and deviant realisms can be found in numerous examples not included in this study: interrupted editing in the films of Jean-Luc Godard and Fellini; interrupted realism in later Buñuel or in Neil Jordan's work, particularly in the context of postcolonial Ireland; infusions of dark fantasy in Powell and Pressburger and in the work of Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro amongst many others. But each filmmaker in my selection has forged a specific relationship between form, fantasy and context that I examine; more importantly, the areas that I have chosen to focus on are further illuminated by considering them in relation to the others.

Rather than an overambitious totalising exposition, this study presents a suggestive juxtaposition of sites of disruption in film. In order to explore how these are realised in art, I consider the self-conscious play of montage and the deliberate integration of non-linearity and anti-narrative tactics. Zamora and Faris point out that "[i]n magical realist texts, ontological disruption serves the purpose of political and cultural disruption" (1995, p. 3). Correspondingly, I consider underlying socio-political unsteadiness in relation to Jameson's "very provisional hypothesis" (1986, p. 311) which locates magical realism as an interstitial mode, potentially capable of reconciling disruptive experience with representation. The different areas of interest in this study all share a common concern with opposites, with borders and with juxtaposition. Like the surrealist obsession with integrating the dream and the quotidian, and like the borders that connect and divide Palestine and Israel, this study holds together for consideration the modernist with the postmodern, realism with the phantasmagorical, the objective with the subjective, and the political with the aesthetic.

Two distinct lines of enquiry meet in this study: realism and its variants such as surrealism and magical realism, and questions around the theory and practice of film editing. These are for the most part explored in terms of the formal construction of realism, and the textual strategies and techniques for deviations from established conventions of realism in film. I use magical realism and surrealism as a lens through which to read contemporary world cinema in order to explore how the form of the film functions to communicate elusive experience. This thesis does not present a case for any direct influence of surrealism or magical realism on contemporary world cinema but rather hopes to present a suggestive montage which allows different films to be read in the light of each other.

Chapter One

Editing the Real: Seamlessness and realism in film

This chapter discusses the relationship between editing and realism. I begin by tracing how film history and theory have drawn a distinction between editing and the camera by aligning editing with artifice and the shot with realism. However, the artifice of editing, its potential for illusion, can also be used to communicate a more convincing realism. The chapter tracks the relationship between editing and realism: it considers the realism/illusion divide in relation to the Lumière Brothers and Georges Méliès and then proceeds to Kracauer's distinction between the realist and formalist tendencies in film, drawing on Bazin. Briefly, I consider how Soviet montage and the beginnings of continuity editing conceptualised different relationships between editing and reality. Continuity editing is the foundation of classical and contemporary mainstream narrative film; its conventions are standardised, and in conjunction with viewer expectations, it creates the effect of realism in cinema by creating the illusion of seamlessness. I argue that the idea of seamless editing has extended to the conceptualisation of the process of editing itself. In this way, space, time, point-of-view and the position of the viewer are all manipulated through the conventions of continuity editing in order to achieve an illusion of seamlessness, and I analyse sequences from Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964) and *Psycho* (1960) to illustrate this.¹ But these examples also indicate how classical Hollywood cinema permits deviations from the conventions of continuity editing without compromising the overall continuity of the film. Contemporary mainstream film, while

¹ Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson locate classical Hollywood between 1917 to 1960 (see Bordwell et al. 1985). Even though *Marnie* and *Psycho* were both made at the tail end of classical Hollywood, Hitchcock is one of the foremost filmmakers of the period.

maintaining continuity editing as narrative foundation, is normalising increasing amounts of interruption and thereby shifting viewer expectations of realism.

Introduction

Russian theorist, Jurij Lotman, pinpoints one of the issues that has vexed discussions of cinematic realism:

The world of cinema is extremely close to the visible appearance of life.

The illusion of authenticity, as we have seen, is one of its integral properties. But this world has one rather strange feature; it always consists, not of all reality, but of a segment carved into the shape of the screen (Lotman 1976, p. 23).

Film theory and history have attempted to negotiate the divide between the illusionary and realist potential of the screen. Both of these terms, illusion,² can be understood in too many ways; sometimes they indicate opposing tendencies and at others, as the quotation from Jurij Lotman suggests, they converge. This chapter explores these concepts, particularly different understandings of cinematic realism, in relation to film editing. One of the classic discussions of realism considers the different effects of an emphasis on shot and on sequence.³ Focusing on the unbroken shot highlights its photographic qualities, thereby emphasising the camera's ability to reproduce the appearance of the world in a moving image. The sequence, a combination of shots arranged together, is necessarily more compromised by human interpretation.⁴ The artifice of editing, through its attention to form, has been associated with illusion and

² Pam Morris (2003) discusses the slipperiness of the term "realism".

³ See Daniel Morgan's essay on Bazin for an argument for the continuing value of classical theories despite advances in digital technology (Morgan 2006).

⁴ The photographic qualities of the camera of course involve some selection and interpretation; rather than a rigid divide between camera and editing, views here have tended to emphasize one above the other. See Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' for a discussion on the photographic image (1967). See also Maya Deren 'Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality' (2004) for a discussion which simultaneously values the photographic qualities of the camera, but uses motion effects to explore and reveal the nature of movement. See also Higgins (1991).

fantasy, while the unmediated shot has been considered to have a closer relationship with reality.⁵

But editing can also be used in order to effect realism. The illusion of cinema can refer to the spectacular or fantastic content, but it can also indicate the realistic impression that cinema can project, and this owes much to the use of specific editing techniques. Because this study is especially concerned with the deliberate breaking down of realism and the possible emergence of variants of fantasy in relation to editing, it is necessary to ground the broader discussion through an examination of how editing has been established as the foundation of realism in the last century. There are two key developments in the history of editing and both of these effected divergent forms of realism: Soviet montage and continuity editing. These paths forged distinct relationships with reality and editing and continue to dominate the contemporary understanding of the history and function of editing. But as these forms were consolidated, some experimental forms emerged and moved away from these techniques in search of disruption – this is evident in Dada and surrealist films. Surrealism in particular drew on and undermined dominant techniques in order to communicate its concerns around the unconscious, the dream and the marvellous.⁶ While the heritage of editing is usually traced back to Soviet montage and Griffith's innovations in continuity editing, surrealism may be seen as the rebellious younger sibling, which has left its own legacy of disruption and discontinuity, allowing alternatives to realism to emerge. Later chapters explore the significance of surrealism, while this chapter considers how editing has been employed in the service of realism. My examination of editing as foundation of realism in this chapter discusses how continuity editing has been conceptualised, and in particular, how the concept of seamlessness relates to ideas of the editing process as “natural”. Seamlessness – the idea of editing as invisible and continuous so that it does not interrupt the viewer's experience of the film – is the definitive characteristic of the way in which continuity editing creates the effect of realism in fictive cinema as it communicates spatial and temporal coherence

⁵ This coincides with Bazin's distinction which recognises two basic categories in discussions of realism in film from the 1920s to 1940s: “the resources of montage” and “the plastics of the image”. These relate to his recognition of two distinct trends in cinema, those “who put their faith in the image and those who put their faith in reality” (Bazin 1967, p. 24).

⁶ See Chapter Two for a discussion of surrealism and discontinuity editing.

and a unified perspective. This chapter considers how small disruptions in editing were absorbed by classical Hollywood cinema and how contemporary mainstream film increasingly incorporates narrative disruption.

Editing and realism in film history: shot and sequence

Film theory and history frequently refer to the distinctive approaches of the Lumière Brothers and Georges Méliès as the origin of the divide between fantasy and realism in cinema; Kracauer draws on this distinction in order to clarify his divide between the “realist” and “formative” tendencies in cinema (Kracauer 1960, p. 30).⁷ Lumière and Méliès are usually cited to illustrate the persistent rift in cinema caused by these conflicting impulses and evident since its inception.⁸ The preoccupation with capturing reality on film is usually traced back to the Lumière brothers, and this is contrasted to the more fantastic alternative initiated by Méliès. But rather than pinpointing them as separate, the work of these two early filmmakers reveal the extent to which realism and illusion are intricately bound up in each other. The distinction between Lumière and Méliès also begins to explain film form and its relationship to the representation of reality through a contrasting emphasis on either editing or the capacity of the camera to document the world. But even as editing and camera have been viewed as opposing approaches to realism, the relationship between shot or sequence and realism is more nuanced than is immediately evident.

In terms of style, the Lumière brothers are recognised for recording the world around them through short vignettes. These are drawn from their daily lives: workers leaving the Lumière factory in *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895), a baby eating

⁷ Méliès is best known for *Le voyage dans la lune* (A Trip to the Moon) made in 1902 although he made hundreds of films. The Lumière brothers are usually credited with what is considered the first film, *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895).

⁸ For a discussion of the Lumière brothers and Méliès see Armes, *Film and Reality* (1974); Wexman, *A History of Film* (2006); Fairservice, *Film Editing* (2001); Bordwell and Thompson *Film History* (Bordwell and Thompson 1994, ; 2002). In addition to Kracauer, these writers also discuss the early filmmakers in relation to realism and illusion. Heath refers to Lumière as a specific example of naïve realism which considers the camera able to reflect reality – “nature caught in the act”, as one of the early spectators is reputed to have said (Heath 1981, p. 25).

its breakfast in *Le Repas de bébé* (1895), a train entering the station in *Arrivé d'un train en gare à La Ciotat* (1895). Méliès, on the other hand, is considered the father of illusion. In order to achieve his illusions, Méliès switched off his camera and then turned it on to an altered mise-en-scène, thus editing in-camera and urging his images to perform in ways permissible only through tricks of technology. The Lumière Brothers, whose interests were far more prosaic, let the camera run. But Lumière and Méliès did not develop their particular styles of film simultaneously. Méliès responded to the Lumière initiative and should be considered as a further step in the development of cinematic language and its complex relationship with reality.

These two strands are marked as distinct impulses and by pinpointing the beginning of cinema as the beginning of the divide, film theory has narrated the inevitability of these opposing impulses as well as the idea that they are irreconcilable; fantasy and realism, Lumière and Méliès, story and documentary are established as dichotomies. But their separateness has never been entirely sustained. Illusion was present in the Lumière films too: *Demolition d'un Mur* (1895) plays out the demolition of the wall, but is followed by the reverse projection showing the wall rebuilding itself. Furthermore, the narrative element to these short films begins to interpret the experiences of their subjects and the line between document and fiction blurs even more.⁹ Film editor Don Fairservice (2001) points out that the first film, the workers leaving the Lumière factory, begins with the opening of the gates and ends with them closing, thereby imposing a structure to the scene of the workers leaving to go home. Some of the later films show even more evidence of being staged, and this is particularly evident in *L'Arroseur arrosé* where a gardener is squirted by a boy. Furthermore, these short films, emerging from a tradition of ocular toys of illusion, sought to communicate the marvellous and spectacular nature of cinema.¹⁰ Tom Gunning (2004) reads early silent

⁹ Gunning discusses Maxim Gorky's response to the Lumière films – he was struck by the combination of realistic and non-realistic elements as it indicates a “life deprived of words and of the living spectrum of colours” (Gunning 2004, p. 865). This suggests that rather than a window to another world, early film was more like a trick mirror in a funfair hall.

¹⁰ See Bordwell and Thompson (1994) for a discussion of the zoetrope, praxinoscope and kinoscope, none of which were concerned with document. The development of cinema appears to be less linked to a desire to document and record reality than to a particular relationship between scientific innovation and entertainment.

cinema as a “cinema of attractions” thereby emphasising its spectacular appeal.

Conversely, Méliès’s use of the illusion of film in the service of advertising suggests a more pragmatic approach than is usually attributed to him.¹¹

The Lumière/Méliès myth of origin highlights two factors of importance to this study: from the very beginning of cinema, realism and illusion were entangled. And from the very beginning of cinema, editing has been contrasted with the shot, in this case a proto-long take, and this indicates the formal distinction between realism and fantasy that has underpinned discussions of cinematic realism from early film theory. One of the classic ways of configuring the divide between realism and fantasy, that is, through the distinction between shot and sequence, emerges in an embryonic form with Méliès and Lumière. Considered in this light, the Lumière/Méliès schism is a useful myth of origin whose true benefit is illustrative rather than definitive as it identifies a cinematic schizophrenia from the earliest inception which serves to weight it with the gravity of history.

It is therefore possible to extract at least two related approaches to realism in cinema, and also in film theory, as it developed over the last century: an emphasis on the shot and an emphasis on the sequence. This distinction resonates with what Kracauer has termed the “realist” and “formative” tendencies in cinema (Kracauer 1960). Kracauer’s famous distinction identifies a core tension in film and is frequently used to indicate opposing urges to film as a document of reality and film as illusive. The realist tendency indicates a concern with cinema’s ability to document the world and values the verisimilitude of the image while the formative tendency is more concerned with form, which manipulates and interprets, in order to explore the aesthetic potential of the medium. This can be related back to the split between fiction and documentary cinema but does not necessarily suggest a neat binary opposition between story/formative/sequence set up against documentary/realist/shot. Rather, to consider these together allows for an understanding of the extent to which they are not distinct and illuminates the ways in which they tend to bleed into each other.

¹¹Roy Armes (1974) discusses how Méliès sold mustards and corsets in his “gay, burlesque little films” (pp. 27-8).

While the divide between fiction and documentary is important, there is no simple correlation between the two approaches to realism and these two modes of representation. Documentary cinema can show evidence of a concern with form, and fiction has at times preferred to rely on what the camera sees rather than on how images may be arranged in sequence, as discussions around deep focus suggest:

As practised by Toland and others, deep focus cinematography constituted perhaps the first coherent alternative seen in American films to the editing-centred film theories of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Kuleshov. Whereas to the Russians, the content of the shot was subordinate to the feelings generated by its juxtaposition with those preceding and succeeding it, in deep focus cinematography the individual shot and action recorded within it came to be of primary importance (Ogle cited in Williams 1980, p. 198).

Ogle contrasts the use of deep focus to the juxtaposition of images by referring to Gregg Toland, Orson Welles's preferred cinematographer. The emphasis on camera as a means to realism holds the integrity of the shot as paramount and allows reality to be "revealed" through techniques such as deep focus, long takes and fewer shots. This minimizes the interference of the apparatus, asserts the content as more real, and is thought to allow for a less mediated representation by allowing the viewer freedom to interpret the images. The shot is consolidated as a record, capable of capturing an objective reflection and offering it up to the viewer. When Bazin (1980) suggests that deep focus, lateral depth of field and the long take are preferential techniques for creating the effect of realism in cinema, he implies a particular kind of realism. Bazin's discussion of the long take and depth of field in relation to realism refers to a deeper psychological realism that is considered an improvement on the way that montage, particularly shot reverse-shot, had been used. For Bazin, the increased potential for psychological realism was linked to more ambiguity and increased activity from the viewer (Higgins 1991).

Colin MacCabe, in his study on Godard, pinpoints what is at the heart of Bazin's concern with realism:

In his defence of realism, Bazin is not arguing about film's ability to represent social reality; this is not an argument about whether Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*

is realistic, rather its is an argument that cinema inevitably represents the reality of Laurence Olivier playing *Henry V* before the camera (MacCabe 2004, p. 63). Bazin's interest in the camera's ability to document the world is stripped down to the essentials: the obvious, but easily overlooked, ability of the camera to capture an image of the world before it. Realism in film has been underscored by the tension between this understanding of the fidelity of the camera – the idea that an image can capture the reality before it, whether it is fiction or not – and the arrangement of images in sequence which create meaning in conjunction with other images. Editing has been viewed as artifice because “the resources of editing take the activity of film away from the real world, propelling it to ‘art’ and ‘combination’” (Williams 1980, p. 21).¹² Editing can be considered an external force which imposes a logic and order on the images and therefore potentially compromises the objectivity of the image by manipulating the viewer through the arrangement and organisation of images. It obscures the relationship between representation and reality by imposing an interpretation. But to regard editing as an external logic imposed on the material could implicitly suggest a purity of the shot: the belief that the authenticity of the image derives from its ability to reflect the real without any mediation; that the image indicates the thing itself. This prods at the hornet's nest at the centre of the debates around realism: there are various understandings of what realism is and how it may be achieved. This study considers specific ways in which alternatives to realism are uncovered and conveyed through interruption and interference editing techniques in contemporary world cinema.

Soviet montage and continuity editing

The emphasis on editing as an approach to representing reality does not emerge from a coherent position as there are many different ways of conceptualising editing as exemplified by the contrasting techniques of Griffith and Eisenstein. Both Soviet

¹² Christopher Williams discusses this in relation to Grierson. Grierson recognised the advantages of editing and montage sequences in his films but he held to the belief that the documentary image was better able to signify the real (Williams 1980).

montage and continuity editing in early Hollywood developed particular approaches to realism through film form. Both emphasise editing but they offer vastly different ways of conceiving of how it should work. Continuity editing is usually considered the foundation of contemporary mainstream editing and realism in cinema, and is traced back to Griffith's innovations in editing (Dancyger 2002). Following Griffith, certain methods have been standardised in order to communicate the images as seamlessly as possible. These include the orchestration of longer and closer shots: Griffith's contribution was to invest film language with a dramatic function; his innovations in editing began to communicate emotional and psychological verisimilitude.¹³

Three of the key figures in Soviet montage, Eisenstein, Vertov and Pudovkin, have varying ideas of how editing should function. Fundamentally, Soviet montage ascribes a more associative function to editing but there are different ways in which this has been understood. Pudovkin claims that the "foundation of film art is editing" (Pudovkin 1935, p. xiii). His formulations around film construction are premised on the idea of a film as "built" through the sequencing of shots; "soulless photographs" (1935, p. 2) are considered dead material until animated through the editing process. Pudovkin therefore views editing as an external logic that is imposed on the shots as it animates them. Pudovkin's conceptualisation of editing as linkage contrasts to Eisenstein's emphasis on collision and conflict; what he termed a "montage of attractions" (Eisenstein 1943, p. 166). Eisenstein conceived of montage where editing, as a dialectic, is the logic of film, as meaning arises through juxtaposition and allusion. Here editing is the internal dynamic through which film meaning is determined. For Eisenstein, montage was a way of communicating reality through its ability to represent while simultaneously breaking down and reconstructing.

Christopher Williams recognises how Eisensteinian montage can also be considered a form of realism:

[F]or Eisenstein and others who have drawn on Marxist ideas it is necessary to displace the real world, which is itself a bourgeois ideology, and to replace it with

¹³ See Dancyger (2002) for a discussion on Griffith's developments in editing in terms of realising drama. See also Fairservice (2001) and Reisz (1953).

a range of other possibilities. This displacement, however, is itself carried out in the name of realism” (1980, p. 21).

This suggests a different kind of realism, one that rejects what is usually considered real as illusion or façade and instead aims to uncover an alternative. Eisenstein’s realism rejected the mimetic qualities of film in favour of accessing experience that might not be immediately available.¹⁴ Vertov, who developed the concept of the “kino-eye” shared Eisenstein’s disdain for mimesis and instead sought to capture “life itself” (Michelson 1984, p. xxxvii). Again, this suggests an attempt to represent experience which eluded a straightforward representation.

The conceptualisation of editing and reality in Soviet montage therefore contrasts with how it is understood in Hollywood cinema. In Hollywood, it is illusion that constitutes realism. Here, believability becomes the measure of realism. This follows an idea of realism as an imitation of reality, which is contrasted to the belief in the integration of reality. Classical Hollywood narrative tells stories in what is best described as a realistic way, thereby smudging the idea of realism into what appears to be real. Bazin’s description of realist cinema as “any system of expression or narrative procedure tending to make more reality appear on the screen” (Bazin 1976, p. 27) indicates a core confusion – what does it mean to have more reality appear on screen? “Realism” is deployed in too many different ways, plotted along too many axes. The term attempts to pin down the elusive; it indicates a shifting referent. The exact parameters of verisimilitude in film shift and blur when considering the different levels at which film can operate. Bazin says of the shifting understandings of realism:

[The *realist* tendency] has been through many mutations, but the forms in which it has appeared have survived only in proportion to the amount of aesthetic intervention (or discovery) – conscious or not, calculated or innocent – involved.

There is not one but several realisms. Each era looks for its own, that is to say the

¹⁴ Wollen (1979) writes about how the realism issue is caught up in Eisenstein’s work. On one hand, it was “proclaimed in principle as arch-realistic” and on the other it was quite removed from reality (p. 56).

technique and aesthetics which can best capture it, arrest and restore whatever one wishes to capture of reality (Bazin 1980, p. 41).¹⁵

The approach to realism through editing is further complicated by different positions regarding what constitutes a more accurate representation of reality. Emotional, psychological verisimilitude and dramatic intention are all different ways of measuring a representation of reality. Then there are also additional film elements like mise-en-scène, film stock and subject matter which communicate something about the fidelity of the represented world, further dividing discussions of realism into form and content. Despite the antithetical aims of an emphasis on sequence and on shot, there are stylistic devices that may converge: both, to varying extents, involve an effacement of filmic technique. Unpacking conceptualisations of editing begins to map out the complex terrain of representation and screen technique.

Continuity editing and classical realism

Editing is most immediately recognised in filmmaking as the practices of joining shots in order to structure a narrative. These practices have become standardised, particularly through continuity editing. Continuity editing has frequently been associated with realism in cinema and particularly with classical Hollywood cinema. For Stam, the effects of the “classical realist” text are constructed through:

... a set of formal parameters involving practices of editing, camerawork, and sound which promote the appearance of spatial and temporal continuity. This continuity was achieved, in the classical Hollywood film, by an etiquette for introducing new scenes (a choreographed progression from establishing shot to medium shot to close shot); conventional devices for evoking the passage of time (dissolves, iris effects); editing techniques to smooth over the transition from shot to shot (the 30-degree rule, position matches, direction matches, movement

¹⁵ I have worked from two different translations of Bazin’s essay on William Wyler. The first, translated by Hugh Gray, is reprinted in Christopher Williams’s 1980 realism reader, and the second, translated by Alain Piette and Bert Cardullo is collected in *Bazin at Work* (Bazin and Cardullo 1997).

matches, inserts to cover up unavoidable discontinuities); and devices for implying subjectivity (interior monologue, subjective shots, eyeline matches, empathetic music). The classical realist text was “transparent” in that it attempted to efface all traces of the “work of the film”, making it pass for natural (Stam 2000, p. 143).

Because film can appear to mirror the world through resemblance and an attention to detail, the emphasis of the relationship to reality shifts from the fidelity with which the text details the world to the extent to which it hides the mechanisms by which it details the world. The deployment of the term realism in cinema can in this way become a measure of something else: what it means to have more reality appear on screen, as Bazin (1976) puts it, is often to absorb and contain the mechanisms by which the world is portrayed.¹⁶ Again, by concealing its devices, and absorbing deviance into itself, film leads viewers to accept the unity of its representation. By standardising the way that films are put together, it is possible to blur the transitions between shots, between sequences. In this approach, the criteria for realism in classical cinema become less of a dedicated attempt to render a true to life depiction than to hide the devices that alert the viewer to the artifice of film. Robert Stam (2000), although identifying that camerawork and sound function along with editing in order to create an illusion of reality, details in his description mainly the editing techniques that were standardised in order to communicate the classical Hollywood text.

There are overlaps between Stam’s description of the classical realist text and Bordwell and Thompson’s many descriptions of the classical Hollywood text.¹⁷ While the conflation of the classical realist text and classical Hollywood has been questioned, it remains useful for describing a systemised approach to seeing film.¹⁸ But this does not need to be a reductive grid where certain films are forced to fit a definition or meet a checklist of basic requirements; it is not a mechanical conformation of all films made in Hollywood until the 1960s. “Classical Hollywood” which – whether rightly or otherwise

¹⁶ Heath (1981) discusses the containment of techniques, rather than effacement, in ‘Narrative Space’.

¹⁷ See Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson (1985), Bordwell and Thomson (2004), Bordwell and Thompson (1994) and Bordwell (1996).

¹⁸ Christopher Williams (2000) questions the way in which MacCabe’s classical realist text and Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson’s writing on Classical Hollywood cinema merged into one (p. 207).

– has been conflated with “classical realist” may be more fluid, less static, than is sometimes perceived, but it still serves to demarcate a particular attitude towards film production, as well as providing a discursive framework for considering techniques in cinema history. It is more useful to view classical Hollywood in terms of a set of established expectations.

In his criticism of the unquestioned acceptance of “classical continuity editing” Williams asserts that only the most naïve viewer would not notice film technique, that appreciation of technique is itself part of the enjoyment of watching film (2000, p. 213). Certainly, all filmmaking is artifice and even the most carefully concealed techniques are revealed if one looks too closely. However, through standardisation, techniques and devices that are not meant to draw attention will remain in the background thereby facilitating a viewing that does not encourage an awareness of form. The experience of watching many mainstream films is not marked by paying attention to editing – the ideology of good cutting is that it draws attention away from itself, away from the facticity of film. Bad cuts are the cuts that are noticed; good cuts are modest and demure, creating a sense of drama and rhythm, providing shape, pace and structure, communicating space and time, but never drawing attention to themselves. They facilitate the communication of a totalised text whose joins are seamless and invisible. This, like the idea of editing as intuitive, mysterious and organic, is another way of constructing a mythology around the technical construction of realism.

The normalisation of continuity editing

The relationship between the filmmaker and the apparatus further illuminates the relationship between film and its resemblance to reality. Although there are various conventions and practical considerations that determine how a cut works, production lore suggests that editing is conceived of as an intuitive logic, rather than any kind of empirical knowing. Editing as an “instinctive” activity, involving some kind of “mysterious” communion with the material underpins much of the discourse around it. For example, Anne Coates – one of the grand figures of Hollywood editing – describes

the process as “instinctive. You make it up in your head. In the bath” (Oldham, 1995, p. 166). The idea of editing as mysterious or magical born out of a gut feeling is the basic premise of many film editors.¹⁹ Mary-Anne Doane writes of the naturalising discourse surrounding sound editing which is considered by practitioners as an unspeakable knowledge – a knowing accessed through intuition, acting in concert with the material and resisting description (Doane 1980). She points out how this functions to totalise the impressions of sound, the viewer perceives its function as a composite whole rather than in bits and pieces. Similarly, the idea of seamlessness as an aesthetic choice in editing, becomes part of the conceptualisation of the whole process of editing and of the editor:

Underappreciated. Most people don't know what editors do. People in the movie business don't know what editors do. Editors are perceived as special people who work in dark rooms away from the madding crowd... we're in our dark cutting room all day, appearing only at night with the rushes. We are kind of gray eminences on the production, not really seen as part of the regular production crew (Lottman cited in Oldham 1995, pp. 232-3).

As cuts are the invisible part of the film, the editors are the invisible people in the film process who have access to some kind of arcane knowledge.

Film editor, Walter Murch (2001), identifies a key cutting point as the moment when characters blink. This naturalises the cutting process, making it as obvious as blinking; Murch considers that blinking is “somehow geared more towards our emotional state” (2001, p. 62). The impetus to cut is then something that is not imposed on material from the outside, but occurs organically, from the actors, but also from the editor, who is in tune with the actors and the celluloid.²⁰ This way of conceptualising editing bridges the

¹⁹ This emerges strongly in the writing of Walter Murch, an editor and sound editor who has featured in two books about editing. Murch wrote one, *In the Blink of an Eye* (2001) and the other by Michael Ondaatje, *Conversations* (2002) is a series of conversations which resulted in their U.K. book tour of 2002; it also refers to his film *The Conversation* (1974). Murch is something of a celebrity editor, an unusual beast since the work of editors is usually to hide their techniques rather than distinguish themselves to audiences through clever cutting.

²⁰ An interesting point here is the shift from film cutting to digital editing. Film cutting is more physical – it involves more physical action, takes up more physical space and the film is previewed by hand-cranking the machine which is a different experience to hitting a play button. In my observation, editors prefer to have some knowledge and experience of the physicality of cutting on film in order to make sense of the more abstracted digital technology, and similarly, editing software like AVID, Final

divide between the editor and the material who become unified in an action that is seen as natural and expected. This is not unusual: filmmaking is often considered in terms of the relationship of the apparatus to the body, in some ways, it considers the apparatus as an extension of the body. Tarkovsky, for example, speaks of the “blood vessels” (1987, p. 114) of film, thereby imbuing it with life and making a connection to the corporeal. Coates talks about the ways in which her editing works to find the “heart” in a piece which again attempts to naturalise the process and conventions of editing (Oldham, 1995, p. 154). It also attempts to account for how editing is instinctive: if it is in the body, then it must be a natural, even primal, logic that allows these cuts to depict a realistic view of the world.

The ways in which editing is drawn into the body are echoed in discussions of the ways in which editing works to mimic mental processes. Lindgren (1963), like Bazin, considers that editing can function to simulate psychological perception, so that what the viewer is presented with is a “normal” trajectory of piecing together visual information in a way that mimics the processes by which we perceive the world:

The fundamental psychological justification of editing as a method of representing the physical world around us lies in the fact that it reproduces this mental process in which one visual image follows another as our attention is drawn to this point and to that in our surroundings. In so far as the film is photographic and reproduces movement, it can give us a life-like semblance of what we see in so far as it employs editing, it can exactly reproduce the *manner* in which we normally see it (Lindgren 1963, p. 62).

Lindgren explains the normalisation of Hollywood mainstream editing as a cinematic realisation which follows the logic of perception. Bazin identifies that classical editing “implicitly corresponds to a particular natural mental process that makes us accept the sequence of shots without being conscious of the cutter’s hand at work” (Bazin 1997, p. 7) and suggests that the viewer’s awareness of the shots is diminished because of this. The viewer – and filmmaker – is therefore less likely to question the logic as imposed because it resembles a natural process. This line of conceptualising editing – as natural

Cut and Premiere all use the language (for, example, “bins”) and left to right working style of manual cutting.

because it coincides with the body and is psychologically justified – works to align realism with film processes because it suggests that this is how “normal” translates to film language. Moreover, as the conventions of editing become established they forge a dynamic relationship with viewer expectations. Edits that conform to these conventions are more likely to go unnoticed by a viewer who has become familiar with a dominant film language. This constructs a circular argument as the idea that continuity editing is somehow normal becomes the reason for establishing it as the norm. But Bazin also considers that “analytical cutting or classical editing was founded on the illusion of psychological realism” (Bazin 1997) and argues that breaking down the scene into composite parts over-determines the film’s meaning. Opting for minimal editing and allowing the viewer to decide how to watch, is according to Bazin, no less psychologically grounded (1967). Similarly, Bazin’s discussion identifies deep focus as more conducive to realism because of the way it allows the eyes to change focal point, thereby working in communion with the body in order to effect a realistic representation. Again there is that understanding of realism of film as grounded in natural processes and therefore sustaining a kind of natural order. There is a strong connection between this sense of film as following some kind of natural order and the illusion of realism in film. They both suggest a tendency towards cohesion, a totalising impulse that does not accommodate any irregularities. These ways of articulating the filmmaking process presuppose its unity of expression and ability to represent a coherent reality. This is the premise by which seamlessness can be read into continuity editing.

But the idea of editing as intuitive or instinctive coincides with the totalising effect of seamlessness in relation to broader questions of realism. In his study on cinematic realism, Iain Aitken describes how totality in film was “important” for Bazin: because like all the theorists within the intuitionist realist school, he believes that the summoning up of micro-totalities is important in a world in which modernity has chipped away at our experience, desire and need for totalising modes of experience... the realist film image is also capable of rendering this other essential aspect of the intuitionist realist credo – an experience of totality... (Aitken 2006, p. 179).

Aitken in his discussion of totality in relation to Bazin, Kracauer and Grierson suggests that the seamlessness of film creates not only a sense of realism in film, but attunes one to a more transcendental realism as it functions in an intuitive way.

Realism and viewer expectations

The idea of realism in film has shifted across different times and contexts but viewer expectations remain a constant determining factor. Standards of realism from classical to contemporary Hollywood have changed; the contemporary viewer is less likely to be persuaded by the realism of classical Hollywood than of contemporary Hollywood. Elements of film such as acting, mise en scène and to some extent, editing trends and techniques, have developed over the decades and viewers have become accustomed to a different, but related, realist aesthetic.²¹ Conventions and standardised practices are determined by the constancy in reception: it is only through repetition and familiarisation that something may be established as the norm. Therefore, if we accept that realism is, in part, determined by the use of particular film conventions, the influence of viewer expectations in determining realism becomes clear: the effacement of technique corresponds to the viewer's familiarity with particular effects and conventions. But the relationship between the viewer and the realist film is not limited to becoming accustomed to a particular aesthetic. The way that the viewer is positioned in relation to a film impacts on how it may be received as realist.

As the following sequence analyses from *Marnie* (1964) and *Psycho* (1960) begin to demonstrate, film works to position the viewer in particular ways in order to create and maintain the illusion of realism. The 180-degree line that classical editing maintains, is reminiscent of the proscenium arch of naturalistic theatre – the viewer is invited to the inside of an invisible wall thereby reinforcing the impression of realism.²² The shifting position of the viewer from silent to sound cinema, from classical to contemporary

²¹ See Phillips (2003) for a discussion of viewing expectations in relation to early cinema.

²² Most discussions of the conventions of continuity editing explain the 180-degree principle. See Fairservice (2001) and Bordwell and Thompson (2004) for example.

cinema signifies a different approach to cinematic realism as the language of film developed alongside the emerging technological processes. In early silent cinema, the position of the viewer resembled that of the theatre spectator as the framing was often a direct translation of a filmed stage. The viewer observed the screen as though it were a stage and it was the development of continuity editing combined with the advent of sound perspective that allowed the range of viewer positions to shift until the viewer was inserted inside the *mise en scène*. The accustomed location of the viewer inside the film text sets up expectations of what is real and what is not.

Some deviations from continuity editing are absorbed by viewer expectations. While continuity editing suggests a cinema with no interruptions, where all cuts match and attempt an anticipatory logic, we find that there are interruptions at this level: there may well be some jump cutting or crossing the line without the overall realism of the film being compromised; the montage sequence in mainstream film functions as acceptable deviance. On a small and perhaps obvious scale, the jump-cut is an example of an edit that potentially interferes with the viewer's expectations. It interrupts a cohesive perspective by following one shot with another which falls within the same 30-degree axis of action.²³ The viewer's sense of a coherent point-of-view is jarred by the use of a shot that does not preserve continuity in perspective. Similarly, the 180-degree line preserves spatial continuity by structuring the onscreen space in a coherent way. But the 180-degree line is also important for maintaining continuity in point-of-view. Crossing the line interrupts the fluidity of the viewer's reception of film by bouncing to the opposite perspective. Editing conventions allow for a character to break the axis of action by moving across the screen, thereby taking the viewer along and revising how the viewer is perceiving space in film. Crossing the line and jump cutting are more obvious examples of a disconnection with realism as a result of interruption in the text, but this disruption works at more subtle levels too. There are more embedded ways of undermining the realist effect through more subtle distress to the coherent point-of-view of the imaginary observer, for example, disrupting identification and alternating between a subjective audience position and an estranged one as a means of dramatically engaging

²³ For a detailed discussion of these rules and conventions see Bernstein, *Film Production* (1994) as well as Fairservice (2001), Button (2002) and Dancyger (2002).

the viewer and then distancing them.²⁴ Similarly, there are subtle ways of undermining the usual temporal and spatial dynamics of film, and an exploration of these is one of the primary aims of this thesis. Therefore, the variations in the standardised system function as deviant according to the extent to which they are outside of the parameters of viewer expectations. But these kinds of deviances can be absorbed without comprising the overall realist effect of a film; viewer expectations can accommodate minimal disruption. Furthermore, realism can be plotted along emotional, psychological, dramatic and social axes and the unresolved debate about the kind of verisimilitude that constitutes realism complicates a simple understanding of classical Hollywood as realist cinema.

Within continuity editing, there is room for montage sequences that are not directly part of things, but even these do not really disturb the flow of the narrative. In classical Hollywood, viewer expectations incorporate the montage sequence – usually to indicate passing time but possibly with a dramatic function – as long as it accords with established patterns of how this may work.

Two things the editor must guard against. Firstly, a montage sequence operates, so to speak, on a different plane of reality from straight narrative. If it is to fulfil its practical function of unobtrusively filling certain gaps in the story, then it must do so quickly. A montage sequence which becomes unduly long unnecessarily interferes with the conviction of the rest of the narrative and thus destroys the effect it was made for. Secondly, the montage sequence must be conceived as a whole... music is generally used to bind the whole series of images together and to underline the rhythm of the passage of events. A badly planned montage with bits of realistic dialogue alternating with superimposed general images can become a confusing affectation (Reisz 1953, p. 114).

Karel Reisz's *The Technique of Film Editing* was written in the 1950s, revised with Gavin Millar, and has been reissued many times. For the most part, it reads as a quaint example of an outdated approach to editing, a British editor's bible, along the same lines as the American editor's "how to" manuals from classical Hollywood. Today it is still revered by editors even though its "rules" for cutting are not taken at face value. The

²⁴ Later chapters explore examples of these.

book reveals a lot about how editing was conceived in the 1950s, which sheds light on the relationship between the rules of continuity editing and its relationship to realism. It also indicates, to a large extent, that little has really changed in terms of the basic principles of the practice of continuity editing. Reisz clearly values minimal disruption: continuity-link montage,²⁵ or time-lapse sequences, are there for a purely practical use and should not impose on the narrative. If these techniques become obtrusive, then the realism of the film is compromised. Classical realism therefore makes allowance for some deviance within its standardised system; deviations are absorbed into the overarching continuity of the film.

Editing in time and space

One of the distinguishing features of film is its movement through time and space both within the shot and in sequence. The spatial-temporal movement of film determines to a large extent the relationship between film and reality.²⁶ Editing conventions and practices work to construct a plausible sense of time and of spatial geography. While the temporal aspect in editing is important in determining the rhythm and pace of the film, the affinity for real time within the shot and the contrasting ellipsis, or possible expansion of time, through editing negotiates how realism works at this level.

Continuity editing has standardised various techniques for communicating a fluid sense of time and space in film. It needs to orientate the viewer within the boundaries of the fictional world as well as convey the sense that this world is “real”. The onscreen world must be constructed as implicitly continuous but presented by means of the finite frame. Therefore, editing needs to link up off-screen and onscreen space in a way that

²⁵ A specific example would be the Vorkapich, named after the editor who popularised this technique. Evan Lottman describes this: “superimposed shots of spinning locomotive wheels, newspaper headlines whirling around and coming at you. They used to say, ‘We’ll do a Vorkapich here’ or ‘We’ll Vorkapich out of this.’ I thought this technique was kind of old fashioned and corny” (Oldham 1995, pp. 222-3). Reisz makes a distinction between this kind of montage sequence and the montage sequence which works towards a dramatic effect by examining a montage sequence from *Citizen Kane* (1941).

²⁶ See Noël Burch for a discussion on how different kinds of edits work to sustain spatial temporal continuity (Burch 1973); Stephen Heath discusses narrative space and coherence (Heath 1981).

coheres for the viewer by constructing whole space out of the component parts that are visible to the viewer. The most conventional method by which this is achieved is to introduce a scene using an establishing shot, and then arrange the subsequent shots in order to cue the viewer to identify the space and how it works. The classical technique is to move from long to close as this communicates the story by establishing the scene in space. The viewer infers a spatial relationship by filling in the blanks of the spaces that are not seen. Similarly, directional matches, that is ensuring continuity in screen direction, and eyeline matches create and preserve spatial continuity as they cue the viewer's reading how characters are positioned in space (Burch, 1973).

But space is not simply physical, it also organises ideas, characters and action in a film and can therefore be arranged in order to communicate a more symbolic layer. This is evident in many of Hitchcock's films which, despite his adventurous and innovative streak, remains rooted in the Hollywood tradition of editing. For example, in *Psycho* the opening sequence in the bedroom establishes Marion's character as well as resonating with the other bedrooms in the film, both the anonymous bedrooms of motels where bad girls hide, as well as the inner sanctum in the Bates's house. The motel and the house are contrasted visually with each other, with the house established as an ominous looming presence; the abode of the unpleasant, unseen mother. Arbogast enters the house and is killed for it, while Lila's discovery of the house is literally a discovery of Norman. She finds his different selves through the physical space, for example, his little boy self, until she finds what is hidden in the aptly named fruit cellar. The house and motel function as the collision between festering womb and unsound mind and communicate some of the thematic concerns of the film.

These spatial associations are linked to the editing in film in various ways. The way the characters are located spatially is determined by editing. The function of editing with regard to space also determines how the viewer enters into the space of the film and into the action that takes place between the characters. The following scene from *Marnie*

shows how continuity editing establishes the space, the interaction between Mark Rutland and Marnie, and arranges the space at a more symbolic level too.²⁷

Transcript 1: Instinctual behaviour (*Marnie*)

	Shot	Sound/Dialogue	Edit
1	Establishing shot exterior Rutland building; car park empty but for one car.	<i>Marnie</i> theme music	Straight cut (all cuts straight unless otherwise indicated)
2	ELS Marnie walking down corridor		
3	MLS Marnie approaching office door. She knocks.	Knocking; Mark: Come in Mrs Taylor.	
4	MS Marnie closing door	Marnie: Good afternoon Mr Rutland.	
5	MLS Mark behind desk, zoom		eyeline
6	MS Marnie walking to desk		
7	MS shelf of artefacts and figurines, pan POV		eyeline
8	MS Marnie looking at artefacts		
9	As 7, but closer	Mark: Are you interested	eyeline
10	As 6, she looks at him and back to the shelf	in pre-Columbian art, Mrs Taylor?	
11	MLS Mark, looking at shelf	Mark: Those were collected by my wife. She's dead. The only things of hers I've kept.	
12	MCU Marnie,		
13	CU of a framed picture of Sophie	Mark: And that's Sophie.	Cut on Marnie's open mouth; graphic match; eyeline
14	MCU Marnie	Mark: She's a jaguarandi.	eyeline
15	MCU Mark	South American. I, uh, trained her.	eyeline
16	MCU Marnie	Marnie: Oh, what did you train her to do?	
17	MCU Mark	Mark: To trust me.	eyeline
18	MCU Marnie	Marnie: Is that all?	eyeline
19	MCU Mark	Mark: That's a great deal –for a jaguarandi.	eyeline
20	MCU Marnie	Mark: Shall we get to work?	Eyeline

²⁷ For interesting discussions on *Marnie* and *Psycho*, see the compilation of Raymond Bellour's essays (Bellour and Penley c2000).

21	MS Mark and Marnie, each on edge of frame	Mark: You can use the typewriter over there. I want an original and one copy of this. If you can't decipher any of this, speak up. I typed it myself and I'm a very creative typist.	
22	Zoom to MLS. Marnie turns, walks to desk while reading. Mark watches her from behind. She sits at the desk	Marnie: Arboreal predators of the Brazilian rain forest.	Match cut
23	MCU Mark sitting down at desk	Mark: Before I was drafted into Rutland's, Mrs Taylor, I had notions of being a zoologist.	Jump-cut, but relieved by difference in shot scale
24	MS Marnie at typewriter, side view	I still try to keep up with my field. MT: Zoos?	
25	MCU Mark, closer	Mark: Instinctual behaviour.	eyeline
26	MCU Marnie	Marnie: Oh. Does zoology include people, Mr Rutland?	eyeline
27	MCU Mark, closer	Mark: Well in a way. It includes all the animal ancestors from whom man derived his instincts.	eyeline
28	CU Marnie	Marnie: Ladies' instincts too?	eyeline
29	CU Mark	Mark: Well that paper deals with the instincts of predators.	eyeline
30	CU Marnie, closer	Mark: what you might call the criminal class of the animal world.	eyeline
31	CU Mark, ring showing	Lady animals figure very largely as predators.	eyeline Long pause at end of shot
32	CU Marnie. She looks at him and slowly looks away		
33	CU Mark, smiling slightly, fingering his neck		eyeline
34	MS Marnie inserts sheet of paper into typewriter		
35	MLS Mark. Window lights up with lightning	Music starts. Sound of thunder	

The space is organised along classical lines in this scene: it opens with an establishing shot showing the exterior space of the scene, and the anticipatory logic of continuity editing combined with viewer expectations locate it as such. The next two shots continue to locate the film in space by showing Marnie walking through the general office area, but also give temporal clues as the building is empty; this is clearly the Saturday afternoon that Mark mentioned in a previous scene. By showing Marnie approaching

Mark's door after the shot of her walking down the corridor, the viewer pieces the two together and begins to gain a relational understanding of the onscreen space and is able to infer how off-screen space works. In this way, editing helps to map out the spatial geography of a film and allows the viewer to gain a sense of the integrity of the film world. Within Mark's office the editing establishes the office as a complete space primarily by linking three areas: the door and the small desk area where Marnie types; Mark's desk; the display shelf where his dead wife's objects are arrayed. The space is divided and the scene uses these spatial divisions in order to communicate the tension between the characters: for the most part, Marnie remains in one corner of the office between the small desk and the door while Mark commands the centre and blocks the access to the display shelf. The scene is made intimate through the edit and tight framing; the editing reduces the size of the office by cutting between Mark and Marnie in their corners and this is emphasised by the way that the cuts become closer. The wider shots at the end of the scene give an idea of the size of the office, which is much bigger than it initially appears. The establishment of Mark's space at the centre of the office, barricaded behind his desk and Marnie, who is both the intruder and the wild animal, relegated to one corner of the screen, is the spatial realisation of the dynamic between them. Mark is in control, he has the dominant position, it is his office, and Marnie is the lady predator, the object of his scrutiny. The use of shot reverse-shot editing for their dialogue entrenches them in these positions and prevents Marnie and the viewer from accessing the other side of the office which is set up to represent Mark's dead wife; that would be, quite literally, crossing the line.

In the transcribed sequence, there are only two shots of Mark and Marnie together. In shot 21, the two of them are at the edge of the frame, divided by a tall lamp and this taut composition holds the tension between them. In shot 22, Marnie walks away, while Mark watches her intently. The content of the dialogue is about Mark's interest in taming wild animals, particularly lady predators of the criminal class and this shot communicates Mark's casually aggressive pursuit of her as he watches her from behind. Otherwise, the scene holds them entirely separate and within their allocated spaces. But even though they are kept separate by the shots, the framing becomes closer thereby punctuating the subtext of their conversation, and suturing the viewer into their

dialogue. Marnie's hysterical response to the thunderstorm sends her to the door, and from this position, Mark leads her across to the other side of the room. The editing gets tighter here as the shots get closer, until Mark and Marnie kiss in an extreme close-up which focuses on their mouths, followed by a jump-cut. The effect is discomfiting since the viewer is too close and too intimate. After the kiss, a tree smashes through the window, shattering the dead wife's things. By the end of this scene, Marnie and Mark are positioned together in the previously unseen section of the room – the dead wife's domain – and are at the start of the next phase of their relationship with Mark's prophetic words: "It's cold and damp here. I must get the maintenance people in". This scene from *Marnie* demonstrates how Hitchcock successfully communicates interiority and underlying tensions, as well as furthering the plot, within the constraints of continuity editing. In *Vertigo* (1958) and *Spellbound* (1945), Hitchcock communicates unstable mental states by integrating interruptions and drawing on techniques from surrealism. These are isolated from the rest of the narrative and announce themselves as dream experiences or interior states.

The potential for editing to disrupt is embedded in the establishment of continuity at various levels including thematic continuity, graphic continuity and through the creation of patterns and motifs. For example, the image of Marnie receding into the distance in *Marnie* is repeated throughout the film and resonates with the idea of her as elusive, on the run, and tracked by Mark. Editing works to establish motifs and patterns through the ways in which certain images are sequenced and repeated throughout the film. A broader pattern emerges as images, shot constructions, props or character actions are repeated in order to create specific effects. Graphic continuity through the use of motifs and repetition can be used in order to consolidate the effect of realism but also to undermine it, as some of the later chapters explore.

Point-of-view and viewer position

In film, there is an overall point-of-view which structures how the narrative is told and received. Point-of-view mediates between the telling and the reception of the story, and

informs how a viewer may be positioned in the narrative.²⁸ The arrangement of shots in sequence, therefore, both disseminates and withholds information and determines how the viewer receives that information. One key mediating factor emerges through the idea of the “imagined observer”, or the “invisible-observer” as David Bordwell (1986, p. 24) terms it, which is used to ascribe a coherence to the perspective of shots. The default position of the viewer corresponds to the point-of-view of the imagined observer.²⁹ This is not a random perspective, but a coherent position which is constructed through shot and sequence. According perspective to the shots, and arranging these in sequence, can position the viewer as an engaged observer, align the viewer with the characters or distance the viewer from the text. The viewer may be invited to identify with a character, to share subjectivity, or may be positioned on the outside of identification.

Branigan’s typology of four different kinds of shots is a useful way to consider the mediation of point-of-view (Branigan 1984). He recognises objective shots that operate from outside of the film’s diegesis and indicate the perspective of an omniscient narrator. Externally focalised shots indicate a character’s awareness of events but not their experience. Then there are two levels of internally focalised shots: the first indicates the characters’ subjective experience, such as their psychological perspective or their dreams, while the second shows their point-of-view (1984). These help to describe the different strategies for allowing the viewer a varying degree of access to the story. They also work in concert with each other in order to communicate a holistic narrative point-of-view which serves to embed the viewer within the film. This overarching point-of-view is dynamic and fluid and if it is not organised for narrative cohesion, it threatens to

²⁸ Bazin offers one way of understanding the relationship between the organisation of point-of-view and editing. By recognising editing “as a compromise between three ways of possibly analysing reality” he implicitly recognises its treatment of point-of-view and space as integral to representation (1967, p. 92). The first, a “logical and descriptive analysis”, is contrasted to the second two which are accorded psychological functions connected to a manipulation of point-of-view, which is linked to the manipulation of space, both as it is received by audience and perceived through character. The consequent “psychological heterogeneity and material discontinuity” describes the ambiguity of the realism effect as it works towards a unity of expression and material illusion as well as psychological verisimilitude.

²⁹ While various theorists have disputed the way that the imagined observer has been conceptualised, it remains a useful way of describing how point-of-view coheres. One of the main problems with it appears to be that it has been conceptualised too narrowly and therefore has been used in a too literal, reductive way rather than as a useful tool of analysis. Murray Smith sums up Currie’s argument against the imagined observer hypothesis but also suggests ways that it can be useful (Smith 1997).

disrupt. While perspective and point-of-view are important in determining identification, it is the establishment of a fluid and coherent point-of-view – for some, the imagined observer – which sustains the illusion of realism by allowing the viewer a unified perspective. Disrupting perspective here would result in an irregular viewer position and would jar the illusion of reality.

The editing in the famous shower sequence of *Psycho* deviates from established techniques of the time and this communicates a heightened condition, which is outside of the ordinary. While it does not operate from the point-of-view of either of the characters, it does suggest something of their awareness – external focalisation in Branigan’s terminology – which places the viewer in a position where they are primarily watching Marion, but have access to her reactions and this allows a more complete sense of the story. The sequence contains 45 cuts, most of which occur in one minute. The cutting of the film mimics the cutting of her body: Marion is effectively dismembered by the editing of the film. The effect of this is that there is a kind of violence inflicted on the viewer who is positioned inside the sequence. The frequency of the knife coming down on Marion highlights the violence and shock of the act.

Transcript 2: The shower sequence (*Psycho*)

	Shot	Sound/Dialogue	Edit
1	MS legs getting into shower. Pulls curtain		Straight cut (all cuts straight unless otherwise indicated)
	MS Curtain closing	Curtain close	
2	MCU Marion in shower. She turns on the water and looks up	Soap unwrapping	eyeline
3	MCU Shower head from Marion's perspective	Water running from shower	
4	MCU Marion from front, scrubbing		
5	Marion from side + shower jet. She turns		
6	Marion from side, slightly closer		Jump-cut
7	MCU showerhead, side view		
8	MCU Marion		
9	MCU Marion but in corner of frame. She goes out of frame and shadow moves in from the opposite side. Slow zoom to "Mother" – she wrenches curtain open, knife raised	Violins begin	Jump-cut

10	CU Marion turns and screams	Screams and shrieking violins begin	
11	CU Marion screaming		Jump-cut
12	ECU Marion's screaming mouth		Jump-cut
13	Mother stabbing		
14	MCU Marion in corner of frame	Screams and violins continue	Match-on-action: hand slashes down
15	Mother with hand raised		
16	MS, High angle. Mother's arm reaching to Marion. They struggle		
17	ECU Marion's face		
18	Indistinct shot: Marion's hand as she struggles. High angle		
19	Marion's face, ECU		
20	As 18		
21	Mother with knife raised		
22	CU Marion turning face		
23	Mother slashes		
24	Marion		
25	Mother		
26	Marion's torso		
27	Knife		
28	Marion torso and arm		
29	Marion's head turning		
30	Marion's legs, moving		
31	CU Marion's head, side view		
32	MCU Marion reaching to wall		
33	MS Marion's legs		
34	Marion's head on edge of frame		
35	Mother leaving the bathroom		
36	CU hand on wall, slowly sliding down	Music changes	
37	MS Marion in corner of frame. She slides down wall and reaches out her hand		
38	MCU hand grabs curtain		Match cut (awkward)
39	MLS Marion crouched in bath pulls curtain		Match cut
40	MCU curtain rail hooks pop		Match cut
41	Curtain falls on Marion as she falls		Match cut
42	Showerhead, directly above, as 3		
43	MCU Marion's legs. Pan, then zoom to water swirling down plug hole		
44	Camera swirls around CU of Marion's eye and zooms out to Marion awkwardly positioned and dead on floor		Dissolve; graphic match
45	MCU of showerhead (as 7)		

46	CU Marion's face, then slow pan across bathroom, into bedroom to money wrapped in paper. Then to house through window	Mother! Oh God Mother, Mother! Blood. Blood!	Violins shriek
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The reverse-shots between Marion and the showerhead at the beginning of the sequence, and then the return to the showerhead at the end, have an important structural function. By locating Marion in relation to the showerhead, Hitchcock sutures the viewer inside: the showerhead and the MCU shots of Marion create an image dialogue and therefore establish the sequence as dynamic. It also builds the showerhead into something of a presence – an indifferent figure watching over her, initially causing her great pleasure as her open-mouthed, shampoo-advert enjoyment clearly indicates. The continued jet of water at the end of the sequence emphasises the recent emptiness and new sudden stillness as it relentlessly continues to spray, but this time without the volleying between it and Marion. That the final shot of the showerhead is preceded by the swirl like pan out of the dead Marion’s unseeing eye and then followed by a pan from the same shot of the eye contrasts with the earlier reverse-shots between Marion and the showerhead as it highlights her lifelessness and inability to participate in the suturing effect of shot reverse-shot. Silverman calls it an “inanimate eye now closed to all visual exchanges” (Silverman 1986, p. 226) and this necessarily alters the way in which the viewer is positioned in the film.

Hitchcock uses jump-cuts as a particular strategy for creating a small disjuncture in the viewer’s experience of identification. The jump-cut between shots 5 and 6 is not particularly jarring; it blends in fairly well for a jump-cut. But by jumping this cut, Hitchcock is deliberately toying with the viewer’s position within the sequence: it makes for a mild jag in the viewer’s perception of the scene which suddenly hops between shots. This is contrasted to the more violent use of the jump-cut between 10, 11 and 12 where the effect is an interrupted zoom into Marion’s screaming mouth which communicates her horror and requires that the viewer also inhabits this horror. If shot reverse-shot sutures a viewer inside the action through its resemblance to stitching, this particular use of the jump-cut does something similar but in a much rougher way. It takes the viewer closer to the expression of horror, but leaves out parts of the zoom thereby forcing the viewer across large, horrific gaps.

The coherence of the overall point-of-view of the scene is not immediately apparent. The sequence does not use point-of-view shots but instead uses shots that almost correspond to a point-of-view. For example, the shot of the showerhead as directly overhead follows Marion's eyeline as she looks up, but unless she throws back her head at a ninety degree angle, which is unlikely, it cannot be her point-of-view. Similarly the shots of Marion in the shower and particularly of Mother from the shower's perspective suggest the characters' points of view, but cannot be pinned down as such because they shift too easily: either of shots 13 or 15 could be Marion's point-of-view but they cannot both be; it is not certain which one is because her exact position in the shower is hard to pin down. This is compounded by the blurred effect of the shots, for example, the indistinctness of Mother suggests that we are seeing from Marion's point-of-view but the eyelines and angles do not always support this. This is a perceptual trick; the viewer is taken close to a character's point-of-view but the viewer and character points of view are not quite aligned, which suggests an off-kilter perspective.

From 10 to 34, the cutting is very quick and some of the shots are only a few frames long. Not allowing the viewer to take in and consider what is happening as we see different body parts flashing too quickly, forces the viewer to inhabit Marion's confusion and panic. We never see her being stabbed, only her different body parts dismembered by the cutting of the film. In Silverman's analysis of the shower sequence in relation to her discussion on suture, she comments that the "whole process of identification is formally insisted upon by the brevity of the shots; the point-of-view shifts constantly within the extremely confined space of the shower, making Marion the only stable object, that thing to which we necessarily cling" (1986, p. 226).³⁰ Since the sequencing of point-of-view usually functions to communicate a perspective that the viewer can inhabit and thereby engage with the scene, Silverman is pointing out that the disrupted point-of-view in this sequence undermines a coherent perspective in order to communicate the psychological reality of the sequence. By forcing the viewer to "cling" to Marion, and then using the

³⁰ For discussions on suture, in addition to Silverman, see also Heath 'On Suture' (1981) and Jean Pierre Oudart 'Cinema and Suture' (Oudart 1977-78). For a summary of these and of Žižek's discussion of suture, see *Projecting a Camera* (Branigan 2006).

film in order to cut, the violence and psychological horror of the sequence are brought home.

The quick, fragmented editing of the stabbing contrasts strongly with shots 37 to 45, as the sequence becomes much slower and more continuous. This emphasises the brutality of the shots of brief, disconnected body parts. Hitchcock uses match cuts consecutively in the next few shots as Marion pulls the shower curtain down from the railings and this places emphasis on continuity. The first match, the hand grabbing the curtain after reaching out to it is awkward and this is very effective as it highlights the sense that her hand was perhaps reaching out to the viewer in shot 37, rather than to the curtain. The angle of the hand around the cut is not entirely continuous, thereby emphasising the desperation of the act – because it is an attempted match, it really highlights the way in which the edit does not match. The use of a graphic match and a dissolve between the eye and the plughole creates a strong link between the two: the dissolve ensures a gentle, fluid transition while the graphic match, much like the use of rhyme in poetry, invites the viewer to consider the two images in relation to each other. Throughout, the sense of the shower as more than a neutral background is maintained – this begins with the way that the showerhead is given a sense of importance through the use of shot reverse-shot, the way the film places her eye and the plughole together for consideration and also as she pulls the shower curtain over her as she dies. The sequence extends plausibility with time as it expands and fragments the slashing to communicate a sense of brutality and of suspense; time moves at an ordinary pace at the beginning, faster in the middle and slowly at the end.

The *Psycho* shower sequence also indicates another important aspect of editing in creating and sustaining the illusion of realism: cutting the body. Editing works to establish the coherence of the body on screen by piecing it together in a plausible way. Many of the editing conventions such as match cuts and directional editing work to preserve the integrity of the body and the illusion of the complete body.³¹ Hitchcock departs from these conventions in this scene in order to communicate the violence of the attack on Marion without the use of graphic portrayal of the stabbing itself. By not

³¹ Chapter Four, which examines the work of Jan Švankmajer, explores the relationship between the body, editing and surrealism.

depicting the scene in a literal way, he opts for a different kind of verisimilitude. The violent nature of the scene allows Hitchcock to deviate temporarily from realism – the distress of the attack masks any discomfort that the departure from realism may cause and the scene does not compromise the overall realism of the film.

Alternative approaches to realism: editing and discontinuity

Having argued that one of the key elements of realism is the effacement of technique, I will now consider the converse claim to realism: film that takes full cognisance of its artifice. The idea that realist film resembles reality is negated when the measure of realism is the extent to which a film does not claim to indicate an unmediated version of the world. Classical realism in cinema is fundamentally illusionary and Hollywood fantasy functions in much the same way as its realism. There is little structural difference between the two – the filmic construction of Hollywood fantasy is usually cosmetic.³² While various cinematic elements such as art design, computer-generated images and special effects may be used to construct fantasy texts, they tend to abide by the narrative and technical rules of realist texts which involves the hiding of mechanisms.

An alternative claim to realism is often made through the marked presence of form in the film narrative, where acknowledgement of the mediation indicates greater fidelity to the real world. Ironically enough, the announcement of mediation can sometimes function to assert the film as truth: if it says that it is telling a story, then it is truthful, so we can believe it. This is mostly evident in documentaries, particularly *cinéma vérité* where announcing the presence of the filmmaker through the “participant camera” is seen as more truthful than trying to pretend that a film is not a representation, but is also sometimes evident even in mainstream filmmaking practices.

These two different claims to realism can be traced back to the two distinct historical trends discussed earlier: Soviet montage, particularly Vertov’s *Kino-Pravda*

³² There are countless examples here: the *Star Wars* series, the different *Harry Potter* films, and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy are probably the most popular for now – they all follow a three-act narrative structure and preserve narrative continuity.

(exemplified by the *Man with the Movie Camera*) and its legacy in cinéma vérité which has since metamorphosed and been appropriated, in part, by new forms like reality TV and mockumentary; and Griffith's influence which has developed classical Hollywood cinema and still continues to be the foundation of mainstream film and most narrative cinema. But there are forms of realism which do not easily fit into either. Dogme 95, for example, works towards a form of realism predicated on a minimalist approach to film: it rejects what it considers to be superfluous elements like sets and non-diegetic music in favour of long takes and improvised performances. There is an inescapable awareness of form and a rejection of the illusion of realism found in Hollywood cinema.³³

A further complication is the increasing use of fragmentation in mainstream cinema. While many of the continuity practices are sustained in contemporary mainstream cinema in order to communicate coherent narratives, this has since been complicated by what is considered to be the influence of MTV in editing mainstream film, which results in a more interrupted narrative.³⁴ However, as with earlier deviations from seamlessness, these interruptions are usually absorbed into the narrative without much compromise to the realism of the film. A heightened sense of the spectacular in mainstream film helps account for these deviations. Viewing conventions are gradually changing. Just as the interruptions to classical narratives, for example, in *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles 1941) and *Psycho* through the use of dramatic montage occurred in a graduated context thereby decreasing the strangeness of it, the narrative shifts in contemporary representations are making piecemeal adjustments to the expectations of the contemporary viewer. These adjustments make for kaleidoscopic shifts: while the more subtle narrative arrangement remains intact, new narrative conventions are slowly absorbed into viewing habits. As the Vorkapich gradually fell into disfavour and appears as highly unrealistic to a contemporary viewer, a different trend in editing has emerged without compromising the use of continuity editing as the foundation of mainstream film syntax. This is related to the way that the mainstream absorbs and appropriates innovations from the experimental. Švankmajer, who calls himself a “militant surrealist”

³³ For a discussion of Dogme 95, see Hjort and MacKenzie (2003), and for a discussion of mockumentary, see Roscoe and Craig (2001).

³⁴ See Dancyger (2002) for a discussion of the influence of MTV styles on film editing.

(O'Pray, 1990), is perhaps most popular for his one-minute short film, *Meat in Love* (1989), which aired on MTV. There is a correlation between the use of fragmented narratives in mainstream cinema and the depiction of subjective or psychological states, for example, Aronofsky's representation of addiction in *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), of Nolan's piecing together of lost memories in *Memento* (2000). Continuity editing is interrupted in order to represent moods and states that are otherwise difficult to represent. In principle, this is not too dissimilar to the use of interruptions in classical Hollywood films in order to depict dreams and psychological states. However, the contemporary use of fragmentation and discontinuity in mainstream cinema employs a particular kind of aesthetic which has become increasingly popular with films like *21 Grams* (Alejandro González Iñárritu 2003) which does not tell its story in a linear order and *Fight Club* (David Fincher 1999) which incorporates interruptions, some of them for just a few frames. These examples, *21 Grams* in particular, have opted for a "grittier" realism, which is effected by the use of a grainier film stock. The use of fragmentation is emphasised and this is different to the way that classical Hollywood absorbed deviance into a greater pattern of continuity. These films exemplify the appropriation of discontinuity and fragmentation into the mainstream, thereby taming them and decreasing their subversive potential.

In other contexts, there is a rejection of continuity editing as inadequate to represent experience.³⁵ The use of discontinuity editing outside of the mainstream has harnessed the breaking down of these conventions in order to depict experiences which resist being told and to allow stories to emerge through interrupted narrative. James Donald observes:

[F]ilm's 'suturing' of the spectator was held to sustain broader social relations of power. The corollary of this seemed to be that to break this link by exposing the illusionist conventions of cinema narrative and the contamination of the pleasures it offers might throw at least a small spanner into the ideological works of capitalism and patriarchy (Donald 1989, p. 226).

³⁵ See especially Chapters Five and Six.

Donald attributes political consequences to embedding the imagined observer within the film and by interrupting continuity editing it becomes possible to dislodge the viewer from this position. Discontinuity editing has the potential to undermine the totalising impulses of continuity editing through its revision of space, time and viewer perspective or point-of-view. Without making a reductive equation between anti-realism and a political perspective, there is a clear association of continuity editing with mainstream cinema, its politics of production and with broader socio-political erasure. Frequently, these interruptions flirt with fantasy, the imagination and dream and in this way, the breakdown in editing becomes a site where the subjective intersects with the political. This will be discussed in greater detail with regard to Palestinian and South African film in later chapters.

Conclusion

The need for a representation that is in tune with experience has traditionally prompted two different kinds of realism through the effacement of and emphasis on technique. But the structural elements of continuity editing, in other words, the conventions that constitute seamlessness, have always had the potential to be broken down and undermined in search of alternative ways of representing reality.³⁶ The reasons may be political: a rejection of the totalising impulses of continuity editing which is linked to the broader issues around the politics of film production. Or they may be aesthetic, or even a search for a different kind of real as the surrealists demonstrate. This thesis considers film technique, primarily editing, in relation to broader questions of verisimilitude and a different kind of realism than is usually adopted by mainstream film. It considers the argument that reality is too elusive to be depicted by established techniques, thereby

³⁶ This is particularly evident in Godard's counter-cinema. Wollen (2004) schematises and describes the features of counter-cinema which highlights gaps and interruptions, a lack of closure, a breakdown of identification, a foregrounding of cinematic language and a multiple diegesis. Many of these features persist in a trend that has developed parallel to mainstream cinema, including surrealism and many examples from contemporary cinema.

making a case for a fragmented representation which better encapsulates experiences of reality.

For Eisenstein, the representation of reality emerges through “collision” rather than imitation or any attempt to integrate. Significantly, Eisenstein locates editing as the determining factor in the representation of reality by focusing on juxtaposition and association as representation. Soviet montage does not emphasise seamlessness, but advocates a playful and self-conscious cutting which draws attention to the combination of images. This is most evident in avant-garde cinema where filmmakers deliberately move away from the systemised approach of Hollywood film. While it may appear that there is a neat division between continuity and discontinuity where one correlates to realism and the other anti-realism, there are necessarily elements of both present in each. As discussed, classical continuity editing employs interruption as a device and contemporary cinema increasingly weaves fragmentation into mainstream narrative.

More recent shifts in representation through technical advances such as MTV editing and the use of digital technology also trace a changing attitude to the depiction of reality. Alternatives to realism have emerged through discontinuity editing and through interruptions to continuity editing, but also through a more subtle rearrangement and alteration of conventions. Consequently, continuous, unified representation may be disturbed overtly through the use of interruptions and jump-cuts, thereby consciously breaking the illusion of coherence. But there is also a more covert challenge to the conventions of continuity editing through adjustments on a much smaller scale resulting in an ostensibly unified expression which, beneath the surface, is undermined.

The relationship between editing and reality therefore works within continually conflicting and shifting processes. Editing shapes the movement of the film as it establishes the structural progression through the sequencing of shots. Narrative cohesion is achieved as each shot joined to another forms a relationship with what precedes and what follows. This is extended to all shots having a relationship with each other, influenced by where they occur in the film, and by the patterns that are established. In this way, the relationship between shots does not simply indicate a linear progression but is plotted across multiple points – the potential for an alternative narrative logic is thus implicit; it is possible to construct a fluid narrative without relying on the standardised

conventions of temporal and spatial continuity. The mapping of spatial geography and progression through time is incorporated into the function of joining shots. This, along with rhythm, pace and perspective, all work towards or against sustaining an illusion of close resemblance to reality and implicitly demarcate not only what is seen but how it is seen.



Figure 1

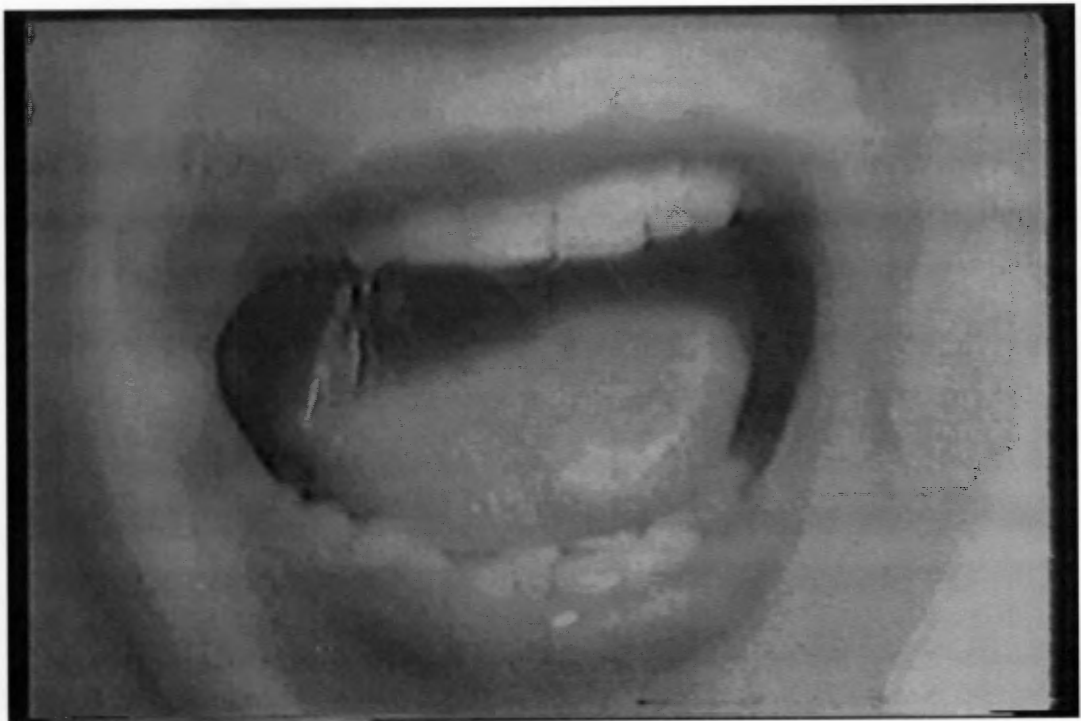


Figure 2

Chapter Two

Surrealism and montage

In this chapter I examine surrealist montage as a specific expression of editing. Surrealist montage highlights disjuncture through the presentation of a reconstituted whole; it requires that the image be read as the sum of its parts and the film as the sum of its, often incongruous, images. I consider the surrealist affinity for cinema through an emphasis on dream. Breton's hypnagogic encounter with a sentence, first described in his 1924 manifesto, highlights the significance of the dream and I discuss this in terms of surrealist montage. Through the use of continuity and discontinuity editing in concert, surrealist disruption is encoded into the narrative of Buñuel and Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929); I compare this to Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* (1926) which had a mixed reception as a surrealist film. Through an analysis of *Un Chien Andalou*, I explore how surrealist montage is taken up by film editing. The narrative construction of surrealist film parallels certain psychoanalytic techniques, and I consider how surrealist strategies, for example the fixation on the object, coincide with the interest of the surrealists in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic processes such as displacement and condensation thus potentially provide a template for how editing may work in surrealist film. Finally, I consider the significance of surrealism as subversive expression through its manifestation of interior processes as it depicts the objective world.

Introduction

On a small square of paper, stuck on like an afterthought, the content page of Arturo Schwarz's study on Man Ray entitled *Man Ray: The Rigour of Imagination* contains the following explanation:

Erratum: The Publishers regret that illustration no. 47 on page 47, 'Jazz' 1919 has been printed upside down (1977).

Mistakes, not unlike parapraxes, in the surrealist game of chance, potentially open up a new perspective. For Freud, parapraxis – which includes bungled actions, the slip of the tongue, mislaying things and forgetting – indicate the small ways in which everyday behaviour can veer off course as a result of a gap between conscious intentions and unconscious thought.¹ Parapraxis functions between two levels: the intended action and the faulty action. As a result, parapraxis insists that we read the two in relation to each other. While the picture itself might not mean anything when viewed upside down, the error itself points to a moment of vacillation, whether conscious or not, about how to read that particular image. Having seen the erratum, it is difficult to consider Man Ray's *Jazz* as right way up without also considering it upside down; my reading of it is suspended between the two.

Similarly, surrealist montage – the juxtaposition of images both within the frame of composition and across or between frames – demands that an image be read in light of other images; images may become corrupted by each other. Montage, and its variations, such as bricolage, collage,² and assemblage form a fundamental part of surrealist expression across different media. Surrealist technique therefore places an emphasis on piecing fragments together in order to constitute a reformed whole. Montage as art technique mirrored and enabled the most basic surrealist preoccupation: the joining together of disparate elements, particularly dream and waking life. Breton suggests that surrealist montage allows for a destabilised perspective:

¹ Freud's discussion of parapraxis can be found in 'The Psychopathology of Everyday Life' (2001b).

² Marjorie Perloff in her discussion of the origins of collage as a "systematic play of difference" (Perloff 1986, p. 53) also discusses the relationship between collage and montage. She considers montage as an offshoot of collage and says that they could be considered two sides of the same coin even though montage emphasises continuity while collage emphasises fragmentation.

The enterprise consisted of nothing less than to reassemble these disparate objects according to an order which, while differing from their normal order, did not seem on the whole to do them any violence; to avoid all preconceived designs as far as possible; and, with the same eye with which from one's window one watches a man with an open umbrella walking along a roof, with the same mental reaction that allows one to think that a windmill may serve as a perfectly convenient head-dress for a woman, ... to assert by means of the image other relationships than those generally, or indeed, provisionally established between human beings on the one hand, and, on the other, things considered as accepted facts (Breton 1972d, p. 26).

Surrealist film developed as a thread in a greater fabric of surrealist expression and retains strong links with poetry and painting. Film was considered a means to broaden what could be achieved by painting, to move beyond the frame of the painted canvas and to work with movement, light, space and time (Wollen cited in Donald 1998, p. 29).

In cinematic history, surrealism runs a parallel path to the development of classical Hollywood, which consolidated continuity editing techniques.³ In its aim to find some kind of “surreality” – the coexistence of the quotidian and dream life – surrealist montage offers a specific understanding of the role of editing in the integration of the real, the dream and the marvellous through the construction of alternative continuities. By drawing on the ideas of Breton, this chapter explores surrealism in relation to its techniques of disjuncture: the destabilisation of habitual perception which emerges through dissociation, juxtaposition and disorientation. It considers how surrealist montage is taken up in film editing through a comparative analysis of *Emak Bakia*, a film which is variously read as surrealist or dadaist, and *Un Chien Andalou*, surrealism's hallmark film.⁴ This also sheds light on how surrealism has exploited editing techniques that deliberately work to integrate and interrupt different levels of reality. Surrealism,

³ The two way relationship between the mainstream and the experimental is evident in Hitchcock's use of surrealist interruptions in order to depict dream states or subjective experience in *Spellbound* (1945) and *Vertigo* (1958).

⁴ The success of *Un Chien Andalou* as a surrealist film was followed by *L'Age d'Or* (1930) which is a longer, more complex expression of surrealism and its relationship to the unconscious and merged dichotomies.

film and psychoanalysis converge around the resemblance of the cinematic experience to the dream state and the idea of cinema as “conscious hallucination” (Short 2003, p. 9) or waking dream is the basic premise of this study of techniques of surrealist disjuncture.

Surrealist dreams: communicating vessels

When will we have sleeping logicians, sleeping philosophers?

(Breton 1972a, p. 12).

A story is told according to which Saint-Pol-Roux, in times gone by, used to have a notice posted on the door of his manor house in Camaret, every evening before he went to sleep, which read: THE POET IS WORKING.

(Breton 1972a, p. 14).⁵

...it seemed to me, a sentence, I might say, that knocked at the window.

(Breton 1978c, p. 120).

One of surrealism’s primary aims was to tap into and exploit the unconscious. The attempt to incorporate psychoanalytic methods and ideas into surrealism coincided with an emphasis on the dream, particularly the interaction between the ordinary and the dream world: Breton’s “communicating vessels”. This image, which was also the title of his 1932 book, encapsulates the fluidity of movement between two modes: sleep and waking, exteriority and interiority; reality and the imagination (Caws 1990, p. ix). Breton identifies the dream as the “capillary tissue” that links these dualities (1990, p. 139).

The surrealist obsession with the dream, which is linked to Freud’s ideas on the dream, can be traced back to Breton’s famous sentence, “There is a man cut in two by the window” (Breton 1972a, p. 21), which Breton indicates as a starting point in surrealist

⁵ The above Breton quotations are from the 1924 manifesto compiled in *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (1972b) translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane. My discussion of Breton’s dream draws from both the 1924 manifesto and his 1934 lecture ‘What is Surrealism?’ which is included in a compilation of surrealist documents (Rosemont 1978) in which he retells the story about his encounter with a sentence, initially described in the First Surrealist manifesto of 1924.

modes of representation.⁶ Breton details how the visiting sentence led him, along with Phillipe Soupault, to develop the process of automatic writing in order to access what he called “spoken thought” (Breton 1978c, p. 121). He describes the sentence with an accompanying visual image:

...a man in the process of walking, but cloven at half his height, by a window perpendicular to the axis of his body. Definitely, there was a form, re-erected against space, of a man leaning out of a window. But, with the window following the man’s locomotion, I understood that I was dealing with an image of great rarity (Breton 1978c, p. 120).

The story goes that Breton was falling asleep and heard this voiceless phrase. Initially he took a “cursory note of it and prepared to move on” but then he was struck by its “organic character” (Breton 1972a, p. 21). There are several elements to this visitation: it is part composed of an image, and part composed of words.⁷ It indicates a man who is cut in half by the window thereby suggesting a fragmentation of the body and rupture to material coherence.⁸ It occurs at a moment between sleep and waking life. Freud writes that the “dream experience appears as something alien inserted between two sections of life which are perfectly continuous and consistent with each other” (Freud 1953, p. 10). Freud therefore appears to view the dream experience itself as rupture; the surrealist endeavour to merge waking and dream life therefore is an attempt to disconcert the ordinary and integrate rupture; this is how the ordinary is remade into the marvellous.

Breton’s visitation indicates the ways in which surrealist montage and automatism link together disparate elements in order to communicate a dialogue between the unconscious and the conscious, between the dream and the quotidian. It illustrates the idea of spoken thought as it is simultaneously verbal and also the fragment of a dream image. The visitation highlights the transition from image to words and also marks the gap between the two: the seemingly intraversable territory which Breton must cross in

⁶ Breton says in ‘What is Surrealism’: “...I explained the circumstance that had originally put my friends and myself on the track of the surrealist activity we still follow ...” and then proceeds to recount the visitation by the sentence (Breton 1978c, p. 120).

⁷ Hammond (1978) discusses the intrinsic connection between surrealist film and poetry; similarly, Man Ray conceives of his films as cinepoems. Susan McCabe (2005) traces the relationship between surrealism and poetry thereby drawing a parallel between the structure of the poem and of the montaged, surreal film.

⁸ The chapter on Švankmajer considers the surrealist body and rupture in more detail.

order to communicate the untranslatable. This mimics the coinciding of dream and waking life and points towards what Wills refers to as a systematic decentralisation of language:

In the so-called surrealist image, this rupture is conveyed by an absence within normal linguistic articulation. The sign (say, “umbrella”) which is completely incongruous with its neighbouring element in the syntagm (say, “sewing machine”) but to which it is nevertheless compared, parodies any absolute concept of difference (Wills 1996, p. 87).

Surrealist disjuncture is marked by an absence. This is an absence which corresponds to Freud’s “something alien”, a blank which emerges between two disparate elements that are communicated alongside each other. Surrealist montage both emphasises and dispels difference. Similarly, film editing highlights and bridges differences and the joining of shots always covers the gap that emerges between them.

The visiting sentence and the accompanying visual image also mark the merging of form and content that is so indicative of surrealism; similarly, the process by which Breton takes this out of the near-dream state into his theory of surrealism further negotiates the divide between the inarticulable dream and conscious reflection. The visitation by the sentence then communicates the way in which surreal expression is equivalent to surreality; that the articulation is not simply an aesthetic, but, like the dream, functions as capillary tissue, the place where dream and waking life converge. The surrealists did not explore and innovate art forms in the interest of art, but in pursuit of surreality. Benjamin highlights the surrealist emphasis on mode of expression above the self:⁹

Language takes precedence. Not only before meaning. Also before the self. In the world’s structure dream loosens individuality like a bad tooth. This loosening of the self by intoxication is, at the same time, precisely the fruitful, living experience that allowed these people to step outside the domain of intoxication (Benjamin 1979c, p. 227).

⁹ Their dislike of French avant-garde film, for example Gance, was linked to a dislike of form for form’s sake.

In Benjamin's understanding of surrealist expression, the implicit danger of being caught up inside the inward seeking element of surrealism, of being trapped inside the dream, was averted by the way that surrealism emphasised its mode of expression first.¹⁰ But privileging language above the self and the "loosening" of self do not mean the effacement of self; such an awareness of form suggests that this is not entirely possible. Rather, it indicates the way in which surrealism sought an unconscious self through a particular mode of artistic expression and set it up in dialogue with other more rational selves. Adamowicz considers the loosening of identity in relation to surrealist montage:

By exploding the mimetic claims of photography, fragmenting the face, and displacing the visual with the verbal, Ernst foregrounds the (self) portrait as an artefact, presenting identity as a construct – split, fragmented, held together by writing – bringing together irreconcilable fragments in the manner of collage. The Surrealists explore through their texts and pictorial works the destabilisation and splitting of identity, portrayed as a locus of contradiction, fragmentation and decentring (Adamowicz 1997, p. 33).

According to Adamowicz, surrealist techniques of disruption work to undo the self. After the visitation, Breton writes that it left him alienated and "in a state of extreme detachment" (Breton 1978c, p. 121) thereby indicating that his surrealist encounter with language allowed for a loosening of the self and a consequent state of disassociation. The integration of dream and waking life therefore seeks to unravel apparent reality and this is the premise of surrealist film.

Surrealism and film

The surrealist interest in the dream is actively linked to an interest in film. Film has frequently been considered the ideal medium for the surrealists because of its resemblance to dream; it has the potential to function as a "conscious hallucination"

¹⁰ Wim Wenders, many years later, exploited the idea of being trapped within one's dreams in *Until the End of the World* (1991) in which the characters become disconnected from each other and socially useless because they spend all of their time replaying and watching their dreams.

(Short 2003, p. 9). But there are obvious limitations to the analogy between cinema and the dream state. Most insurmountably, the gap between the conception and product inhibited surrealist filmmaking and this could be a reason for such a low output of films that can be called surrealist without reservation. Surrealist viewing then becomes an important part of the surrealist's relationship to cinema. Breton tells of how he and Jacques Vaché would dip in and out of cinemas, watching snippets of films thereby effectively editing together their own films (Breton 1978b). Buñuel entertained himself when bored by covering his eyes with splayed fingers or blinking repeatedly, others had dinner parties in cinemas and these were all practices which were designed to interrupt and refuse a linear reception of films.¹¹

A definitive factor in surrealist film was the combined effect of linearity and interruption. Just as the dream takes its material from and engages with the real, surrealist film sought an integrated representation rather than one which lacked all logic and coherence. Man Ray's 1926 film, *Emak Bakia*, has been read as either a surrealist or a dada film or somewhere between the two.¹² *Emak Bakia* was initially not considered a surrealist film, but when Breton published his 1938 list of surrealist films, he appears to have revised his opinion. For contemporary critics, *Emak Bakia* seems to hover on the margins of surrealism as it shows some characteristics that are in keeping with surrealist film and in other ways is better understood as a French Dada film. Man Ray appears to have aspired to surrealism:

I complied with all the principles of Surrealism: irrationality, automatism, psychological and dramatic sequences without apparent logic and complete disregard for conventional storytelling (Man Ray cited in Kuenzli 1996, p. 3).

Emak Bakia, contrary to Man Ray's expectations, was not enthusiastically received in surrealist circles despite his attempt to comply with their "principles". Man Ray's list of how he complied with surrealist principles sounds rather like a checklist of points; textbook surrealism – just follow the formula – and this is at odds with the idea of the surreal text as unconscious and spontaneous expression. As a result, Man Ray's opening presents itself as an "object lesson in the surrealist belief in the camera's power to

¹¹ Both Matthews (1971) and Short (2003) elaborate on the ways that the surrealists viewed films.

¹² See for example Fotiade's comment regarding *Emak Bakia* (1995, p. 398).

transform the familiar world and generate surreality” (Short 2003, p. 27). The result is an approach which is distanced and intellectual rather than spontaneous. It also underscores the extent to which surrealist expression is not simply about irrationalism and automatism at the expense of an underlying continuity.

Emak Bakia (Don't Bother Me) is fifteen minutes long and can be divided into three parts. The first part depicts rayographs and abstract shapes juxtaposed with each other. The second part begins with a shot of an eye superimposed on a car which then drives away. It continues with various shots, including sheep and dancing legs – the key difference between this and the first section is that there are some human figures. The third part begins with an intertitle saying “the reason for this extravagance” and shows a man taking off his collar which then rotates and returns to similar images until the ending with the painted eyes. Many of these shots seem random but for a graphic relationship, a connection between the visual qualities of the shots and sequences. The absence of a straightforward linear narrative defies an easy synopsis of the film, and this is only marginally easier with *Un Chien Andalou*.

Un Chien Andalou is sixteen minutes long. The film is introduced by a prologue, the famous slit eye sequence, and can then be divided into eight sequences. After an intertitle saying “eight years later”, the first starts with a cyclist dressed in an elaborate costume carrying a striped box who then falls off the bicycle. There follows an interaction between the woman (whose eye at this point is noticeably intact) and a man (the cyclist) in a room. The sequence ends with the montage of ants, underarm hairs, a sea urchin and circle of people watching the androgen prod a severed hand in the street. The androgen, who now has the striped box, is watched by the woman and man from an upstairs window. The androgen is hit by a car and the action returns to the upstairs room. The man pursues and corners the woman – this is marked by a montage where he turns into a sightless man feeling her breasts which shift between clothed and bare, and then again transform into bare buttocks. After chasing around the room, he drags in a grand piano with a dead donkey on top, followed by two Marist brothers. She runs into another room, which is the same room, and finds that the clothes she laid out earlier have turned into the man. The next sequence begins here and an intertitle announces “around three in the morning”. A visitor arrives and tosses the cyclist's costume out the window. A new

title card appears, saying “sixteen years earlier” and the two men continue to confront each other until one is shot and dies, falling into a park; a group of men gather around and carry him away. The next sequence returns to the room where the woman sees a Death’s Head moth. The man suddenly returns and they have an argument which is realised through his loss of mouth, her response of putting on more lipstick, and his sudden growth of pubic hair in place of a mouth. She sticks her tongue out at him and leaves; a new sequence begins on the other side of the door which is now a beach, where she meets another man. They walk and pick through rubbish; the striped box lies discarded. The final sequence is entitled “In the spring”, and shows two still figures deep in sand, their eyes hollowed out and insects crawling. This is not a happily ever after as suggested by the opening title, “Once upon a time”. *Un Chien Andalou* has a clear sense of story that develops the experiences of the main characters, but this is not a linear story. Instead it functions according to an idiosyncratic causality. The film marked an exciting development in surrealist expression. While Buñuel and Dali were not attached to the group when they made the film, it became their introduction to surrealist circles.

It is useful to consider surrealist expression in film with regard to the differences between *Un Chien Andalou* and *Emak Bakia* because the latter appears to miss the mark somehow, despite adhering to some surrealist precepts. Man Ray seems to have worked towards the wrong kind of discontinuity; he miscalculated in his sequencing of various disconnected images – rayographs – in *Emak Bakia*. Man Ray describes his process of making the rayographs for *Return to Reason*: “On some strips I sprinkled salt and pepper, like a cook preparing a roast, on other strips I threw pins and thumbtacks at random” (Schwarz 1977, p. 290).¹³ Many of these rayographs used in *Return to Reason* were repeated in *Emak Bakia*.¹⁴

Buñuel and Dali, on the other hand, claimed an entirely spontaneous process but one that was based more directly on dreams and automatism:

When I [Buñuel] arrived at Dali’s house in Figueras, I told him about a dream I’d had in which a long tapering cloud sliced the moon in half, like a razor blade

¹³ Schwarz (1977) gives a full account of the conception and reception of *Emak Bakia*.

¹⁴ Man Ray’s next film, *L’Étoile de Mer* (1928) was more enthusiastically received. This film, centered on the image of a starfish, was based on a poem by Robert Desnos, one of the early surrealists, who also acted in the film.

slicing through an eye. Dali immediately told me that he'd seen a hand crawling with an ant in a dream he'd had the previous night (2003, p. 64).¹⁵

Apart from the genesis of *Un Chien Andalou* in the combined dreams of Dali and Buñuel, one of the primary differences between *Emak Bakia* and *Un Chien Andalou* is that Buñuel and Dali adhered more to spatial and temporal conventions of editing. By doing so, they were able to subvert these conventions, and this, according to Hammond, was one of the ways in which surrealists created the effect of surreality (Hammond 1978). In addition, Kuenzli suggests that Man Ray broke the illusion of film by showing the camera – not unlike Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) – and making it self-reflexive and therefore too self-aware (Kuenzli 1996). Both films contain images of their makers and thereby draw some attention to the film as text. The presence of Man Ray with a camera at the beginning of the film highlights Man Ray's role as filmmaker, rather than highlighting the language of the film. While surrealist film did not project an illusion of seamlessness, announcing the camera suggests a different kind of interruption: the presence of the filmmaker with a camera implies a self-consciousness that is somehow not compatible with the dream state.

Buñuel, on the other hand, does not announce himself as filmmaker by inserting a shot of himself with a camera. There may well be a deliberate analogy between Buñuel the slicer of the eye, and Buñuel the filmmaker, but this is not an obvious assertion of himself as maker of the image. Instead, he allows himself to be read as an object of the camera, rather than as the author, and therefore tricks the viewer into believing the opening sequence. Buñuel's inexplicable disappearance also de-emphasises his presence; it is just another example of altered causality in the film. It also suggests a loosening of the self as Buñuel, after the eyeball is slit, is lost inside his film.

The viewer of *Emak Bakia* oscillates between being invited into the film, but also rudely thrust out: the viewer is positioned in a way that permits entry and simultaneously refuses a way in. There is no clear sense of spatial geography apart from what is effectively a black background – or infinite space – upon which sometimes indistinguishable or seemingly arbitrary images move. Later the film moves to outside

¹⁵Short goes on to give a full account of the "gestation of the film script" as well as some details of the shooting which are both characterised by spontaneity.

locations but even these are not edited together in a way that allows them much cohesion. The rotation of objects accords a false sense of intention – they are moving, and this movement must be doing something and therefore be useful or have some purpose. Instead, it becomes another means by which the viewer is blocked from the film: it moves and this move is repetitious, and after a while, the potential for a narrative significance subsides. Eventually, there is the suspicion that staring at Man Ray's rayographs on film and the inhibiting rotation of objects is really an experiment in form; the use of rotation and repetition of shapes indicate a graphic continuity that, like Man Ray's objects, just turns in on itself. Once again, there is the idea of self-awareness which resists surrealism.¹⁶ The focus on movement and shape in *Emak Bakia* forgets another key factor with regard to dreams:

The transformation of ideas into hallucinations is not the only respect in which dreams differ from corresponding thoughts in waking life. Dreams construct a *situation* out of these images; they represent an event which is actually happening; ...they 'dramatize' an idea" (Freud 1953, p. 50, his emphasis).

Emak Bakia lacks situation. Freud ends the above paragraph saying that in dreams "we appear not to think but to experience". In *Emak Bakia*, thought is privileged above experience. It presents a more intellectual experiment with form and this concurs with Man Ray's description of his film:

I said that my film was purely optical, made to appeal only to the eyes – there was no story, not even a scenario. Then, somewhat more truculently; this was not an experimental film – I never showed my experiments – what I offered to the public was final, the result of a way of thinking as well as of seeing...I concluded in a more conciliatory tone: how many films had they sat through for hours and been bored? My film had one outstanding merit, it lasted not more than fifteen minutes (Schwarz 1977, p. 295).

The difference between an intellectual rather than visceral approach is most apparent in the contrast between Man Ray's ending and Buñuel and Dali's opening sequences. At the

¹⁶ *Emak Bakia* was made in the context of various other films exploring the links between mechanisation and film, for example, Leger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924), and Duchamp's *Anémic Cinéma* (1926) both of which are a study in movement and mechanisation. It also shares similarities with Eggeling's *Symphonie Diagonale* (1924) which presents itself as an experiment in time.

end of *Emak Bakia*, the actress Kiki opens her eyes to reveal another set of eyes beneath them (the first is painted on her eyelids). This second awakening is clearly a comment on vision as it uses the surrealist motif of the eyes in order to depict the hidden eye which sees the unconscious and it therefore suggests release from habitual perspective. Buñuel and Dalí's prologue communicates something similar, but is executed in a way that highlights experience – the effect is visceral – and therefore communicates ideas of vision and seeing in a much more immediate way.

The slit eye sequence at the beginning of Buñuel and Dalí's film is said to be the most frequently discussed sequence shorter than two minutes in film history (Short 2003), and there are various ways to read it. We could view it in opposition to the opening of *Emak Bakia* as an assault on, rather than assertion of, the self through its attack on the "eye"; this is elaborated by the implied attack on the viewer who connects visually to the sequence through the image of the eye, and experiences the slashing on a visceral level. The opening sequence of *Un Chien Andalou* is most obviously understood in terms of an assault on vision: the film signals an alternative way of seeing; with the mind's eye, as it were. Fotiade (1995) reads the sequence in terms of Breton's figure of the "untamed eye". In *Surrealism and Painting*, Breton writes:

The eye exists in an untamed state. It presides over the conventional exchange of signals apparently required by the navigation of the mind. But who will draw up the scale of vision? There exists what I have seen many times... There exists also what I am beginning to see that is not visible" (cited in Fotiade 1995, p. 394).¹⁷

Fotiade considers the untamed eye to be the foundation of surrealist cinema, and the way in which it distinguished itself from Dada film. This places an emphasis on the image of the eye which is bound to seeing the visible, but also alludes to the unseen. The implication is that the slit eye can see what the whole eye cannot and therefore, by slitting the eye in two, the film screen becomes a "threshold space" (Everett 1998) which brings together dream and waking life.¹⁸

¹⁷ The translation that Fotiade cites is different to the Simon Watson Taylor translation published in 1972 which does not use the term "untamed eye".

¹⁸ I take this term from the title of Everett's paper 'Screen as threshold' (1998).

Surrealist montage: the slit eye

Editing is the specific film technique that effects surrealist montage. The implicit fragmentation of both editing and surrealist montage corresponds to the slit eye which is then able to access the inaccessible. And further, the slit eye corresponds to Breton's man cut by the window (part image, part sentence), thereby signalling the integration of the dream and the quotidian. That the slit eye should result in a different kind of seeing is practically enacted through the editing of the film. Because the editing manipulates the way that the viewer is positioned in the film, there is a further correspondence between the altered viewing position of the viewer in the discontinuous film and the altered viewing position through the parted eye.¹⁹

The prologue of *Un Chien Andalou* is made up of 12 shots, excluding the titles that bookend it on either side, and is 38 seconds long. It contains the following shots:

Transcript 3: the slit-eye sequence

	Visuals	Edit
1	"Once upon a time" written on screen	All straight unless otherwise indicated
2	MCU hands sharpening razor against door knob	
3	MCU man's face, looking down -	eyeline match to
4	MCU hands with razor	
5	MCU man's face looking down	
6	MS man opens door and goes out -	match cut to
7	MLS man emerges through door onto balcony	Jump-cut, but alleviated by shot scale and slight angle change to
8	MCU man smoking on balcony	Eyeline match to
9	MS moon in the sky with the faint puff of cloud	
10	MCU man on balcony puffing on cigarette, eyeline to moon	
11	CU woman's face, a man with a tie holds her eye open, starts to draw a razor across	
12	MS moon in the sky sliced by a cloud.	
13	ECU eye slit by razor	
14	Title: Eight years later	

¹⁹ Wendy Everett (1998) links this slit eye to Stephen Heath's idea of the cinematic apparatus as the perfect eye.

This sequence draws on the logic of continuity editing. The first image of the razor sharpened adjacent to the door frame is followed by a shot of the man's face (played by Buñuel), establishing the action as his, and lulling the viewer into a position which does not anticipate discontinuity. Through shot reverse-shot, the editing in the opening sequence establishes the relationship between the man and the razor. In sharpening the razor, opening the door and going out to the balcony, the continuity of the sequence is maintained, though very subtly undermined by small lapses such as the missing watch and the collarless shirt which is later replaced by a tie; these small details are not immediately visible. The man puffs on his cigarette and a matched eyeline, point-of-view shot of the moon follows. But an alternative continuity begins here: the smoke from his cigarette provides a visual rhyme with the clouds moving towards the moon in the next shot.

The clear spatial and causal logic that characterises the scene until this point is interrupted in the next shot – the appearance of the woman – thereby drawing attention to both the continuity and its interruption (see figure 3). Prior to this, the woman is not edited into the space of the film and her appearance removes the viewer from the established space of the sequence. But the careful continuity in the editing through the use of match cuts and eyeline matches smooths the viewer's entrance into the film and her sudden appearance does not jar too much; the violence of the slit also does not give the viewer a chance to object to her sudden presence. The moment of slicing the eyeball is anticipated by the cloud moving across the moon, which in turn is visually linked to the cigarette smoke; the cloud moving across the moon interrupts the match between the hand about to cut and the slitting of the eye thereby making the wisp of cloud part of the action. But the use of continuity editing in actually slicing the eyeball is significant: the illusion of the slit eye occurs through the combination of the preceding shot (someone about to slice her eye) and the shot of the slitting of a calf's eye; it is also pre-empted by the graphic continuity of the cloud slicing through the moon. This particular blend of continuity and discontinuity serves to anchor the integration of dream and waking life that surrealism seeks. Without the use of continuity editing, as *Emak Bakia* shows, the viewer remains suspended, never entirely immersed in the film.

While graphic continuity can be considered a subset of continuity editing, the use of visual rhymes and analogies signals the alternative continuity by which the film pieces itself together. The graphic continuity overrides the logic of continuity editing as the film no longer communicates in a linear way. *Un Chien Andalou* uses graphic continuity in order to create visual rhymes; it becomes another linking device that recurs throughout the film. Particular shapes or objects return, sometimes in a different form, and through this use of repetition, the film draws associations and analogies through seemingly disconnected moments. The narrative logic relies on rhymes and association but grounds itself in continuity editing which is persistently interrupted and consequently undermined. The moon, for example, maintains graphic links with other moments in the film: the face of the woman as her eye is slit, the circle of people around the severed hand, which corresponds to the ants crawling out of the hole in the hand, the fuzzy underarm hairs, the sea urchin. Similarly, the striped tie that is laid out on the bed in simulation of a man suggests the tie which suddenly appears in the prologue.

A different way of reading the opening of *Un Chien Andalou* is as the sum of its discontinuities. The suddenly present woman, the missing watch and the collarless shirt turned into tie all appear in only one shot: this is shot 11, which depicts a man about to slit the woman's eye. If we read the man wearing the tie and no watch as a second man distinct from Buñuel, in an entirely different space, then this shot could be understood as a rupture, an imposition to the continuous sequence. Either way, the scene is punctuated by the establishment of an alternative continuity through the use of the conventions of continuity editing.

Breton writes that what most appealed to the surrealists about cinema was the “*power to disorient*” (Breton 1978b, p. 43, his emphasis). For Breton, this disorientation worked in various ways, partly through viewing conventions and partly through the text. Buñuel and Dali's ability to disorient in *Un Chien Andalou* is linked to their revision of spatial and temporal cues, as well as the alternative way of reading bodies, shapes and objects. Temporal cues such as “Eight years later” and “In the spring” are designed to create an illusion of continuity, but because the links are not conventionally logical, these temporal cues are false trails and serve to disorient rather than link the various scenes; this kind of disorientation is consolidated by the way the body is refigured through the

disembodied hand, the bodiless clothes laid out on the bed and of course the slit eye. Similarly, at the core of surrealist expression, is a reconfiguration of space, and consequently of the portrayal of bodies and objects in relation to space. *Un Chien Andalou* disregards the rules of space as objects and characters move through it in a way that is inconsistent with the illusion of realism as, for example, the box appears and disappears, a body falls into a forest and the apartment opens out onto the beach. This contrasts with the spatial continuity that the film maintains. The reconfiguration of space is also evident through the ways in which space is perceived – the emphasis on vision is an enduring feature of surrealism, most succinctly displayed through the sliced eyeball, one of surrealism’s iconic images. The representation of literal space attempts in many ways to compensate for an uneasy relationship with those spaces that cannot be perceived with the human eye. The surrealist desire to reach the inaccessible is in some ways a search for negation and this is difficult to represent. The calculated approach of Man Ray to *Emak Bakia* and surrealism alludes to a core tension in all surrealist expression: how does the surrealist artist articulate the unconscious without mediation and therefore without bringing it to consciousness? Surrealism attempted to appropriate psychoanalytic strategies in order to achieve this.

Surrealism and psychoanalysis

With poetry, painting, and film, surrealists applied the devices of dream thought: condensation, displacement, analogy, intensification, and disregard for conventional time, space, syntax and causality. They hoped to consecrate objective chance, “the geometric locus of coincidences,” and to create works of such startling coincidences that would “attain surreality” (Linden 1984, p. 42). One of the surrealist projects with regard to photographs and the cinema was to explore ways of depicting the dream state and unconscious impulses by exploiting the realist potential of the camera while simultaneously undermining it. Cinema opened up opportunities to explore specific forms of non-verbal expression and this was developed in various ways. Instead of a more direct pictorial relationship between image and referent, surrealism employed complex techniques for communicating through images,

and this was related to the way an image could be arranged, both in composition and in sequence. So, as discussed earlier, surrealist strategies such as chance, automatism and montage redirected straightforward readings of images. Because the surrealists were concerned with expressing that which eludes easy representation, they bore an inherent distrust of the relationship between the image and its referent.

There are two iconic examples of the detachment between the image and its referent. The first is Magritte's 'The treachery of images' (1929) which shows a picture of a pipe which is immediately undermined by the claim 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe' beneath it. The second is the 'chance encounter on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella' by the Comte de Lautréamont, a predecessor of surrealism.²⁰ Both reveal a particular understanding of the material object as detached from their habitual meanings. As with surrealist montage, the surrealist object allows for subterranean meanings to emerge. The transformation of the object was one surrealist means of communicating the co-existence of the interior and the exterior.

By undermining the object, the surrealists were undermining the fabric of the ordinary, material world. Breton explains the surrealist reconfiguration of objects:

Liberated from the need to reproduce forms essentially taken from the outer world, painting benefits in its turn from the only external element that no art can get along without, namely inner representation, *the image present to the mind*. It confronts this inner representation with that of the concrete forms of the real world, seeks in turn, as it has done with Picasso, to seize the object in its generality, and as soon as it has succeeded in so doing, tries to take that supreme step which is the poetic step par excellence: excluding (relatively) the external object as such and considering nature only in its relationship with the inner world of consciousness (Breton 1972c, p. 260).

Breton speaks of the surrealist relationship with objects as a means to reconcile interior perspective with material presence. In this way, the object is no longer bound to its material presence, instead, it is reproduced as simultaneously in its general form but also

²⁰ Both of these, like "the exquisite corpse will drink new wine" and Magritte's apple disclaimed by "Ceci n'est pas une pomme" are now popular expressions of surrealism. This is evident in the earlier quotation from David Wills where he uses the umbrella and the sewing machine in order to indicate how difference works in surrealist juxtaposition.

revised by its relationship with inner consciousness. Objects are therefore presented as material, but their boundaries are tested as they become altered through subjective interpretations. Surrealism therefore establishes an alternative relationship with objects and this emerges through techniques such as counterpoint and juxtaposition. These techniques work to destabilise objects by removing them from their usual contexts.

In *Un Chien Andalou*, psychoanalytic techniques such as condensation and displacement mark the depiction of objects in the film. Displacement, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, indicates a chain of association, the way meaning can be passed on from one idea to another, facilitating condensation, which refers to the way one idea can represent a range of associated meanings (1973). The underlying sexual anxiety becomes displaced through a series of objects working in relation to each other. The object that stands out in the film is the striped box which reappears in various contexts, thereby indicating a skewed causality in the film. The idea of sexual anxiety is suggested by the use of the box to indicate the groin when the woman lays clothes on the bed in the shape of a man. The box defies the logic of continuity editing: after filling in for the groin, it inexplicably reappears in the street and is given to the androgen. As the androgen stands clutching the box in the street, a car hurtles towards her and there is a series of shots of her both holding the box and with her arms raised in defence, the box neatly placed at her feet (see figures 4 and 5). The disconnected and repeated depiction of the box throughout the film gives it a significance which is best understood in relation to Freud's idea of condensation: the box is a seemingly unified object which indicates various associated ideas relating to sexuality.

Breton's 1934 lecture on objects entitled 'The Surrealist situation of the object' (Breton 1972c) also occurs in the context of him commenting on the dangers of its success: that the term surrealism was being employed too loosely; his definition of surrealist objects was used specifically to define and differentiate surrealism from contemporary experimental forms. Interestingly, Breton's lecture on surrealist objects was delivered in Prague, where later Czech surrealist animator, Jan Švankmajer, would be developing his own surreal relationship with objects.

Emak Bakia and other avant-garde films show that irregular narratives examining movement, shape and structure and decontextualising objects through the use of montage

was not the exclusive domain of surrealist film in the 1920s; surrealism was not the only movement that sought to defamiliarise through formalism. What primarily distinguishes the surrealists from other avant-garde movements of the time was the way in which they coincided with psychoanalysis in their interest in the unconscious, and equally importantly, their playful approach to the psychoanalytic strategies that they drew on. Various critics have cautioned against a too serious reading of surrealist images, particularly in terms of their symbolism.²¹

The relationship between Freudian psychoanalysis and surrealism has been fraught with mutual distrust on either side.²² Caws and Harris include the prickly correspondence between Breton and Freud in their translation of *Communicating Vessels* (1990) in which Freud, rather disingenuously, comments: “although I have received many testimonies of the interest that you and your friends show for my research, I am not able to clarify for myself what Surrealism is and what it wants. Perhaps I am not destined to understand it, I who am so distant from art” (Breton 1990, p. 152).²³ By saying that he is not able to understand what surrealism wants, Freud dismisses the surrealist claim to accessing the unconscious and distances it from his more scientific approach.²⁴ In an attempt to account for the relationship between psychoanalysis and surrealism, Lomas considers one of the key differences between them: he notes an important distinction “hinges on the very question of analysis” as the surrealists were interested in the “products of the unconscious”, while psychoanalysis found the value of the unconscious to be the “raw material of interpretation” (Lomas 2000, p. 5). Lomas documents Breton’s reservations about psychoanalysis, particularly in terms of ascribing psychoanalytic interpretations of surrealist products. In this way, he draws attention to the exploitation of psychoanalytic symbolism as a knowing device used by surrealists rather

²¹ Thiher, (1977), Hammond, (1978), Everett (1998) Lomas (2000) are four examples that indicate that for as long as surrealism in film has been discussed, there has been the tendency to warn against reading the images in a serious or symbolic way.

²² David Macey (1988) details psychoanalysis’s debt to surrealism in terms of surrealism spreading the ideas of psychoanalysis. He traces Lacan’s own affinity for and involvement in surrealism.

²³ The two men had a series of letters arising from Breton’s accusation in *Communicating Vessels* that Freud did not reference Volkelt. The reference had been included in the German edition, but not the French.

²⁴ Caws, in the introduction to the translation links this question of what surrealism wants to Freud’s other question, “what do women want?” (1990).

than as a blind adherence to Freudian psychoanalysis.²⁵ The appropriation of psychoanalytic techniques to coincide with surrealist techniques is conscious and deliberate and this makes it difficult to consider these works only in terms of the symbolic value of the images.

Instead, it is more productive to focus on the relationship between surrealism and psychoanalysis in terms of their mutual pursuit of the hidden structures of life. Psychoanalysis and surrealism intersect in their joint interest in “the habitually concealed or occluded” (Marcus 1998, p. 243); both have an affinity with the cinema because of these intersecting interests. Macey observes that “the question of possible mutual influences is less important than a parallelism which testifies to the fertility of the borderlands between psychiatry, psychoanalysis and surrealism” (1988, p. 63). Surrealism attempted to reconcile psychoanalytic techniques with specific textual practices; it sought to find analogies between the two as both worked towards revealing unconscious experience. In film, this becomes particularly evident through the disruptions and deviations from continuity editing conventions which fundamentally sought to construct a linear and coherent narrative. Silent films had developed a syntax that allowed the narrative logic of film, particularly in relation to realism, to run parallel to that of the novel (Thiher 1977). Eisenstein explored Griffith’s filmic equivalences to the classical realist novel in his essay (Eisenstein 2004). These developments were largely aiming at a transposition of the narrative logic of nineteenth century novels in order to construct realism along similar lines.

Filmmakers wanted to cope with the problems of temporality and the mimesis of episodic experience as well as character functions and point-of-view not only in the same manner as a realist novelist, but, more especially, because the realist novelist had defined these concerns to be the central preoccupations of mimesis (Thiher 1977, p. 38).

But the surrealist integration of psychoanalysis worked towards an expression of subjective states that were not communicated by the classical realist novel.

²⁵ Lomas points out that Dali was criticised for a too academic approach to the use of symbols.

To use it [cinema] to tell a story is to neglect one of its best resources, to fail to fulfil its most profound purpose. That is why I think the cinema is made primarily to express matters of the mind, the inner consciousness, not by a succession of images so much as by something more imponderable which restores them to us with their direct matter (Artaud 1978, p. 64).

Artaud was drawn to what he perceived as a magical, almost alchemic process that became a space for displaced religious rituals. By conceiving of the cinema as an alchemic process, Artaud recognised cinema as a magical transfiguration. While Artaud's views might be extreme and not representative of surrealism in general, they coincide with Breton's fascination with the marvellous. They also indicate that the surrealist tendency in cinema was not simply a matter of showing dreams. Rather, film revealed structure and was able to mimic psychic processes and thereby access the unconscious. Benjamin says of the camera:

Photography with its devices of slow motion and enlargement, reveals the secret. It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis (Benjamin 1979a, p. 243).

Benjamin aligns the technical ability of the camera with psychoanalysis by finding analogy between the camera's ability to slow down or zoom in on the visible world in order to reveal what usually goes unnoticed, and the relationship between psychoanalysis and the unconscious. From here it is possible to understand how film itself may be inherently surrealist as Wendy Everett suggests through her comparison of the visuality of both and their mutual concern with the dream (1998). But there are further ways in which film and surrealism coincide, and these are related to technique and structure. Surrealism expressed itself in film through the use of visual associations, nonlinearity, a skewed causality, a playful use of symbols, and a revision of the temporal and spatial logic of film. These techniques coincide with psychoanalytic devices such as the relationship between dreams and condensation, symbolism, parapraxis, ellipsis and

projection.²⁶ Similarly, editing works in accordance with psychoanalytic processes such as displacement: editing, particularly when it is nonlinear, functions in relation to the sequences that precede and follow it. The use of alternative continuities and associations requires that scenes and images are read in relation to each other. The surrealists then consciously and playfully applied these elements in order to explore the unconscious. This conscious appropriation suggests that while the film sought to emulate psychoanalytic devices in order to explore the unconscious, there is a limited value to reading them as a means of interpreting the film. As indicated earlier, one of the key divides between psychoanalysis and surrealism was that surrealism sought the unconscious and not the interpretation of it (Lomas 2000). Therefore, acknowledging the similarities between psychoanalytic techniques and the surrealist use of editing sheds light on the kind of relationship that surrealism sought with psychoanalysis; it brings us that bit closer to understanding what it was that Breton wanted.

The surrealist revolution

Having discussed surrealist montage in terms of surrealist film, I will briefly consider a more overarching significance of surrealism to this study: the reading of the objective through the subjective and the consideration of the socio-political through the aesthetic. Breton's reconceptualisation of the quotidian is potentially subversive. Hal Foster details how the surrealist uncanny has social implications and how Breton's image of the modern mannequin and romantic ruin offer a critique of industrial capitalism (Foster 1993).

The marvellous is not the same in every period of history: it partakes in some obscure way of a sort of general revelation only the fragments of which come down to us: they are the romantic ruins, the modern mannequin, or any other symbol capable of affecting the human sensibility (Breton 1972a, p. 16).

²⁶ Hammond observes: "Freud had uncovered the devices the unconscious uses: condensation, displacement, symbolisation, co-existent opposites, a disregard for time, space and causality. The surrealists proposed employing these same devices consciously to reveal the unconscious things of life" (1978, p. 8) thereby reiterating Linden's point stated at the beginning of the chapter.

The idea that the marvellous is not the same in every period of history sheds light on the relationship between the marvellous and the ordinary. It suggests that the marvellous is in part constituted by the everyday, when the ordinary is perceived anew.

Breton, from the early days of surrealism, conceived of the movement in revolutionary terms. Initially, this referred primarily to a revised approach to the real, in which the imagination refreshed and recast the habitual; the conceptualisation of surrealism as a revolution marked it with an urgency and emphasised it as an approach to life rather than purely an aesthetic. As surrealism progressed, Breton became increasingly interested in Marxism. In some ways this may seem the ultimate in surrealist montage: the juxtaposition of the dream and the socio-political; how can unmediated unconsciousness and the marvellous work in conjunction with social consciousness? In the 1924 manifesto which laid out a map of surrealism, social concerns and processes were absent.²⁷ Breton's awareness of this contradiction prompted him to observe in an essay entitled 'Visit with Leon Trotsky': "We have heard often enough, my friends and I, that this attitude we wish to maintain with the greatest rigour is incompatible with Marxism!" (Breton 1978a, p. 180). Breton does not hold to this view. He goes on to write of Trotsky: "I would say, comrades, that I could have found no one more open to my preoccupation than I found him to be" (p. 180).

Breton became increasingly anxious in his attempt to "reconcile Engels and Freud" (Cohen 1995, p. 2). But there remained a tension between the potentially mystifying expression of surrealism and Breton's more political interests resulting in some uncertainty around Breton's exact position. *Communicating Vessels* (1932) and *Mad Love* (1937), the two texts that express some of Breton's ideas here are not easy to read as clear theoretical concerns, and the effect is that many people, surrealists included, were not convinced. Breton's position in the French Communist party was not comfortable and he left in 1933.

²⁷ Instead, lines like these entrench a very specific kind of social positioning. This is from a section in the 1924 manifesto entitled 'Secrets of the magical surrealist art': "After you have settled yourself in a place as favourable as possible to the concentration of your mind upon itself, have your writing materials brought to you" (Breton 1972a, p. 29).

Another voice picked up on some of the ideas that Breton was trying to communicate: Walter Benjamin's interest in surrealism has been frequently discussed.²⁸ Benjamin in his essay on surrealism credits it with a "profane illumination": he recognises the revolutionary potential in the surrealist fascination with the outmoded and discarded, which, as Breton's observation, quoted earlier, suggests, was where the surrealists located the marvellous (Benjamin 1979c, p. 227).²⁹ Both Benjamin and Breton were interested in exploring the irrational aspects of social processes; they were both intrigued by the ways in which the irrational pervades society. Benjamin's insight into the surrealist project excited him greatly: in a letter to Adorno dated 31 May 1935, he claims that he had to put down Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* because it made his heart beat too excitedly (Adorno 1999). While he remained sceptical of various elements of surrealism, particularly its potential for "intoxication", he recognised something of his Arcades project in the "profane illumination" of surrealism: both surrealism and the Arcades project attempted to apply psychoanalysis to orthodox Marxism.

One of the contributions of surrealism to art is therefore the coincidence of the subjective with the objective, which allows the exterior to be read through the lens of the interior. Without claiming a direct influence of surrealism on all of my later examples,³⁰ I consider its tactics of disjuncture, particularly surrealist montage, and its related juxtaposition of the socio-political with phantasmagoria a helpful premise for some of my later discussions. The importance of the relationship between surrealism and Marxism for this thesis rests in the potential of surrealism and surrealist techniques applied to film, in particular, to reflect on the socio-political realities by recasting the objective through the lens of subjective internal states. Surrealism's potential in this regard is taken up in a different way by magical realism, the subject of the next chapter, which shifts focus from the unconscious to the communal. A detailed portrayal of the objective in magical realist

²⁸ See for example Foster (1993) and Cohen (1995).

²⁹ Benjamin, W 'Surrealism: Last Snapshot of the European Intelligensia' in *One Way Street* (1979)

³⁰ Roger Shattuck, in his introduction to Maurice Nadeau's *History of Surrealism* identifies the inability to pinpoint what surrealism became after its prime. He says that the term "refers to literary-artistic activity that centred in Paris in the Twenties and profoundly affected two generations of poets and painters in Europe. Beyond this point, any concurrence of opinion on the nature and significance of surrealism goes to pieces" (Nadeau 1968, p. 12).

texts allows access to collective internal states, which necessarily creates a space for reflection on historical and socio-political contexts.

Conclusion

It is no longer the harmony of the individual parts that constitutes the whole; it is the contradictory relationship of heterogeneous elements (Bürger 1984, p. 82). Peter Bürger points out that montage allows for a unified reading but one which holds inherent contradictions. Surrealism in film integrated interruption and worked towards different ways of reading images through its particular use of montage. The films emulate the effects of psychoanalysis by using editing techniques that resonate with psychoanalytic practice. This is evident both in terms of the structuring of non-linear narrative as well as the particular depiction of objects in surrealist film, which gain their significance in terms of where they are located within a text.

Surrealist film is an early example of the use of discontinuity editing to incorporate dreams, the marvellous or elements of fantasy. But surrealism always emphasised that it was not an aesthetic; rather, its aim was to access a specific kind of reality, surreality, through the use of art. Similarly, the injection of fantasy, or its variants, through the use of discontinuity and disjuncture in other contexts has also indicated a concern that stretches beyond aesthetics. One of the legacies of surrealism has been an understanding of how art and art form may reveal an alternative kind of realism; how art enables one to push beyond these constraints. By aligning itself with psychoanalysis, even in this limited way, surrealism showed that film had the potential to reveal subjective experience through the use of montage.



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Chapter Three

Magical Realism and Film

This chapter explores the relationship between magical realism and film. It draws on Jameson's 1986 essay, 'On Magic Realism and Film' which attempts to reconcile the idea of magical realism as a narrative trend, with the idea of magical realism as altered perception, by discussing the two in relation to film. I consider the early understanding of visual magical realism in Weimar Germany and then briefly examine more contemporary claims to magical realism: as a postcolonial mode; as a Latin American form of expression; and in terms of Jameson's idea of it as an interstitial mode. In relation to film, even though the term has currency, there is no clear consensus about how it should be used. I suggest three useful ways for reading magical realism in relation to film: it could indicate literary magical realism adapted to film, and it could refer to the appropriation of the term by contemporary popular film. The third is the most intriguing: there is a body of films that exhibit equivalent textual strategies to literary magical realism, and I explore this by drawing on Wendy Faris's article 'Scheherazade's Children' (1995) which summarises textual features of magical realism.

Introduction

Maggie Ann Bower's 2004 study of magical realism includes a filmography at the end and only five films are listed: *Like Water for Chocolate*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Being John Malkovich*, *City of Angels*, *Wings of Desire* and *Stuart Little* (2004, p. 136). These slim, almost random pickings reflect the difficulties of identifying a definitive body of magical realist films. Magical realism has been most frequently discussed as a literary

mode, particularly within a Latin American or postcolonial tradition. The link between contemporary literary magical realism and the origin of the term in early twentieth century fine art has been well documented. In film, the term has been less formally established: it has been casually applied to communicate a popular trend in Hollywood cinema; it has also been used in more precise way that correlates to the attributes developed in literary and art criticism. While it is difficult to definitively apply the term to contemporary work outside of literature, its origins in fine art provide a link to the visuality of film.

Magical realism moves towards realism even as it pulls away and this informs the antinomy that Chanady recognises as the structural hinge of a magical realist text (Chanady 1985).¹ This combination of fantasy and reality suggests an affinity with film. Cinema is itself simultaneously implicitly fantastic, or illusive, and realist.² As with surrealism, with which it has a historical relationship, magical realism may be well suited to cinema, a medium that is conducive to exploring the co-existence of the magical or the fantastic and the real. But there is a significant, if small, body of films that are associated with surrealism and these are largely agreed. Filmic magical realism, on the other hand, is best pursued by tracing the influence of the mode on contemporary cinema practice.

My discussion of magical realism in film draws on Jameson's extraction of two tendencies from its complex history: a narrative trend and a "metamorphosis in perception" (1986, p. 301). This chapter explores the premise of magical realism as metamorphosis in perception which emerges in its origins in fine art and reconciles with its narrative tendencies in literature and, potentially, in film. In my discussion of how magical realism has been applied to film, I identify three distinct uses. These include the adaptation of novels and stories to screen and the Hollywood appropriation of the mode. The third refers to films that textually embed recognised magical realist techniques and practices. But while these certainly indicate a strong influence of magical realism on film, I conclude that there is no agreed body of magical realist films.

¹ In addition to Chanady, for a discussion on the combination of fantasy and reality in magical realism see Flores (1995) and Faris (2004).

² See Chapter One for a discussion of illusion and realism in cinema.

Early magical realism: the metamorphosis of perception

Because contemporary magical realism has been recognised as predominantly a literary mode, not much has been written about it in relation to film. Jameson's 1986 essay, 'On Magical Realism and Film' is the most significant attempt to locate all three media (literature, fine art and film) in relation to magical realism. Jameson spells out two distinct tendencies in the development of magical realism since the early part of the twentieth century: the "metamorphosis in perception" (1986, p. 301), which occurs through the transfiguration of the object, and the narrative aspect of magical realism; he identifies Marquez's writing as the moment where these two merge.³ Jameson's reading of magical realism begins to draw together the narrative and the perceptual elements in a more theoretical way through his application of the concept to film. Because magical realism has its early history as a visual art form, film could potentially further reconcile the narrative trend – which is strongest in literature – with the metamorphosis of perception inherited from ideas of magical realism in painting.⁴

The idea of the metamorphosis of perception in relation to magical realism emerges through the writing of German art historian, Franz Roh, writing in 1925. Franz Roh used the term "magischer Realismus" to describe developments in German art of the time (Roh 1995).⁵ This is one of the earliest applications of the term and refers to a renewed interest in the conventions of realism as a reaction to Expressionism.⁶

³ Jameson's discussion of magical realism in film centres on three films and three features that he identifies: history, colour and narrative. My intention is not to simply replicate Jameson's article and apply it wholesale to my examples. I am primarily interested in two elements of his article: his attempt to reconcile magical realism as metamorphosis of perception with magical realism as narrative technique and his "very provisional hypothesis" discussed later.

⁴ The thread of magical realism in painting was picked up in various different contexts beyond 1920s Weimar Germany.

⁵ 'Magischer Realismus' is sometimes translated as 'magic' realism in order to distinguish it from 'magical' realism, the more contemporary form, but this is not always consistent. See Bower (2004) to trace this development from magic to magical realism.

⁶ Roh is generally accepted as coining the term magical realism in relation to representation in art. The uncertainty of definition that has dogged the term is present from its very start as Roh claims "I attribute no special value to the title 'magical realism'" (Roh 1995, p. 16). The second name, "Neue Sachlichkeit" coined by Gustav Hartlaub, a German museum director gained currency because of "the famous Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition of 1925. Roh's term did not reappear until a new interest in the Weimar Republic and German art of the time ...in the 1960s" (Guenther 1995, pp. 33-4). Guenther

Contemporaneously, the term “Neue Sachlichkeit” also emerged as a description of these developments and while there are some differences in the application of the two labels, Neue Sachlichkeit is the name that has endured.⁷ This new phase in German art emphasised a return to materiality as it detailed a depiction of the object world in paintings and photographs that attended to the mundane with clarity and precision. But the way of looking at the object world was altered: a sense of mystery was perceived behind the implacable materiality of the depiction and the ordinary was offered up for reinterpretation. The intellectual zeitgeist was marked by the rise in popularity of psychoanalysis – the awareness of an unconscious layer rendering things not quite as they seem, reinforcing a need to question the apparent, and imbuing the visible with the weight of the invisible.

Guenther (1995) traces the genesis of magical realism back to Giorgio de Chirico, the Italian artist usually associated with Metaphysical painting (*Pittura Metafisica*) which he developed along with Carlo Carrà between 1911 and 1918, and this was also the origin of the parallel path of surrealism. De Chirico was greatly admired by the surrealists who adopted similar ideas around alternate realities that could be accessed beneath the object world (Alexandrian 1970).⁸ Both of these approaches, born in close proximity and sharing the same source of inspiration, embraced a similar ambivalence to realism: their interest was in an object world infused with subjectivity. Both found that the object was key to accessing truths that lay beneath the surface and Roh drew on Carrà and de Chirico’s *Pittura Metafisica* in order to expand these ideas.

points out that even earlier than Roh, Novalis used “magical idealism” and “magical realism” with regard to romantic philosophy. But Roh’s use of magical realism in Weimar art, while distinct from, is connected to, and has deeply influenced, contemporary magical realism. Less has been written about the links between Novalis’s ideas regarding romantic philosophy on later magical realism, but Christopher Warnes’s doctoral thesis explores the relationship between the two (Warnes 2003).

⁷ There are several films made under the umbrella of Neue Sachlichkeit but the initial impulse came from painting. The influence of the art movement is evident in the films, particularly in the work of Georg Pabst.

⁸ His early work was a huge inspiration to the surrealists and de Chirico was one of the exhibitors in the first group exhibition. But they were disappointed by his later work, culminating in the surrealists running a counter-exhibition to his work where they staged children’s toys in parodies of his recent paintings. Aragon also renamed the paintings (Alexandrian 1970, p. 58).

Carrà and de Chirico emphasise an attention to form in order to access a hidden reality (Carrà et al. 1971, p. 23).⁹ Their desired effect was the transformation of the “pictorial representation of reality in such a way as to make visible the concealed reality that lies beneath”(Carrà et al. 1971, p. 181). Similarly, Roh’s use of the term attempted to define an art whose realism was so laden that it pointed to an interior reality beneath it: “it’s a question of representing before our eyes, in an intuitive way, *the fact, the interior figure of the exterior world.*” (Roh 1995, p. 24; his emphasis). An ambivalence towards the object world is evident: there is a clear mistrust of the world of appearances in favour of the concealed reality that lies beneath; yet it is only through the immersion in the detail of what can be seen that one is able to access what lies beneath, to effect transformation of what is immediately visible. The exterior world needed to be depicted in a realistic way in order to access a second, concealed reality; Roh advocated smooth surfaces, fine textures and clear detail of objects. Through this, a second reality, one that lies beneath a detailed and accurate presentation emerges: the object is transformed and consequently, the way of perceiving the habitual is altered.

Early magical realism sought out the materiality of the object to counteract the increasing sense of an alienated and modernised world; the growth of technology and mechanical processes resulted in a sense of detachment and loss of agency. Like Surrealism, early magical realist art explored issues of modernity through images of and an engagement with technology and mechanisation. One of the dilemmas that early magical realist art sought to communicate was the plight of the individual against the onslaught of modernity: a sense of alienation in an increasingly automated world. This is evident, for example, in some of the etchings of Otto Dix which present detailed and precise, yet eerily hyperreal images of war: soldiers dehumanised and made monstrous by gas masks, an alien landscape of craters and trenches. Both surrealism and magical realism emphasise defamiliarisation through juxtaposition. Similarly, one of the most frequent uses of juxtaposition in magical realist films occurs through the coincidence of different worlds.

⁹ There are two Carràs mentioned in this thesis: one is Carlo Carrà, de Chirico’s contemporary and the other is his son, Massimo Carrà, primary editor of *Metaphysical Art* (1971), on de Chirico and Carrà’s painting.

Magical realism and surrealism developed differently as they responded to their immediate contexts, but remained bound up in their common affinity with the ideas of de Chirico, and also through the transportation of intellectual and artistic trends within and between Europe and Latin America. Figures like Max Ernst engaged with elements of early magical realism, and brought this, along with the remnants of his flirtation with Dadaism, to surrealism, thereby consolidating a fluid interaction between the modes. The Spanish influence in surrealism, most visible in Buñuel and Dali, extends a kinship to Latin America, not least through a linguistic commonality. Furthermore, Alejo Carpentier's writing about the "marvellous real", which is generally accepted as magical realism, responds on the one hand to the context of Latin America, and on the other to surrealism, in which he had been an active participant. Since then, magical realism has developed primarily as a literary mode popularly associated with Latin American literature. I will consider some of the key applications of the term.¹⁰

Contemporary magical realism

Like any other apparently stable term, magical realism has been interpreted and applied in various ways. Isolating some of the claims, which sometimes converge, sometimes conflict, disentangles some of the varying aesthetic and political functions ascribed to magical realism. There are several key deployments of the term which intersect with each other: magical realism as early German art; its positioning at the interstices of different modes of production by Jameson; the popular appropriation of magical realism by Hollywood film; the idea of magical realism as postcolonial or hybrid expression which coincides with the understanding of it as postmodern. There is also the claim that magical realism is autochthonous to Latin American experience, or at least, it has been very closely associated with Latin America. While the contemporary use of magical realism is distinct from 1920s magic realism, there is a clear, if not entirely unbroken, thread that binds the two.

¹⁰ This diaspora of surrealism and magical realism has been told many times. Bower (2004) sums it up well as does Guenther (1995).

The association of magical realism and Latin America has emerged through the recognition of a trend in Latin American literature popularised by Marquez and Borges. But there has also been a suggestion of magical realism as natural expression in Latin America; Jameson elaborates on this by saying that Carpentier considered it the authentic Latin American expression of surrealism (1986, p. 301). In various papers, starting from 1949, Carpentier revised the surrealist conception of the marvellous to indicate a wonder inherent in Latin America (1990). Zamora and Faris note in their introduction to 'On the Marvelous Real in America' that Carpentier asserts a key difference between the marvellous real and surrealism:

In Latin America, Carpentier argues, the fantastic is not to be discovered by subverting or transcending reality with abstract forms and manufactured combinations of images. Rather, the fantastic inheres in the natural and human realities of time and place, where improbable juxtapositions and marvelous mixtures exist by virtue of Latin America's varied history, geography, demography, and politics – not by manifesto (Zamora and Faris 1995, p. 75).

Carpentier identifies the marvellous real as outward focused, looking towards community rather than inward-looking and concentrated on the unconscious. He also emphasises the relationship between the context of Latin America and the marvellous real. Carpentier's idea of a tendency towards magical realist expression in Latin America resonates with Marquez's view of his storytelling: in his conversations with Mendoza, Marquez claims that he tells stories the way that his grandmother did (Mendoza c1983), suggesting that there is something about storytelling in Latin America that is inherently magical realist. Magical realism therefore invites us to reconsider what is "real" as it embraces a more inclusive idea of reality. Zamora and Faris validate this broader idea of reality in certain cultures as they refer to "non-Western cultural systems that privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, tradition over innovation" (Zamora and Faris 1995, p. 3). But these distinctions are perhaps too simple and too general and potentially encourage an exotic view of "non-Western" cultures.

A similar, though less insistent, claim is made for other postcolonial or cross-cultural contexts based on the co-existence of different frameworks of experience.¹¹ Just as magical realism has been claimed – and rejected – as the “authentic” Latin American voice; its open-endedness and interstitial nature offer a means of expression suited to postcolonial contexts.¹² Magical realism is frequently associated with postcoloniality because it is a form that emerges in the convergence of opposing forces. The fusion of “possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes” (Zamora and Faris, 1995:6) applies at a textual level, for example, the use of juxtaposition and oxymorons, as well as at a contextual level. But the reading of magical realism as postcolonial expression frequently sets it up, as Zamora does, in opposition to “Western” or “rational” modes. The positive interpretation here is that magical realism occurs as an alternative to dominant ways of perceiving the world and offers a different framework where elements of realism and of the fantastic may be rearranged. But the implicit danger of an inescapable binary opposition between Western/rational/realism and exotic/irrational/fantastic is not always averted in this reading. Consequently, a newer generation of writers from Latin America, Africa and India disclaim magical realism because of its potential for romanticism and exoticisation; it can be another tool in the ghettoisation of literature outside of the Western mainstream.

Identifying magical realism as a postcolonial mode resonates with the “very provisional hypothesis” put forward by Jameson in his paper on magical realism and film (Jameson 1986, p. 311). He positions magical realism at the interstices: he refers particularly to magical realism as the site where different modes of production coalesce and considers that it relies on a type of “historical raw material in which disjunction is structurally present” (1986, p. 311). In his paper on Carpentier and Derek Walcott, David Mikics elaborates on Jameson’s definition by suggesting that magical realism “relies on

¹¹ There are texts that are sometimes considered magical realist, for example the work of Angela Carter, which do not conform to either of these claims to magical realism, as the term is not fully agreed. My discussion of the claims to magical realism highlights the usual deployments of the term rather than focusing on the debates around definition.

¹² There is also a backlash to this association of magical realism and Latin America. Most coherently, McOndo is a recent literary trend, clearly derived from Marquez’s *Macondo*, which deliberately moves away from magical realism towards a more urban, grittier representation. It began with the publication of an anthology of short stories, entitled *McOndo* in 1996.

disjunctions among differing cultures and social formations which coexist in the same space and time” (Mikics 1995, p. 373). This resonates with an understanding of magical realism that includes popular storytelling techniques associated with pre-colonial or traditional societies and the postcolonial condition; an understanding which merges different ways of looking at and representing the world, the re-incorporation of poesis, as pre-colonial artistic form, with Western traditions of mimesis.¹³ The shift from early magic realism to contemporary magical realism also reflects a shift from modernism to postmodernism.

The claim for magical realism as an interstitial mode coincides with many of the features that are ascribed to it: magical realism is liminal, hybrid, in-between; it is open-ended, dialogical and polyvocal.¹⁴ Magical realism is implicitly political: it is a latently subversive form which opens up new ways of looking as magical realist texts respond to the varying social and historical contexts in which they are produced. Magical realism engages a particular relationship with history: while surrealism is made strange by the murky waters of the unconscious, magical realism engages with the marvellous through a “shared fictionalisation of history” (Cooper 1998, p. 36). David Mikics observes that magical realism serves as a mode in which the uncanny reveals itself as a “historical and cultural phenomenon” (1995, p. 373). He identifies the ability of magical realism to “transfigure a historical account via phantasmagorical narrative excess” (p. 372) which coincides with Zamora and Faris’s description of magical realism as history through “clairvoyance”(Zamora and Faris 1995, p. 6). This is an understanding of history that disregards time as linear and a coherent spatial integrity, favouring an integration of the past into the present and redefining causality. The inherent contradiction in the term, linking the real and the magical, communicates an ability to slip between different modes; it can illuminate the subjective through the objective.

Magical realism, as it eludes easy categorisation, retains Jameson’s often quoted “strange seductiveness” (1986, p. 302) and remains a persuasive and compelling means of classifying a particular mode of representation. Like surrealism, it rejects the idea of a

¹³ See Chanady ‘The Territorialization of the Imaginary’ (1995) for an account of this.

¹⁴ See Zamora and Faris, ‘Introduction’(1995), Brenda Cooper, (1998) and Faris (2004) for discussions regarding the open-ended textuality of magical realism.

fixed objective reality in favour of representation that speaks to the subjectivity of experience, but magical realism locates this more specifically within a social context. Magical realism, as a mode of representation, is thought to compensate for the inability of realism to depict particular realities effectively. Simpkins considers the argument that magical realism is seen to “improve” on realism as it comes closer to capturing lived reality which in itself is appropriately disproportionate (Simpkins 1988, p. 140). In this way magical realism moves closer towards a nuanced, more accurate, depiction of the world.

From its early use in Weimar Germany, magical realism has evolved to the contemporary application which communicates a predominantly literary mode that is positioned interstitially. Magical realism vacillates between the magical and the real, the objective and the subjective, the post- and pre-colonial and different modes of production. Moving between the literary and the visual, many aspects of magical realism converge in the application of the term to film.

Magical realism in film

Magical realism in film has been narrowly defined as the translation of Latin American magical realist literature by Bordwell and Thompson (1994) and associated with third cinema by James Donald (1989). Donald draws on Jameson to identify magical realism as a “third force” (1989, p. 228) and locates this alongside the emergence of third cinema which attempts to work outside of restricting dualisms in debates around cinema. Third cinema is almost as slippery a term as magical realism, and the problems are charted across similar territory: initially third cinema referred specifically to a Latin American militant cinema following the manifesto by Fernando Solanas and Otavio Getino in 1969, but has come to refer to a broader set of films.¹⁵ While there is an idea that third cinema, like surrealism, refers to the specific historical moment, it can be understood in terms of a

¹⁵ See Michael T. Martin's (1997) edited volume of manifestoes and writings on Latin American cinema.

broader application.¹⁶ Like magical realism, third cinema, inhabits an in-between place, pointing to a clear affinity between the two.

Following Donald and Jameson, it appears that at least in the eighties, the idea of magical realism in film extended the altered perspective within its texts to critical approaches to cinema: it seemed to offer a different perspective on realism/anti-realism, mainstream/ avant-garde modernism/postmodernism debates. Donald interprets Jameson's reading on magical realism and film as an "emerging cinematic mode that allows at least some purchase on History" (1989, p. 228). There seems to be quite an optimistic view of the role of magical realism in film particularly since Jameson considers it as alternative narrative logic to postmodernism. But twenty years after Jameson's article, after magical realism appears to have passed its peak, it would seem that magical realism as a mode of representation has not turned out as anticipated, leaving critics to speculate on its future.¹⁷

Other applications of magical realism to film tend to be fairly broad. For example, there is an understanding that is most often encountered in the entertainment pages in the form of movie reviews, where the term – compelling in its ambiguity and exotic associations – has been used regularly enough but without too much sophistication. While Bower rightly states that it is more than "simply a fashionable device" (2004, p. 128), magical realism was very much in vogue in the mid-nineties to the early two thousands, perhaps attaining its peak in Oprah's declaration of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as book of the century. This peak in popularity coincided with a scepticism in its critical reception. The popular use of the term usually indicates an outline roughly sketched – magical realism reduced to its basic element as it crudely emphasises the most appealing aspects of the mode. Often, but not exclusively, it is applied to films that engage the senses (most frequently taste) like *Chocolat* (Lasse Hallström 2000), *Simply Irresistible* (Mark Tarlov 1999), *Woman on Top* (Fina Torres

¹⁶ Stam and Shohat compile a useful list of "overlapping circles of denotation" for third cinema beyond Latin America in *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (Stam and Shohat 1994, p. 28)

¹⁷ Maggie Ann Bowers (2004) dedicates a chapter to this; Chris Warnes's doctoral thesis considers newspaper articles in *The Guardian*, *Newsweek* and *The Observer* bearing headlines like "Is magical realism dead?" On the other hand, Wendy Faris (2004) asserts that it has become a very important mode and reads it as "perhaps the most important contemporary trend in international fiction" (p. 1).

2000) as they offer sentimental, sexualised and exoticised accounts of the ordinary being infused with the extraordinary; they also tend to be romantic comedies and are often dismissed as “chick-flicks”.

The appropriation of magical realism by popular forms of literature and especially film have resulted in what could be perceived as a similar kind of nostalgia that Jameson contrasts magical realism against in his 1986 paper. These films lack the historical significance and perspective that is so definitive of magical realism. For the most part, they do not seem to indicate a subversive magical realism that coaxes viewers away from received ideas through its ability to offer a fresh way of seeing. But there are other elements, cross-culturalism and a potentially subversive treatment of gender and ethnic identities which make it hard to simply dismiss these films.

But there is the danger that the subversive potential of magical realism is absorbed into mainstream narratives and made benign. This incorporation too often reduces it to a binary opposition of magical and real interacting with each other in an attempt to tap into the saleability of the concept. The term magical realism here becomes a selling point – cinema is a commercial industry first – and the materiality of culture is made apparent through the transformation of magical realism itself from a subversive to a fashionable mode, subsequently viewed with a slightly suspicious edge in the early 21st century, as if just past its sell-by date.¹⁸ Similarly, many novels – saleability is also a key criterion for publishing in the book industry – have also appropriated a magical realism-by-numbers style with greater and lesser success at the height of the trend. This could be seen as the failure of magical realism as it succumbs to the softer, more exotic elements that are couched in the form; where the transformation of the object world is simply illusory rather than indicating Jameson’s “metamorphosis of perception” which defined the mode from its earliest inception. This is another way in which the term becomes more elastic: if we view the use of the term as a spectrum, it is not always possible to draw a neat line between real magical realism and the appropriation of it. And, even as it is misappropriated, the idea of magical realism has been extended in a way that is entirely consistent with its history; magical realism, from the start, has metamorphosed as it

¹⁸ Amazon.com has “magic realism” as a genre for DVD sales.

developed. Because magical realism incorporates popular narrative traditions such as folktales and myth into itself, considering the Hollywood version of the concept allows us to consider magical realism as a popular form rather than as an obscure mode that no-one really gets right. These popular films have the most currency as magical realist films as these are the films that are most popularly identified by the term.

A more satisfying idea of magical realism in film depends on the extent to which we can identify particular narrative strategies that affect a magical realist form and aesthetic. It is relatively easy to identify magical realism in literature as there are apparent textual devices and techniques that can be unquestionably identified as magical realist. But how do these techniques translate to film? I argue that magical realism is necessarily formal – the passing off of the extraordinary as ordinary works because of the way that the story is told, as Marquez's grandmother reminds us. Film representations, rather than paintings or literature, are always loaded with an extra dose of realism; cinema has taken on the burden of realism and it is able to pass off the most fantastic elements as real. But at the same time, film is also implicitly magical and therefore could plausibly pass off the mundane as magical.

It is possible to recognise at least three different ways in which magical realism influences film. First, and quite safely, there is the adaptation of the magical realist literature to screen for example, *Eréndira* (Ruy Guerra 1983), *The Fable of the Beautiful Pigeon Fancier* (Ruy Guerra 1988), *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (Fernando Birri 1988), *Like Water for Chocolate* (Alfonso Arau 1992), *No-one Writes to the Colonel* (Arturo Ripstein 1999). Second, rather more adventurously, I identify a body of films which appear to be forging a screen equivalent of the textual strategies of magical realism like *Wings of Desire* (Wim Wenders 1987), *Time of the Gypsies* (Emir Kusturica 1988), *Black Cat, White Cat* (Emir Kusturica 1998), *Gabbeh* (Mohsen Makhmalbaf 1996) and *The Butcher Boy* (Neil Jordan 1997). And finally, I work through the popular understanding of the term magical realism which is most visible in films depicting the ordinary alongside the extraordinary in a way that is at least superficially consistent with magical realism in literature, for example, *Woman on Top, Mistress of Spices* (Paul Mayeda Berges 2005), *Simply Irresistible, Chocolat, The Butcher's Wife* (Terry Hughes 1991).

The following discussion attempts to reconcile trends in early magical realism in painting with the later magical realism associated with literature and explore these in relation to film. In order to identify technical strategies in magical realism, I refer to Wendy Faris's article 'Scheherazade's Children' published in Zamora and Faris's 1995 volume on magical realism, which lists the distinguishing elements in the magical realist text. These provide a summary of the generally agreed features of magical realism and, in combination with Jameson's ideas of how magical realism communicates in film, they serve as a useful measure for discussing the ways in which magical realism has influenced recent cinema. I discuss formal techniques of magical realist films in relation to the three categories that I identified above and refer specifically to *Eréndira*, *Black Cat*, *White Cat*, *Gabbeh*, *Like Water for Chocolate*, *Woman on Top* and *Chocolat*.

Magical realism and adaptation

Marquez's interest in cinema permeates his writing. He speaks of his perception of narrative space in terms of film grammar: he sees his fictional world through the lens of film.¹⁹ His earliest ambition was to write for the screen – he went to film school in Rome along with several key film figures in Latin American cinema history²⁰ – and his successes and frustrations with the medium informed his writing of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* which he called the “opposite of cinema” (Moynon 1989, p. 117). Cinematic magical realism engages particular textual strategies – some of them derived from its literary counterpart, some from the visual arts and others generated through the mechanics of film form – in order to map out its convergence of the magical and the real.

In the 1980s, there was a conscious attempt to explore the links between magical realist Latin American literature and film (Bordwell 1994). One of the results of this was a six-part series called 'Difficult Loves' where different Marquez stories were adapted

¹⁹ See Mendoza, *Fragrance of Guava* (1983) for Marquez's discussion of the influence of film on his writing.

²⁰ B. Ruby Rich (1997) locates this between 1952-55. The fellow students included Tomas Gutiérrez Alea, Julio Garcia Espinosa and Fernando Birri, who later directed *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*. All three made significant contributions to the development of Latin American Cinema.

into feature-length films by Spanish and Latin American film directors.²¹ But magical realist literature does not automatically adapt to a magical realist film, as some of these films, and the bleak 1999 adaptation of *No-one Writes to the Colonel* directed by Arturo Ripstein, will attest. It is necessary to consider what gets altered or lost in translation; what changes in the conversion from written to cinematic language. Even if we accept that magical realism is primarily a literary mode which may be translated into film, there should be filmic equivalents of its complex textual strategies. There is a difference between harnessing the formal aspects of narrative and a more cosmetic approach that presents magical content but does not embed magical realism into the structure. Magical realist film, as adaptation of the magical realist novel, needs to consider the weight of form in creating the effects of magical realism.

Eréndira (1983) was directed by Ruy Guerra, one of the figures in the Cinema Novo movement in Brazil in the late fifties to early seventies.²² It follows the outline of the novella quite closely: Eréndira lives with her grandmother and is treated like an unpaid servant. A wind of misfortune blows, a candle is knocked over and burns down the house. The grandmother calculates the cost – an astronomical amount – and holds Eréndira responsible. Since Eréndira has no means to pay the bill, her grandmother prostitutes her and Eréndira's reluctant fame spreads throughout the desert. Eventually, Ulisses falls in love with Eréndira and after their attempt to escape fails, they kill the grandmother and Eréndira disappears. The novella begins with Eréndira bathing her grandmother:

Eréndira was bathing her grandmother when the wind of her misfortune began to blow. The enormous mansion of moonlike concrete lost in the solitude of the desert trembled down to its foundations with the first attack. But Eréndira and her grandmother were used to the risks of the wild nature there, and in the bathroom decorated with a series of peacocks and childish mosaics of Roman baths they scarcely paid any attention to the caliber of the wind (Marquez 1996, p. 244).

²¹ These include *I'm the One You're Looking For* (Jaime Chávarri 1988), *The Summer of Miss Forbes* (Jaime Humberto Hermosillo 1988), *The Fable of the Beautiful Pigeon Fancier* (1988), *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (1988), *Miracle in Rome* (Lisandro Duque Naranjo 1988), and *Letters from the Park* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea 1989). Not all of these can be identified as magical realist.

²² See Stam and Johnson (c1995) for a discussion of Cinema Novo and for writing by Ruy Guerra.

Marquez's characteristic magical realism is immediately evident: the wind of misfortune is casually inserted in what could plausibly be considered everyday activity (Eréndira bathing her grandmother) but reading on alerts one to the nature of the relationship of the two women. The details of place – the enormous concrete mansion in the middle of the desert – are slightly unusual and this is mostly because of the combined effect of the desert, the trembling house and the texture of moonstone. Eréndira and her grandmother's indifference to the wind suggests that it is normal; that the "risks of wild nature", "winds of misfortune" are usual occurrences – they were just unlucky in not noticing its caliber that night. The disparity between the reader, for whom these kinds of events probably do not usually occur, and the characters' casual indifference is one of the pleasures of the magical realist text. The magical realist effect is constituted by the details of the scene which by themselves are only slightly strange, but when put together, simultaneously contrast with and complement each other. The attention to detail reminds the reader that magical realism is a variation of realism, as the presentation of the details in a matter of fact way insists that they be accepted as ordinary.

The film opens with an image of two graves, belonging to the two Adamises, Eréndira's father and grandfather and the camera zooms out at a fairly fast pace. This makes the camera movement noticeable and therefore implies a presence, or communicates a point-of-view, particularly because the wind initially sounds as if someone was breathing. Already, the film has located itself in the otherworldly; images of graves, the sense of an unidentified presence, the sound of the wind together strongly insinuate the supernatural and this contrasts with the casualness of the novella's opening. A voiceover paraphrases the first line of the novella, saying "the grandmother was bathing when the wind of misfortune rose". Since the next image is of the grandmother in the bath, it is a strange choice of voiceover – the wind is audible and the next few scenes are marked by its relentless rattling; the grandmother is visibly in the bath, misfortune clearly strikes in the first act of the film, so it does not seem entirely necessary to have a narrative voice communicate what can be realised through film language. This highlights one of the key difficulties of adaptation: the relationship between the visual and the verbal. In the next scene where Eréndira bathes the grandmother, they speak the same dialogue as in the novella:

"Last night I dreamt I was expecting a letter," the grandmother said.

Eréndira, who never spoke except when it was unavoidable, asked:

"What day was it in the dream?"

"Thursday."

"Then it was a letter with bad news," Eréndira said, "but it will never arrive."

(1996, p. 244).

That Eréndira only speaks when it is unavoidable adds to the magical realism of the novella but cannot be communicated by the screen. Instead, it appears to attempt to communicate a sense of reluctance through other means. The first shot of the grandmother is of her skin beneath bath foam which dissolves from the desert graves. The viewer is not shown her face, nor are they allowed immediate access to Eréndira who keeps her face averted and moves away from the camera. The grandmother's face is only seen in the next scene and, initially, it is her reflection in the mirror. Ruy Guerra's choice of grandmother departs from Marquez's grandmother:

The grandmother, naked and huge in the marble tub, looked like a handsome white whale ...The grandmother was so fat that she could only walk by leaning on her granddaughter's shoulder or on a staff that looked like a bishop's crosier, but even during her most difficult efforts the power of an antiquated grandeur was evident (pp. 244-245).

Guerra's grandmother is lean and angular, but working with the opposite of Marquez's description, Guerra creates a similar effect. The representation of the grandmother in her casual excess is one of the ways in which the film begins to satisfy a similar pleasure that the reader of the magical realist text receives. But Eréndira in the novella falls asleep on her feet:

She closed her eyes, opened them again with an unfatigued expression, and began pouring the soup into the tureen. She was working as she slept (p. 245).

Guerra chooses to depict this with a hypnotic zoom into Eréndira's unblinking face followed by a shot, perhaps overstated, of tinkling chandeliers. Guerra's deliberate attempts to emulate the description of the magical in the novella are the least successful instances of magical realism in the film. Instead, when he adapts the principle of magical realism – the co-existence of the magic and the real communicated as if it were ordinary

– rather than the specific details of Marquez’s novella, magical realism begins to emerge in the film. This is evident for example when a painted butterfly flies off the wall, but even more so in the final image of Eréndira as she runs away. Here Guerra uses motion effects which have her disappearing without a trace, but for her footprints. Literary magical realism does not automatically transfer to screen, and some of the literary techniques of magical realism do not easily find screen equivalents. But many do, and I will examine these in relation to films that have been considered as magical realist but are not adaptations.

Magical realism and screen techniques

Certain screen techniques resonate with literary techniques, as Eisenstein recognised in his paper on Griffith (Eisenstein 2004b). There is a body of films that are not adaptations yet exhibit narrative elements that can be considered magical realist. This discussion of feature films that reveal magical realist characteristics draws from Faris’s summary of literary magical realism (Faris 1995) and I consider them with regard to *Gabbeh* (1996), an Iranian film, and Yugoslavian director Kusturica’s *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998). Both of these films have currency as magical realist films and have been identified as such by film reviews, if only in the casual sense of the term.²³

Gabbeh, directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf, is about a carpet which bears the history of a couple. It begins with the couple who wash their carpet at a stream and a young woman appears – she seems to have come from the carpet – and tells the couple her story. *Gabbeh* (which refers to both the carpet and the woman) tells them about how she was courted by a distant man on a white horse who followed her nomadic family and called to her in a wolf voice. *Gabbeh* is given permission to marry him, but this is endlessly deferred by various impediments: she has to wait for her uncle to return, she has to wait for him to get married, she has to wait for her mother to give birth, then her little sister dies. Eventually she runs away with her beloved and her father pretends to shoot them. The past and the present interact throughout the film and the viewer realises

²³ See, for example, Andrew O’ Hehir’s review of *Black Cat, White Cat* (O’Hehir 1999).

that the love story is the story of the couple who are now old and querulous. The two strands therefore comment on each other and the end of the film reconciles the young Gabbeh with the older Gabbeh in her husband's eyes.

The second film I refer to is Kusturica's *Black Cat, White Cat* which details the lives of a gypsy community living alongside the Danube. This film works at different levels and has several story strands woven together. The main strand in *Black Cat, White Cat* tells the story of Matko and his son Zare. Matko makes a deal that goes wrong and then agrees to Zare's marriage to Dadan's (a flamboyant gangster) sister in order to avoid the consequences. But Zare falls in love with Ida and neither he nor Dadan's very short sister are happy about being forced to marry each other. The film is a comedy and does not have an entirely linear narrative. It is punctuated with images such as a pig eating a rusted car, musicians strapped to the branches of a tree, and also includes the stories of Uncle Grga, an old gangster who watches Casablanca repeatedly and his very tall son. At the end, Zare and Ida escape on their dreamed-of yacht.

Faris identifies basic features of magical realism and both *Gabbeh* and *Black Cat, White Cat* exhibit several of these features. The most elemental is as the "irreducible" presence of the magical (Faris 1995, p. 167). Both *Gabbeh* and *Black, Cat White Cat* show evidence of this as, for example, in the former, a carpet turns into a woman, and in the latter two men are raised from the dead. But the magical events also indicate a further feature that Faris identifies: hesitation. The viewer hesitates between believing the magical events and seeking an alternative explanation for them. Another agreed element discussed earlier, is that magical realist texts are grounded in the historical and both of these films depict historical communities living in the margins and in contexts that are effected by ideas around progress. Kusturica comments on this:

I don't think an American from the Midwest would play with magic realism very much except in movies like *Superman*. That *could* be magic realism, too, in a way, but I don't find anything magic in it; it's just something that's loaded with special effects. True magic realism grows out of places where the political and historical context blends with the reaction of the people - sometimes in strange ways (Kusturica cited in Nelson 1999).

Kusturica recognises the validity of popular claims to magical realism, but at the same time asserts the importance of the historical and political dimensions to the mode. The subversive potential of magical realism is linked to its relationship with context. Magical realism therefore usually communicates a spirit of anti-establishment, and in both *Gabbeh* and *Black Cat, White Cat*, this is revealed through its focus on marginal groups living on the outskirts.

In magical realism, there is a questioning of accepted views of time, space and identity: time is lengthened in *Gabbeh* by the endless wait for the father to agree that the lovers can be married and contracted as the past interacts with the present; the conflation of the woman and the carpet recasts identity and the movement of the nomads offers a reflection on space. Repetition is used as a narrative device and in both films, this is evident by the interruptions to the primary narrative: the return to the image of the pig, the lessons on colour, the figure of the lover in the distance. *Black Cat, White Cat* plays with metamorphosis, another feature on Faris's list, as a bride, through the trick of the camera,²⁴ seems to turn into a goose. A further element in magical realist texts is the close relationship with the carnivalesque and there are clear traces of the carnivalesque in *Black Cat, White Cat*. Matko can be read as a trickster figure and the film displays characteristics of Bakhtin's description of the carnivalesque through the inversion of religious and official ritual (the wedding) and through its representation of the exaggerated material body which is most explicitly revealed in the scene of the performer with a special talent for extracting nails from planks and the latrine humour at the end. The carnivalesque reiterates the spirit of anti-establishment (Bakhtin 1968).

There are two further elements of magical realism that I am particularly interested in: the interstitiality of magical realism and the use of "material metaphors". Both of these translate to the filmic in interesting ways. Faris's list of magical realist characteristics reiterates the idea that magical realism is located in border spaces:

²⁴ And Kusturica's obsession with people running around with boxes over their heads. He repeats this image in *Time of the Gypsies* and mirrors it at the end of *Black Cat, White Cat* when the bride, Afrodita, runs away, first beneath a box, then with a tree trunk covering her head.

The magical realist vision exists at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions (Faris 1995, p. 172).

This resonates with Jameson's location of magical realism at the intersection of different modes of production, at "the coexistence of precapitalist with nascent capitalist or technological features" (1986, p. 311). Both Faris and Jameson convey an idea of magical realism as interstitial thereby negotiating the divide between the scientific and pre-scientific, the colonial and pre-colonial, west and other.²⁵ The interaction between the technological and the mythical becomes one of the interstices where magical realism thrives. The technological, when observed through a defamiliarised perspective, can be considered magical. The medium of film, one of those "marvellous machines" that Roh feared would crush painting (1995, p. 25) instead extends and brings out particular elements of the mode. Jameson's contrast between the precapitalist and technological is particularly evident in Kusturica's films which juxtapose a more traditional gypsy culture with a modern Westernised perspective.

The opening of *Black Cat, White Cat* communicates a tension between the two and it is because of this that the viewer experiences a world off-kilter. There are many cues to alert the viewer of a relationship between the technological and the traditional: the father lies on a hammock cooled by a pleated fan which is mechanised by a bicycle wheel; Zare watches the fiddler on the boat through his binoculars while his eggs fry on a makeshift woodstove; he sees a truck/house float by on a boat and exclaims in delight at the design. The debris of an unsustainable modernisation is evident everywhere – the rusty containers, the broken car parts. A newly wrapped washing machine sits on a boat, next to a TV, teddy bear and pair of horns, waiting to be bought and transferred into the little rusty boat. This is also a world where Jameson's divide between nascent capitalist and capitalist is all too evident as Matko buys a washing machine and diesel (which is actually water) from a passing boat. Zare is entranced by a big modern yacht whose passengers in their Western clothes contrast with the more ragged world of the gypsies.

²⁵ While this is a useful way of considering magical realism, there are potential dangers here, as discussed earlier. Christopher Warnes lists these as the saleability of the exotic, the alignment of realism with the developed part and the fantastic with the underdeveloped. He also points out the dangers of perceiving magical realism in terms of modernity's nostalgia for the lost traditional (2003).

The modern yacht that floats by every now and then serves as a reminder of the extent to which these characters are excluded from that world; it is Zare's dream that he leaves the gypsy community and join the outside world which is signified by the yacht.

A further feature of magical realism is what Wendy Faris identifies as "material metaphors" (1995, p. 167) in magical realist texts. These are the images or objects which become overladen with significance by the way that they are used in the text.

The film metaphor is a visual image. This means that the figure as a whole is recognizable perceptually – recognizable by looking – and that the elements that the spectator uses in her metaphorical interpretations must be recognizable perceptually as well. But, obviously, in order to grasp a film metaphor, the spectator must not only be able to recognize the relevant elements; her attention must also be drawn to them. The relevant elements must stand out; they must be visually salient; they must be prominent. Of course, we cannot theoretically predict all the ways in which filmmakers may secure salience. But we can argue theoretically that in order for a film metaphor to be identified by a spectator, all things being equal, the film metaphor and its pertinent elements must be salient (Carroll 1996b, p. 814).²⁶

Metaphors in magical realist texts function in a heightened way; they walk into the *mise en scène* in the way of Beloved and Gabbeh, the title characters, and thus sustain a hyperreality in their presentation. These images or objects hold much of the core ideas and concerns in a kernel; they sum up bigger narrative elements in one unified whole. In *Black Cat, White Cat*, the two cats wander in and out of the *mise en scène* without apparent purpose. They function in a metaphorical way, underscoring the tensions that emerge in various ways in the film: the tension between Dadan and Matko; Matko and Zare; Grge and Zarje and also the various love stories that weave in and out of the film. The black cat and white cat figure for these relationships and this is evident as they go through the roof where the two dead men are hidden and as they witness Zare and Ida's

²⁶ Trevor Whittock's *Film and the Metaphor* (1990) discusses how metaphors as literary devices can translate to screen. Noël Carroll in his article on the film metaphor further considers this. Carroll's discussion of the film metaphor concentrates on a specific variety of film metaphors which he considers in terms of composite images.

union.²⁷ Kusturica's metaphors are simultaneously central to the films and remain on the margins, not unlike the two cats who remain aloof but function as the core image of the film. Metaphors in magical realist texts gain the added significance by the way they are inserted into the texts. Wendy Faris identifies the function of these material metaphors in magical realist texts as repeatedly calling "attention to themselves as metaphors, thus remaining partially unassimilated within the texture of the narrative" (1995, p. 168). The presence of metaphor in magical realism results an overburdened narrative which spills out. Magical realist metaphors emerge from an excess of meaning, when realism is too polite to do likewise. They are never fully absorbed into the story so undigested metaphors bulge out of the narratives. Images can remain unassimilated because of a seemingly arbitrary or disconnected relationship to the main story. For example, in *Black Cat, White Cat*, the main narrative is occasionally interrupted by images of a pig eating a rusted car (see figure 6). These function almost as a parallel narrative, but also serve to comment on the primary narrative strands as the pig silently eats its way through the car. The pre-industrial pig scavenging on the corroded car reflects the lives of the gypsies who eke out an existence on the margins of the technological mainstream.

Metaphor in these films therefore occurs both through interruption, as well as the establishment of visual motifs, patterned to create a web of significance, that communicates beyond the images themselves. Kusturica's pig resonates with another image of a pig in the film. Matko, arriving at Grge's house to request a loan is watched through a camera in a makeshift security system. There is an unmotivated shot of one of Grge's men riding wildly on a pig. This is a small interruption, but resonates with the additional porcine interruptions in the film. These intrusions from metaphor necessarily alter the way in which the film is viewed; they require the viewer to reflect on the main story strands in relation to these images which are simultaneously detached and at the core of the films.

In *Gabbeh*, the carpet as metaphor is emphasised in various ways. The film reflects on how the carpets are woven and how colour is integrated into them. The couple's carpet reveals itself to be a magic carpet not because it flies or behaves in any

²⁷ Similarly, Perhan's flying turkey in *Time of the Gypsies* also offers commentary on the main narrative while functioning as a part real, part magical object.

way like a conventional storybook magic carpet, but because it delivers metaphorical meaning which is communicated through film devices – in the way the carpet is presented. For example, the Gabbeh woman and the carpet are established as interchangeable: she suddenly appears on the carpet to an older version of herself and serves to trigger memories of the past. The first image in the film is the carpet with its picture of a bride and her groom on horseback; the carpet is ever-present, weighted with a significance through the patterns in which it recurs; the carpet also presents itself as a patterned object, as its history is traced through the way it is woven. It therefore functions as an object of collective history – this is how events are recorded in this community – but also of personal history as it tells the love story of the old couple. Both films refer to their core images, the carpet and the cats, in their titles; the titles are a way of encapsulating the primary concerns of the films through the presentation of a unified image.

Magical realism goes to Hollywood

The use of folklore and fairytale structure is a recurring theme in magical realist texts and this is related to what Jameson calls the “raw material derived essentially from peasant society”(1986, p. 303) and what Faris refers to as “almost a postmodern pastoralism” (1995, p. 182). Magical realism borrows from stories which could be considered traditional and this is another way in which we can recognise the magical realist text as positioned at the interstices between the traditional and the technological. However, in the context of mainstream films with magical realist influences, the element of the traditional tends to be appropriated, rather than an originating factor of the film.

In *Chocolat* and *Woman on Top*, the interaction between the mythical and the present is one of the ways in which food is represented as magical. *Chocolat* (2000) tells the story of Vianne who arrives with her daughter in a small French town.²⁸ She opens a

²⁸ Director Lasse Hallström “points out that he’s never before attempted to mix drama, high farce and magical realism as he has in that film. Unsurprisingly, he describes the blend in culinary terms. ‘I am very happy with having baked a soufflé, which I think it is,’ he says. ‘It’s a tricky mix, and soufflés

'chocolaterie' during Lent thereby incurring the resentment of many of the town folk. But she coaxes people with the magic of her chocolate, makes a few friends and fixes their problems. *Woman on Top* (2000) tells the story of Isabella who leaves an idyllic life on a Brazilian beachfront when she discovers that her husband is cheating on her. She goes to San Francisco and begins again, with her magical cooking, her main talent. She bewitches people with her cooking, meets another man, hosts a TV show and her husband comes looking for her.

In *Woman on Top*, it is the mother goddess, Yemanja, who is the author of the magic and this is passed to Isabella through her cooking. In *Chocolat*, which appears to be set in a small French village, Vianne's fey mother from some mythical Latin American tribe bequeaths Vianne a wanderlust and secret recipe for chocolate; she functions as the originator of magic in the film. Both films create an exotic Latin America as the motherland and the birthright of these women is their magical way with food as they are able to invest emotions and desires into the food they prepare which then magically acts upon those who eat it.²⁹ These films clearly draw from the first successful film about lovelorn cooks, mothers and Latin America: *Like Water for Chocolate*.³⁰

Like Water for Chocolate is based on Laura Esquivel's book of the same name and she wrote the screenplay for the film. It has a more complex narrative than the other two films and tells the story of Tita who cannot marry her beloved Pedro because, as the youngest daughter, she must look after her mother. Pedro marries her sister Rosaura in an attempt to be close to Tita who is the head cook at the house. The love story between Tita and Pedro is plotted over many years and includes numerous narrative turns, for example, Tita's nervous breakdown, Tita's engagement to the doctor who nurses her, the death of Pedro's son and the consummation of their passion.

are tricky, because you need the right ingredients and the right amounts, the right temperature and timing. This film was so sensitive to temperature and timing" (Bing 2001).

²⁹ The focus on the senses suggests that they could potentially be read in terms of Laura Marks's discussion of haptic visuality (2000) which highlights the sensory perception of film. Marks's discussion draws primarily on intercultural cinema, but, while these films exhibit elements of cross-culturalism, they also rely heavily on mainstream techniques.

³⁰ John King notes that until *Il Postino*, *Like Water for Chocolate* was the "largest grossing foreign language film of all time in the United States and was shown all over the world to similar acclaim" (King 2000, p. 261).

One of the primary differences between the Latin American film and the other two can be found in the way the core image of food and cooking is applied. In *Chocolat* and *Woman on Top*, the cooking achieves good magic – it works as a narrative device that seeks closure and ensures a happy ending when its narrative in three acts concludes. People fall in love and forge links with each other as soured relationships are healed; the mothers who pass down this magic are good mothers, even if they are sometimes detached. In *Like Water for Chocolate*, the magic in the food is used for love, adultery, and makes people vomit and flatulent; the mother is a bad mother and over involved in her daughters' lives, but she finds counterpoint in the figure of the good Nancha who continues to whisper recipes to Tita after she dies. The narrative structure of *Like Water for Chocolate* does not allow for an easy closure; it has too many plot points so that by the end of the film, the original disequilibrium is no longer relevant.

While these films can be seen as influenced by magical realism as they draw on techniques such as metaphor and attempt to position themselves interstitially, giving a customary nod towards Latin America, it is still open to question whether the metaphors function as transfigured objects, thereby facilitating an altered perspective, like Kusturica's pig. One of the primary differences is the extent to which the metaphors are assimilated into the narrative; in these three films, to varying degrees, food as metaphor is digested by the film. This relates to the other prong of magical realism identified by Jameson and discussed at the beginning of this chapter: the use of narrative. *Chocolat* and *Woman on Top* are Hollywood films and conform to a mainstream narrative style.³¹ The seamless integration of the magical and the real is mirrored by the seamlessness of the narrative structure.

Like Water for Chocolate is a Mexican production but in the end still resembles the nostalgia film, against which Jameson contrasts magical realism (1986). For Jameson, the nostalgia film “seeks to generate images and simulacra of the past” (p. 310);

³¹ There is a danger in seeking magical realist authenticity in the form of a Latin American production as an online review of *Woman on Top* indicates: “Western producers have made the sensible choice of importing a genuine Latin America director [Fina Torres].” Seeking a “genuine” Latin American director suggests that magical realism is bound to geography, an idea which has been problematised, as it carries an implication of an essential relationship between magical realism and Latin America. A more cynical view of the importation of a “genuine Latin American director” is that it is related to product branding.

for Jameson, this is a “pseudopast” which is distinct from films that have a historical perspective. A further key element for Jameson is the particular use of colour which, in magical realist films, is not glossy and serves to separate objects from one another. Bower (2004) points out the golden light which is at odds with the function of colour as described by Roh, and then later by Jameson. The golden glow, like the closed narrative, works to create a screen surface where objects blur into each other rather than one which separates the composition. The second reality, which emerges through a particular representation of objects, recedes. Ultimately, these films present a closed and final image that does not allow for a multiplicity of meanings. While all three films are clearly influenced by the mode, their ability to function as magical realist films is limited.

In comparison, *Gabbeh* works to separate colour and heighten the viewer’s awareness of how colour works. This is most immediately apparent in the compositions that contrasts bright colours, usually the women’s fabrics, against dull landscapes. This has the effect of making the figures of the women stand out from their environment. It also runs an ironic commentary on the exoticism of the film; “exotic” is usually constituted as colourful and *Gabbeh* at times accepts a richness of colour and at other times resists it in favour of a harsher depiction of the landscape which must be traversed. Johnson notes this as he comments that the use of colour in *Gabbeh* reflects “the hardness of the nomads’ experience as much as their exotic settings” (Johnson 1997, p. 35). There are several digressions from the main narrative strands and these are frequently meditations on colour; one scene shows how wool for the carpets is coloured; elsewhere the film is gently but consistently interrupted by inserts of Uncle Abbas pulling colours out of fields. In these interruptions, Uncle Abbas reaches out to flowers, the sun, the sky in order to pull out the colour. These scenes create the illusion of pulling out red and yellow from the fields or sun by editing the images together in a continuous way. This brings to the viewer a consciousness of colour that disallows the totalising glossiness that Jameson discusses; the viewer is too aware of the colours as separate. This, in addition to the collage effect of narrative as it moves between the past, the present and the digressions which create an uncertainty in the story, results in a film that works in a lateral rather than linear way. But ultimately, *Gabbeh* becomes too fragmented to sustain a magical realist reading of the film; there are moments towards the

end of the film particularly where the breakdown in realism is too great to be described as a variation of realism.

Conclusion

While it is not possible to identify a definitive body of magical realist films, there is a clear influence of magical realism on film. Cinematic magical realism translates some of the features of magical realism in the visual arts. The most compelling arguments for magical realism in film are related to the way the mode may be embedded in the formal qualities of the text rather than through the cosmetic appearance of the co-existence of real and magical. The transfiguration of the object world, which is brought about by presenting and then undermining a realistic representation, resonates with ideas regarding the function of metaphor in magical realism. The location of magical realism at interstices suggests that the relationship between magical realism and technology in the film text is embodied by the medium of film itself. Magical realism is suited to a visual medium for its ability to render perspective visually, to realise material metaphors, to experiment with colour and to depict and thus transform a detailed object world.



Figure 6

Chapter Four

The Exquisite Corpse: the Discontinuous Body in Švankmajer's Films

This chapter explores surrealist expression in the work of contemporary Czech animator Jan Švankmajer, by looking particularly at his representation of the body in film. Švankmajer's style of animation allows for a revision of the norms of continuity editing and is a site for the confluence of the marvellous and the quotidian which characterises surrealism. I consider Švankmajer's animation and his representation of the body as subversive; this becomes a means to explore and transgress social norms. I examine Švankmajer's specific idea of childhood in relation to the mechanical and discuss the integration of live-action and animation by examining how he recasts the human through the object. The films accord an equal status to the human and the object, and I consider how the impassive bodies of puppets and dolls signify in relation to the human body. My discussion is structured by four particular techniques for representing the body: the fragmented body, which becomes reconstituted as hybrid; the body in relation to the mechanical; the use of repetition and doubling; and the substitution of puppets and dolls for human bodies, which is related to the merging of live-action and animation. The fourth technique underpins much of my discussion.

My discussion of the fragmented body examines *Darkness, Light, Darkness* (1989) and *Dimensions of Dialogue* (1982) and draws on the early surrealist idea of the exquisite corpse, which highlights fragmentedness through continuity. I also attempt to understand Švankmajer's use of the broken body as an exterior manifestation of internal processes. The dismembered body, like the mechanised body, invokes Freud's 1919 discussion of the uncanny as it induces anxiety and uncertainty; I discuss mechanisation

and the body in relation to *Food* (1992) and *Jabberwocky* (1971). A coherent representation of the body is further disturbed by the blend of live-action and animation, and I discuss this in relation to *Faust* (1994) and *Little Otik* (2000). Similarly, through the repetition and substitution of the body, the viewer is not able to read characters in a linear way and, therefore, Švankmajer revises narrative cues. I examine *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996) with this in mind. Finally, I consider the relationship between the body and the mind in his most recent film, *Lunacy* (2006).

Introduction

“Surrealism exists in reality, not beside it,” Jan Švankmajer states in an interview with Geoff Andrew (1988). A contemporary Czech surrealist, Švankmajer conceives of an object world that may be saturated with magic.¹ His signature film technique of mixing different forms of animation and of merging live-action and animation is the process by which he may realise, uncover and access this dual nature of things, and Prague, with its legacy of puppets and magic, is the background for his work. Švankmajer was born in 1934, just one year before Breton’s lecture on objects in Prague, which marked the integration of early French surrealism and surrealist trends in the city at the time.² He works towards an integration of dream and reality, and his representation of the body is one of the key sites where this occurs.

Cinematic realism is concerned with representing the body as a coherent whole and this has been formalised by the conventions of continuity editing. Švankmajer’s destabilisation of the body coincides with his approach to realism: the revision of the material body becomes a means of exploring and elaborating subjective experience; this is how Švankmajer communicates surreality. Like any good surrealist, he does not

¹ While contemporary Czech surrealism is different to early French surrealism, many of the overarching concerns regarding dream, the imaginary and the relationship with reality remain similar. Švankmajer outlines the relationship between the two in his interview with Hames (1995). See also Fijakowski (2005) for a discussion on the contemporary Czech and Slovak surrealist group.

² See ‘The Surrealist Situation of the object’ (Breton 1972c).

particularly value the idea of art except through its ability to liberate (Andrew 1994).³ He has been referred to as an “underground” filmmaker (Hames 1995) because of the politically volatile context of his work, where artistic expression was monitored and repressed.⁴ The subversive element in these films is therefore necessarily subterranean, and social reality may be explored obliquely through the revisioning of the material world.⁵ Švankmajer’s puppet and doll world is established as continuous from one film to the next, and presents a microcosmic puppet world where these transgressions suggest broader subversions. Without making explicit socio-political comment, these films offer, as a form of surrealist expression, a kind of transgression; they are quietly subversive. This emerges through the breaking down of mainstream film norms, such as the seamless editing but also through Švankmajer’s particular representation of the body. He flirts with sexual taboo and redresses the idea of childhood as innocent. He also questions human autonomy through techniques which fragment and mechanise the body. This chapter examines the representation of the body by considering the effects of fragmentation, mechanisation, doubling (or repetition) and substitution.

Švankmajer’s film career, which developed from his work in theatre, spans from 1958 to his most recent film released internationally in 2006, during which he worked closely with his wife, artist Eva Švankmajerová, until her death in October 2005. He has made twenty-seven short films, and five features: *Alice* (1988), *Faust*, (1994), *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996), *Little Otik* (2000), and *Lunacy* (2006).

³ Švankmajer, as other surrealists before him, rejects the idea of surrealism as an aesthetic. Instead, his emphasis is on surreality, rather than on an artistic trend. Early Czech surrealism, headed by Karel Teige, linked itself to French surrealism in the 1930s. See Hames (1995) and Fijałkowski (2005).

⁴ The short film format proved potentially subversive, as using this form allowed Švankmajer to escape complete censorship (Hames 1995).

⁵ Švankmajer says in an online interview with S. F. Said (n.d): “I was never interested in what I would call the foam of politics; but by definition, if they’re true imaginative films, they deal with the world we live in, and the diseases that the world suffers. In that respect, of course my films were political; but they were never intended as a political statement. I was never interested in direct targeting of a particular situation or person, as the dissident writers of the 1970s and 1980s were. I thought, surely even this totalitarian regime is only a boil on the face of civilisation. Surely a civilisation which has in one century produced two such terrible things as Stalinism and Fascism must be deeply sick within. The rot must be in the veins, inside the civilisation, and these things are only boils. If what I was trying to do was only about a specific totalitarian regime, it would be dead, like most of the dissident literature is now completely dead.”

The animated body and discontinuity

Béla Balázs, the famous film theoretician, recalled: “This story was told to me by a friend in Moscow. A cousin had arrived on a visit from a Siberian collective farm – an intelligent girl, with a good education, but who had never seen a motion picture (this was of course many years ago). The Moscow cousins took her to the cinema and, having other plans, left her there by herself. The film was a burlesque. The Siberian cousin came home pale and grim. ‘Well, how did you like the film?’ the cousins asked her. She could scarcely be induced to answer, so overwhelmed was she by the sights she had seen. At last she said: ‘Oh it was horrible, horrible! I can’t understand why they allow such dreadful things to be shown in Moscow!’ ‘Why, what was so horrible, then?’ ‘Human beings were torn to pieces and their heads thrown one way and the bodies the other and hands somewhere else again’ (Lotman 1976, pp. 28-9).

The body in the film frame is effectively the body in pieces, cut up by the shot and joined together by the edit, as the anecdote from Jurij Lotman reminds us.⁶ Editing works to establish the continuity of the body in film in order to maintain the illusion of realism. Continuity editing has developed various etiquettes such as match-on-action, the 30-degree rule, the 180-degree rule and directional rules that ensure that the human body, cut up in shots, is pieced together in a way that maintains coherence and a sense of integrity both on screen and in terms of their reception by the viewer.⁷ Švankmajer does not simply invert the rules of continuity editing in order to piece the body together in a discontinuous way. Instead, his fusion of animation and live-action, his surrealism, his use of puppets and dolls destabilise the representation of the coherent body in frame. Continuity editing is more subtly undermined through the different ways in which he

⁶ Lotman goes on to quote from Béla Balázs in order to discuss Griffith’s big smiling “severed” head, which caused great panic in the theatre, causing spectators to “stomp” and call “show us their feet” (Lotman 1976, pp. 28-9).

⁷ While continuity editing usually works to give an illusion of the whole body, there is a difference in the way that male bodies and female bodies are represented in film: male bodies tend more to be constructed as whole and coherent while female bodies are more inclined to fragmentation. While this study does not address the complex issue of representation of the female body in film, this, in relation to fragmentation, has been extensively studied. See Mulvey (1975), Doane (1991), Williams (1982), De Lauretis (1985). See also Mary Anne Caws’s discussion of the fragmentation of women in surrealist art in *The Surrealist Look* (1997).

explores and disrupts the perception of the body as complete, whole and autonomous. He emphasises montage above continuity editing; O'Pray writes that Švankmajer claims that "his style emanates from montage and not composition" (1995, p. 69), thereby alluding to the camera/editing distinction discussed in Chapter One.

Švankmajer's particular use of animation marks his signature as a filmmaker and there are several signature techniques that can be recognised in his work. His animation works very differently to mainstream techniques, particularly cell animation which is exemplified by Disney, and more recent developments in three-dimensional computer-generated images. Three-dimensional digital animation, and also cell animation which refers to the process of animation in which drawings are layered on transparent sheet, are highly polished, particularly as practised in Disney and Japanese anime. Shera summarises arguments around the totalising effects of cell animation which "engender a sense of wholeness" (Zipes cited in Shera 2001, p. 139). Švankmajer's use of animation is darker. His mix of different styles, materials and media formally communicate the disjuncture of his content. The films may use any combination of dolls, drawings, clay animation, puppets and marionettes and live-action, and the converging of various media in the text is analogous to montage. Švankmajer further embeds disjuncture in his films through these specific techniques of animation. One of Švankmajer's frequently used techniques is stop-motion which joins still shots, rather than sequences, in order to impose a movement upon the images. Stop-motion carries an implicit interruption; even when more frames are used, they bear a trace of the imposed movement through a brief but usually discernible hesitation. This works in conjunction with the editing of the films which primarily connects discontinuous elements. The effect of this is to emphasise their essential disconnectedness.

Kotlarz locates animation in terms of its history in early cinema where it was "closely linked with the celebrations of the illusionary contrivances and power of editing. It foregrounded the means of producing illusion by montage, perspective and juxtaposition" (Curtis 1995, pp. 25-6). There is a close link between the processes of editing and animation, particularly since, as Curtis suggests, animation is usually considered an uninhibited form of expression, while editing in narrative fiction usually cannot completely escape the constraints of continuity editing. This tension between the

infinite possibilities of animation and the restricted linearity of continuity in editing is something that Švankmajer often exploits to his advantage.

Animation becomes an obvious vehicle for surrealist concerns, as it too explores the boundaries of the body and the nature of movement. One of the primary gags of animation is the dismemberment of, or distress to, body parts. Kotlarz discusses how techniques such as “stretch and squash”, which is the extension and compression of the animated body in an exaggerated way, reveal an underlying interest in the details of the movement and reactions of the body (Curtis 1995, p. 27). She also refers to the preoccupation with the body in relation to the appeal of animation to children who are “intensely curious and aware of the mysteries of the body” (1995, p. 30). The affinity between children and animation coincides with Švankmajer’s interest in childhood, which emerges through his depiction of children, and also his use of dolls. Children’s bodies are marked by uncertainty as they are constantly negotiating their boundaries, and this corresponds to a sense of uncertainty, related to the Freudian uncanny, which emerges from Švankmajer’s representation of the body.

The human body is one of many different kinds of bodies in these films. Bodies are manufactured and crafted; they may be marionettes or puppets, dolls, clay, drawings, cuts of meat, wooden tree stumps or any object made to function as if they had bodies and minds. The puppet and doll bodies are particularly impassive and expressionless and Švankmajer redirects any reading of the human body through these more ambiguous, unnatural bodies. They are simultaneously inert, but made to move, and allude to the presence of a puppeteer, or a child playing a game with dolls. Švankmajer, as master puppeteer, establishes a parallel world which his dolls, puppets and animated characters inhabit, much like through the looking glass, and this allows him to undo and test the limits of the ordinary. The dolls/puppets and clay figures stand in for human bodies; they signify the material which becomes corrupted or altered as the interior is made manifest.

The fragmented body

In his study of the disabled body, Davis (1995) asserts that art has bred normalcy into ways of viewing the body even when it is experienced in fragments. Davis argues that disability signifies as disruption in visual and perceptual fields and therefore has been regulated and contained. Similarly, Švankmajer's representation of the body signifies visual interference, particularly through his use of fragmentation and repetition. Drawing on Kaja Silverman, Davis suggests that, in filmic depictions of the body, society insulates itself against "the possibility of mutilation, fragmentation, castration" (1995, p. 134) because of an underlying fear that the body is essentially fragmented:

The disabled body is always the reminder of the whole body about to come apart at the seams. It provides a vision of, a caution about, the body as a construct held together wilfully, always threatening to become its individual parts – cells, organs, limbs, perceptions ...(Davis 1995, p. 132).

Švankmajer's interrogation of physical form unhinges the body and enacts a primal unravelling: as the body comes undone, other kinds of disintegration ensue. The willed integrity of the body reflects a broader concern with totalising; the anxiety of a body threatening to reduce to its parts coincides with more general fears of dissolution.

A related anxiety emerges in the depiction of the dancing meat in *Meat in Love* (1989) and much of Švankmajer's animation of individual body parts. The dancing and marching meat, brains, tongues, eyeballs and host of fragmented organs imply a certain completeness and autonomy of the fragments. This suggests that the body is really a federation, never entirely controlled, as the individual parts usually lie dormant while waiting for an opportunity to rebel or assert their will. The autonomy of the body fragments forces the viewer to reconsider how they perceive the whole human figure; it introduces rupture in the perception of the unified body. The use of animation therefore functions in a transgressive way, as it destabilises the normal expectations of the human body itself as well as its relation to objects. In his 1919 essay, Freud (2001a) discusses how severed body parts give rise to the uncanny as they depict the familiar detached from its usual circumstance; they also raise anxiety about the observer's body parts.

The fragmented or afflicted body is the site where surrealist concerns and animation techniques meet in Švankmajer's films. There is a clear affinity between surrealism and the body as a means of expression. This is evident in the iconic image of

the slit eye where surrealism is expressed as an assault on the body. The fragmented body issues a perceptual challenge not dissimilar to the slit eye; it refigures the relationship between the human body and the object world around it by repeatedly taking the body back to a fragmented state. Fragmentation implies a process of undoing, and this becomes a means of accessing and manifesting interiority. This is apparent in early surrealist works such as Breton's hypnagogic image of a man cut in half by the window which signifies the integration of sleep and waking life.⁸ Similarly, Breton's ideas of "communicating vessels" and "capillary tissue" (1990, p. 139) locate the linking of the exterior and interior in the material body, and suggest blood and a beating heart. A further intersection between surrealist expression and the fragmented body emerges in the surrealist game, the exquisite corpse.

The exquisite corpse refers to a game in which different people draw a figure – or write a sentence – on folded paper, each player contributing one part and unaware of what the others have drawn or written. While the game is named for the first famous sentence produced in the written version,⁹ the term "exquisite corpse" also refers to the object created by the game, which draws on two surrealist techniques, montage and chance. Shera (2001) elaborates on the idea of the exquisite corpse in relation to Švankmajer's work and conceives of it as female, thereby alluding to the underlying sexuality – and misogyny some would argue – that characterises surrealism.¹⁰ For Shera, the exquisite corpse is a concept underpinning surrealist work, extending beyond the surrealist game and functioning as an important "surrealist referent" (2001, p. 129).

The term "exquisite corpse" then suggests the possibilities created through the collective montage of the body: by joining different fragments, something is opened up. The holistic view of the exquisite corpse, all the different quarters seen together, simultaneously indicates the sum of its parts – a hybrid body – as well as each fragment that constitutes it. The rules of the visual game require that on folded paper, the first person then draws a head, the second the torso, the third the legs and the last the feet; the drawings would extend lines in order to allow the different body parts to fit onto each

⁸ See Chapter Two for a discussion of Breton's visitation by a sentence.

⁹ The exquisite corpse will drink new wine.

¹⁰ See Mary Ann Caws *The Surrealist Look* (1997) and Rudolf E. Kuenzli 'Surrealism and Misogyny' (1991) for arguments regarding the relationship between surrealism and women.

other (Caws 1997, p. 228). The exquisite corpse therefore indicates an underlying continuity – each fragment is assembled according to the logic of the body as well as of the folded paper and extended lines. Similarly, the slit eye sequence in *Un Chien Andalou*, discussed in Chapter Two, uses continuity editing in order to communicate the rupture in this sequence; it is through continuity editing that a calf's eye constitutes one of the most iconic screen moments in film history.

Similarly, in *Darkness, Light, Darkness*, an eight-minute clay animation, various body parts use the logic of continuity editing to piece themselves together in a small room. The wallpapered room with its dinky door handles and little window looks like a room in a doll's house; it is a room that reappears in *Alice*, and parts of it are repeated in other films, thereby building the sense of continuity in Švankmajer's world from one film to another. The room is a strange place to build a man, but this is one of the juxtapositions that drives the film. Various body parts knock on the door, then enter the room, seeking to link themselves to other body parts. Through techniques such as match-on-action, the film communicates each body part's sense of agency, but also underscores the search for cohesion that the fragmented body parts enact. It is particularly the use of continuity editing that makes the piece effective: Švankmajer uses continuity in order to communicate the disconnectedness of the various body parts. Because it works so coherently in sequence, the film makes plausible the implausible and establishes a certain kind of logic as it communicates this: the first hand feels its way into the room after opening the door and turning on the light in a neatly edited sequence; the nose sniffs at the door; the hands can see the nose and hear its pig-like squeals because they have ears and eyes. As the body parts continue to piece themselves together, they exhibit a primal knowledge of how the body should fit together: when the head arrives, the hands relinquish the eyes and ears; there is some sense of the hands feeling their way towards a greater purpose. The urge to link the body is too powerful, so even when the parts do not fit (the hands attaching the eyes and ears to themselves) they force a connection, and these moments of coercion are the moments where the logic of the sequence, established through the use of continuity editing, leads the viewer astray. In the absence of the body, the hands attach themselves to the head as feet; when the feet arrive, they attach themselves as arms. The arrival of the genitals causes some fear, and, in an almost

slapstick scene, the male organ is only admitted after being doused with cold water. After it enters, the rest of the body flows in as rivers of clay and the hands fashion a man who is then trapped inside the tiny room at an awkward angle, his head squashed and seemingly choked by the light suspended from the ceiling. Švankmajer coheres disparate elements with an underlying continuity in order to communicate the disruption of the body. This is a recurring technique which he uses in various films including *Dimensions of Dialogue*, *Jabberwocky*, *Et Cetera* (1966), *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia* (1990), amongst others. It is the integration of continuity editing and montage to communicate the disrupted body that achieves his particular narrative style.

Dimensions of Dialogue, banned in 1982, uses the broken and reconstituted body as subversive expression.¹¹ The film is divided into three different parts and each of them elaborates on the idea of dialogue and the possibilities or impossibilities of conversation. The presentation of a dialogue or conflict between two characters leading to their mutual destruction is a persistent theme in Švankmajer's films (Dryje 1995).¹² But in *Dimensions of Dialogue*, instead of a verbal conversation, dialogue figures through the body. Each of the three parts of the film is read in conjunction with the others; the tension that emerges in each dialogue is held in relation to the other dialogues. The choice of three distinct dialogues, rather than two, implies an extra third; it denies an easy binary like the conversations themselves. In the first dialogue "men", collaged from food, metal and paper, eat, digest and spew each other out, each time evolving into something softer until a line of clay men spew new clay men. Each man appears to be an improvement on the last as the various materials which make them up each become pulverised and then made into something else. Švankmajer structures the metamorphosis according to a continuous pattern. Through the establishment of the sequences, the viewer anticipates that the figures, reminiscent of Arcimboldo's portraits, will continue to eat, digest and spew as they evolve.¹³ The second dialogue moves from a devouring, romantic love

¹¹ Irene Kotlarz says: "In Eastern-Europe under the repressive Marxist-Leninist regimes when film was heavily censored, animators like Jan Lenica and Jan Švankmajer used allegory and visual metaphor to convey hidden political meanings in their animated films" (Curtis 1995, p. 29).

¹² Dryje (1995) refers to *The Last Trick* (1964), *Punch and Judy* (1966) and *Food* (1992) as further examples. I would add *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996) to her list.

¹³ Arcimboldo was a Milanese artist who travelled to the court of Rudolf II and has clearly influenced some of Švankmajer's representations of the body. This is most evident in *Dimensions of Dialogue*

between a clay man and woman to aggressive indifference, which is marked by them swatting away a bit of clay which is reminiscent of a baby. It ends in destruction. The third dialogue follows a similar pattern. Two heads perform simple acts such as sharpening a pencil and tying shoelaces, but they do so with their tongues. After the action is established – the first head sticks out his tongue with the toothbrush, the second squirts the toothpaste – it becomes increasingly frenzied until the toothbrush is shredded by the sharpener, and the two heads dissolve into a puddle of clay with their tongues sticking out. All three sections suggest the impossibility of dialogue as they either end in destruction or endless repetition. The film visualises and embodies dialogue through the broken-down and rebuilt bodies which take the place of language.

Švankmajer's animation therefore fragments and dismembers the body, but also reconstitutes it in order to create a body that reads as chimeric or hybrid. The preoccupation with the body in fragment – and then reconstituted as hybrid – is evident across a wide range of early surrealist works, most noticeably Bellmer's dolls, but also in Dali and Magritte. The hybrid body, like the exquisite corpse which reads as the montaged effect of its composite parts, embodies transgression as it collapses and renegotiates its boundaries. Švankmajer's hybrid bodies also indicate an underlying concern with metamorphosis which places emphasis on the process of becoming. Metamorphosis implies an unstable body and this can be traced in the early surrealist recasting of the body through the figure of the machine.

Childhood and the mechanical

The early surrealist preoccupation with the dismembered body stems from the First World War with its “mutilated and disfigured bodies, wounded psyches and hysterical disorders” which “brought about fundamental shifts in the way the body was conceptualised and identity was constructed” (Adamowicz 2001, p. 20). Adamowicz

(1982) and *Flora* (1989), a twenty-second film where a figure composed of fruit and vegetables rapidly decomposes. The use of collaged figures draws directly from Arcimboldo's style. See O'Pray (1995) for a discussion of Arcimboldo and mannerism in relation to Švankmajer.