

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

FACULTY OF ARTS

***Multiform and Multistrand Narrative Structures in
Hollywood Cinema***

A dissertation submitted by

Stavros Halvatzis

For the award of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2011

SUPERVISORS:

**Dr. Laurie Johnson
Dr. Kelly McWilliam**

Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software, and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

Date

Endorsement:

Signature of Supervisor

Date

Abstract

Multiform and Multistrand Narrative Structures in Hollywood Cinema

In the last couple of decades there has been a growing realisation that an understanding of screenwriting based on traditional Aristotelian notions of dramatic form falls short of explaining the rising popularity of a body of work represented by films such as *Pulp Fiction* (1995), *Magnolia* (1999), *Donnie Darko* (2000), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), *Syriana* (2005), *Babel* (2006), *Shutter Island* (2010), and *Inception* (2010). These films have more in common with European art cinema than with traditional Hollywood. This thesis ties the growth of these forms to the rise of digital media, which it sees as an expression of a postmodern ethos. It suggests that the habits and practices arising from a pervasive engagement with video games and the Internet in general has contributed to a state of *ontological confusion* in the common understanding of time, space, identity, and agency, due in part to the habitual and widespread transgression of the virtual/real world boundary. This confusion finds aesthetic expression in formations that this thesis defines in relation to the categories of *multiform* and *multistrand* narrative, categories within which films such as those mentioned above are subsumed. These categories exist at a deeper level than that of conventional *genre* and are fundamental to the selection, placement, and overall balance of more traditional narrative elements within a screenplay. Additionally, the thesis proposes four major subcategories, namely, *open* or *closed* multiform and *simple* or *complex* multistrand narrative. Multiform narratives tend to be somewhat sci-fi inflected, employing multiple spatio-temporal frameworks to convey the sense of ontological bewilderment. For this reason, much of the work in this category involves explaining how the fabula, as distinct from the syuzhet, creates referential or denotative meaning by exploring the spatial and

temporal underpinnings of the narrative. Multistrand narratives, by contrast, typically spring from a single spatio-temporal framework. This category portrays the dizzying multiplicity and frenetic busyness of contemporary life from a human-drama perspective by employing multiple protagonists of equal weight. If these protagonists often fail to relate to each other in any causal way, they nevertheless cohere in a tapestry of shared complexity and verisimilitude. Here, the thesis explores how the use of symbol, theme, and the philosophical and moral frameworks operating from within the syuzhet marshal the fabula to create an overall story spine – a *metastory* – from individual strands through the use of parallels, contrasts, and other cues provided by the syuzhet. Lastly, the thesis identifies features from each category drawn from an in-depth analysis of nine case studies, and arranges them into a series of indicative schemas to assist in the writing of multiform and multistrand screenplays.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go to my supervisors, Dr. Laurie Johnson and Dr. Kelly McWilliam for their support and encouragement.

Also to the Faculty of Arts and the Committee for Research and Higher Degrees at the University of Southern Queensland for providing me with the opportunity to undertake this research.

Last but not least, I want to thank my family for being there – especially my mother and father. None of it would have been possible without their material and emotional support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: RECYCLING THE CRISIS – AN APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING NEW CINEMA

1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 The Back Story	12
1.2 Adapt or Die	15
1.3 The Inciting Incident	17
1.4 Method	22
1.5 Key Concepts and Terminology	24
1.6 Selection of Texts	36
1.7 Outcomes	38

CHAPTER 2: THE [R]EVOLVING FACE OF FILM NARRATIVE

2.1 Verisimilitude and Narrative Form	39
2.2 A Postmodern Perspective	41
2.3 New Physics and Digital Media	47
2.4 Changing Schemata and Storytelling	51
2.5 The Future of Story	53

CHAPTER 3: ESTABLISHING THE BASELINE

3.1 Canonical or Formula Film	56
3.2 Case Study #1: <i>Avatar</i>	57
3.3 General Characteristics of Canonical Narrative	68

CHAPTER 4: OPEN MULTIFORM NARRATIVE

4.1 Bifurcating Plotlines and Alternate Realities in Multiform Narrative	71
4.2 Case Study # 2: <i>Donnie Darko</i>	72
4.3 Taking Stock	95
4.4 Making Sense of Multiple Fabulas: General Characteristics of Open Multiform Narrative	97

CHAPTER 5: CLOSED MULTIFORM NARRATIVE

5.1 Case Study # 3: <i>The Matrix</i>	100
5.2 Closed Multiform Narrative	116
5.3 Case Study # 4: <i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i>	118
5.4 The Fabula as the Basis for Narrative Coherence	125
5.5 Case Study # 5: <i>Next</i>	134
5.6 A Brief Summary of Open and Closed Multiform Narrative	150

CHAPTER 6: MULTISTRAND NARRATIVE

6.1 Towards a Definition	151
--------------------------------	-----

6.2 Refining the ‘Strand’ in Multistrand	157
6.3 Case Study # 6: <i>Crimes and Misdemeanors</i>	159
6.4 Case Study # 7: <i>Crash</i>	178
6.5 Case Study # 8: <i>Syriana</i>	195
6.6 Case Study # 9: <i>Babel</i>	211
6.7 Fade Out	222

CHAPTER 7: INDICATIVE SCHEMAS FOR MULTIFORM AND MULTISTRAND NARRATIVE

7.1 The Open Multiform Narrative Schema	223
7.2 The Closed Multiform Narrative Schema	228
7.3 Simple Multistrand Narrative	234
7.4 Complex Multistrand Narrative	238
7.5 Conclusion	243

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – <i>Avatar</i> : Syuzhet Breakdown	247
Appendix 2 – <i>Donnie Darko</i> : Syuzhet Breakdown	264
Appendix 3 – <i>The Matrix</i> : Syuzhet Breakdown	279
Appendix 4 – <i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i> : Syuzhet Breakdown	296
Appendix 5 – <i>Next</i> : Syuzhet Breakdown	317
Appendix 6 – <i>Crimes and Misdemeanors</i> : Syuzhet Breakdown	330
Appendix 7 – <i>Crash</i> : Syuzhet Breakdown	342
Appendix 8 – <i>Syriana</i> : Syuzhet Breakdown	355
Appendix 9 – <i>Babel</i> : Syuzhet Breakdown	370

BIBLIOGRAPHY	385
--------------------	-----

CHAPTER 1: RECYCLING THE CRISIS – AN APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING NEW HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

1.0 Introduction

The idea has been slouching around in the shadows for some time. Implicit in the art cinema inflected work of the New Hollywood directors of the late 1960s and 1970s, it betrays its presence in films such as *Jacob's Ladder* (1990), *The Usual Suspects* (1995), *Pulp Fiction* (1995), *Sliding Doors* (1998), and *Fight Club* (1999). One might, of course, have expected to catch a glimpse of it in the more amenable company of the so-called indie directors – Quentin Tarantino, David Lynch, Jim Jarmusch, the Coen brothers, Hal Hartley, Gus Van Sant, Miranda Julie, Richard Linklater, and others, who in many ways have continued to develop beyond the traditions established by the New Hollywood. But, a wink and a nudge from acknowledged establishment lynchpins such as Steven Spielberg, screenwriting mentor Syd Field, and former Sony Pictures chairman Peter Gruber? Curious indeed. Nor are they the only ones. Of late, a queue has been forming outside the trailer. Some screenwriting authorities seem critical of it (McKee 1997, pp. 58-66). Others have embraced it (Egan 1997, p. 3). The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has set up special facilities to study it (Cieply 2008, p. 2).

Everyone, it seems, has an opinion. This is not the usual gossip that we are used to hearing – fears that the failure at the box office of some hugely expensive blockbuster will bring down a studio, nor some refrain about sex and drugs affecting production, nor even scandals surrounding the accidental or induced deaths of its stars and executives. This is something supposedly more threatening to the existence of Hollywood establishment itself – the rumour that the Classical Hollywood

narrative mode itself may be terminally ill (Cieply 2008, p.1). I examine this claim against a backdrop of pertinent discourses, including cultural, economic, scientific, and technological – specifically, those of digital media, by mapping a number of ways in which non-canonical narrative forms have emerged in mainstream cinema. I argue that changes in cultural practices are reflected in the stories we tell. Matthew Campora, for example, suggests that the wide-spread availability of movies released on DVD offers the added opportunity to unravel complex narratives through multiple viewings (Campora 2009, p. 129). Additionally, it may be that the rise of cyber-narrative with its focus on multi-layered subjectivity, which forms the core of interactive media, has permeated traditional narrative, supporting the growth and acceptance of complexity within it (2009, p. 129). Taking these and other arguments developed in this thesis as a backdrop, I offer *multiform* and *multistrand* as categories that reflect the flavour of contemporary culture. I conclude by presenting indicative schemas, which may prove useful for the writing of multiform and multistrand screenplays.

It is worthwhile noting here that valuable work is emerging in this area of research. Campora's doctoral thesis *From the Art House to the Multiplex: an Exploration of Multiform Cinema*, for example, highlights differences between canonical, multiform, and multistrand film and traces the link, specifically with regards to multiform film, to early exemplars such as Robert Weine's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) and Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950). He rightly acknowledges the essential characteristic of ontological layering in multiform film, and situates subjective realism – hallucinations, dreams, and lying flashbacks – within the multiform category. I propose a further refinement of this category by introducing

two subcategories – *open* and *closed* multiform narrative. Drawing on the distinction between the *syuzhet*¹ and the *fabula* as a way of getting to the finer grain, I argue that hallucinations, lying flashbacks, false memories, dreams and the like, exist at the level of the *syuzhet*, and may be ultimately explained (away) at the level of the *fabula*. They therefore fall within the closed multiform category. Open multiform films such as *Donnie Darko*, by contrast, present story streams of equal or non-preferential *existential* status. By employing distinct spatio-temporal frameworks, such narratives, in effect, generate multiple *fabulas* as a way of displacing paradoxes in the *diegesis*.²

It is my contention, then, that a significant part of the existing literature on complex cinema tends to centre on the explicit, implicit and repressed meaning of texts extracted primarily from the *syuzhet* and underpinned by Freudian, Auteur, Structural, Feminist, and Queer theories. Some studies, while valuable in exploring the themes, culture, politics, and morality operating within various modes of narrative, have avoided, in my view, emphasizing the necessity of unlocking the referential or denotative aspects of texts through the persistent and rigorous exploration of the spatiotemporal dimension of the *diegesis* – specifically with regard to multiform narratives. Jennifer A. Hudson, in her paper “‘No Hay Banda, and yet We Hear a Band’: David Lynch’s Reversal of Coherence in *Mulholland Drive*”, for example, underplays the importance of referential or denotative coherence by tying her analysis of the film to Lacanian post-structuralism and to the French psychoanalyst and linguist Julia Kristeva's description of the *chora*—‘the shared

¹ Here, I use Bordwell’s spelling of the word, rather than the more common ‘*sjuzhet*’ translated from the work of the Russian Formalists, since this thesis borrows quite heavily from the former’s more current rendering of the concept.

² One of the crucial assertions of this thesis is that *fabula* formation is dependant on the coherent navigation of the spatio-temporal *forme(s)* upon which the *diegesis* rests.

bodily space of mother and child where presignifying traces underlie and break through the order of signification (inscription)' (Hudson 2004, p. 19). In semiotic terms, the chora is experienced as 'desire, the uncanny, or the mystical' and as 'absences in the symbolic language' (2004, p. 19). In attempting to shed light on the film, Hudson asserts that Lynch 'defers the discourses of traditional logic to the discourse of nonlogic in the film' (2004, p. 17). She adds:

all bets are off as the film spirals into an increasingly absurd and confused jumble. In fact, the persons, events, and images in this last third [of the film] feel more desultory than those of the previous thirds; as they appear to have been woven into each other, like a Möbius strip, with some details that overlap and some that do not. Moreover, the narrative framework in this last portion seems much more circular, fuelled and touselled than does the first – which might explain why words fail to pinpoint an exact destination (meaning) for Drive. (p. 18)

When applied to the fabula, rather than to specific diegetic episodes within the syuzhet, this downplaying of referential coherence in favour of psychological and semiotic references to the chora as a pointer to a deeper truth inspired by the unexplained, is problematic. This is especially the case in multiform narratives that deal with alternative ontologies and/or realities, instigated by time travel rather than hallucinations and dreams. In the absence of the cult of personality of a Resnais, a Goddard, or a Lynch, this lack of clarity at the level of the fabula, seen as a boon by Hudson, may lead to obfuscation which works against the democratization and proliferation of complex narratives. Of course, Hudson's interpretation of the film is one of many. In a joint paper, "The Slipstream of Mixed Reality: Unstable Ontologies and Semiotic Markers in *The Thirteenth Floor*, *Dark City*, and *Mulholland Drive*", Hayles and Gessler contend that the construction of a coherent story is indeed possible in *Mulholland Drive*, facilitated, in part, through visual cues, such as the colour red, which appears as a dream-state marker (Hayles & Gessler, 2004, p. 491). Although an identification of what is 'real' and what is hallucination

or dream, does not invalidate many of the observations offered by Hudson's Lacanian/Kristeva analysis, Hayles and Gessler's paper does point to the existence of a functioning fabula in *Mulholland Drive* (2001) which extracts additional information from the text by arranging the various episodes within a coherent structure.

But why should the coherence of the spatio-temporal frame be as important as this thesis claims it is? The simple answer is that without it, the sorts of values and moral assertions that are claimed to exist in certain works may not always stand up to scrutiny. Christopher Grau's paper, "*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and the Morality of Memory," examines this complex narrative from a philosophical perspective in order to help explain, amongst other things, why it is that we experience unease and even disapproval at the actions of characters who seek to alleviate painful memories, stemming from broken relationships, by having them erased. Invoking arguments from Kant, against the classical Utilitarianism of Bentham, Mill, or Sidgwick who, in simple terms, align morality with the accumulation of happiness and the alleviation of suffering, Grau argues that memory removal is a deprivation of truth and may be seen as a kind of self-mutilation, or abuse, as well as a limit on freedom. Additionally, it is a violation of self-respect, much like drunkenness and suicide. Grau maintains that this is the case even if a person is unaware, after the fact, that the procedure has occurred, since this places a limit on one's knowledge and consequently, curtails one's freedom of choice. Grau refines his argument further by suggesting, along with Robert Nozick (Grau 2008, p. 121) that memory erasure is also a violation of the need to do, rather than to have the experience of doing – that one values contact with reality in and of itself. Grau

nuances the notion of harm by elaborating on Steven Luper's distinction between harm that wounds and harm that deprives (2008, p. 123). Clementine's decision to erase her memory of Joel, for example, may not harm her in terms of wounding her, but it does deprive her of the possibility of love. Additionally, memory erasure may not only cause harm to oneself, but to others. Discovering that Clementine has purposefully erased him from her memory causes Joel added pain. Further, distorting, denying, or purposely forgetting the true historical record with regards to oneself in relation to past events disrespects the life of others whose lives have intersected with ours.

As insightful as this philosophical interrogation of ethical and moral touchstones is in shedding light on the characters of *Eternal Sunshine*, a *closed* multiform film, this methodology would be problematic if applied to a reading of an *open* multiform narrative such as *Donnie Darko*, with its multiple realities of *irresolvable* status (as this dissertation will show, in Chapter Four). This is because the validity of moral and ethical judgments made on fictional characters and their actions depends on the coherence of the diegetic framework within which they occur. Again, although such frameworks are indeed fictional, we retain the sense that a well crafted narrative transmits truths which reflect real-world values beyond the confines of the diegesis. If this relationship between what is real and what is an accurate fictional account is correct, it follows that wrongful actions perpetrated in a dream, or as part of a hallucination within indeterminate diegetic spaces are not culpable of moral censure. In the absence of an undistorted and true historical record within a coherent spatio-temporal frame, notions of betrayal, disrespect, and harm that Grau identifies as crucial in determining the morality of certain actions *within the diegesis* would fall

flat in *open* multiform narratives. To sum up: because open multiform narrative is predicated precisely upon the idea that it is not possible to determine which of the multiple spatio-temporal frameworks generated by the story is (diegetically) real, it would be inappropriate to apply Grau's type of analysis to *open* multiform narratives in general. This has implications for a significant section of critical literature that is unaware of this finding.

The chief concern of this thesis is to establish categories that exist at a deeper level than genre, drawing primarily on their treatment of spatiotemporal frameworks as the chief feature of differentiation. This is more than an academic exercise for its own sake. Categories, much like genres, shape the meaning of events that flow through them through specific stylistic and narrative devices. The open multiform category, for example, offers a home to an increasingly rampant fabula(s). It is worth noting that in many ways, the rise of complex narratives signals the rise of the fabula over the syuzhet. Whereas, in canonical film, talk about the syuzhet is largely talk about the fabula, multiform, and to a lesser extent, multistrand films often rely on extra-diegetic material from websites, podcasts, chatrooms, and the like to shed additional light on ambiguous and open-ended stories. This spilling over has implications for certain cognitive-inflected claims which have appealed to the syuzhet alone. In his analysis of what he calls forking path narratives, for example, Bordwell limits, on cognitive grounds, the number of paths that a narrative can reasonably explore by the mind from amongst the infinite variety of worlds allowed by parallel-universe theories. He draws on notions such as 'primacy' and 'recency' (Bordwell 2002, p. 100), as well as existing conventions springing from folk psychology to suggest that forking path narratives draw their conventions from existing ones, since one is

still required to ask the sorts of questions in comprehending an ontologically complex story that one asks in comprehending a traditional one (2002, pp. 90-1). They are: linear, signposted, intersect each other, unified by traditional cohesion devices, run parallel, and unequal in that the least one taken presupposes the others, and the last one taken is the least hypothetical one (2002, pp. 92-103). It is important to add, however, that these notions and conventions apply more to the syuzhet as stylistics devices, than to the fabula(s). This thesis emphasizes that the *fabula operates at a deeper level than the syuzhet*, and may exercise ontological independence. While the way the syuzhet presents of the fabulas in a specific sequence suggests that characters learn from their mistakes, there is nothing in each individual fabula(s) itself to suggest that this order is inevitable. As an increasingly sophisticated audience becomes versed in experiencing the film at the level of the fabula, the hold of cognitive notions such as primacy and recency may loosen.

Somewhat closer to my own research are two studies which point to the importance of the spatio-temporal frame, and the fabula/syuzhet distinction. Warren Buckland's edition, *Puzzle Films*, acknowledges – in the introduction, as well as in chapters such as Buckland's own "Making Sense of the *Lost Highway*", and Stefano Ghislotti's "Film Form, and Mnemonic Devices in *Memento*" – the presence of 'non-linearity, time-loops, and fragmented spatio-temporal reality' in complex narratives (Buckland 2009, p. 6). In doing so, Ghislotti and Buckland employ the fabula/syuzhet distinction to help unravel such 'puzzle' films. It is my suggestion, however, that additional refinement of the 'puzzle film' category is necessary, specifically with regards to an expanded focus on the spatio-temporal frame. Such a focus allows for a finer differentiation between complex narratives, some of which exhibit *ambiguity at*

the level of the fabula. I argue that the finer ontological and existential *differences* inherent in the fabula, in films such as *Lost Highway* (1997), *Donnie Darko*, and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, are significant enough to warrant the creation of new narrative categories – *open* and *closed* multiform narrative.

Allan Cameron's *Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema* comes closest to this thesis in highlighting temporality as a pivotal characteristic. Not only does Cameron deploy the syuzhet/fabula distinction in a more rigorous way than aforementioned literature, he offers a typology of complex narrative by dividing it into anachronistic, forking paths, episodic, and split-screen (2008, p. 3). Cameron indicates that central characteristic of modular narratives is to question the temporal separation of causally linked events by foregrounding 'temporal configuration, creating play among duration, frequency and order' (2008, p. 3). This thesis is in agreement with his claim that 'whereas anachronic narratives are modular at the level of the syuzhet (plot), forking-path narratives are modular at the level of the fabula (story)' (2008, p. 10). Yet Cameron does not seem to apply this definition evenly across the range of modular films, referring to certain films as 'overlapping' the modular category, rather than being members of it: 'Time travel films also overlap with modular narratives, although they tend not to exploit the inherent possibilities for disjuncture and confusion' (2008, p. 24). Cameron argues that anachronic narratives such as *Elephant* (2003) allow us to reconstruct a linear fabula from a jumbled temporal order of the syuzhet, while forking-path narratives such as *Run Lola Run*, present different plotlines that usually contradict one another (2008, p. 10). I argue that the distinction between anachronic and forking-path narrative (roughly corresponding to open or closed multiform and simple or complex multistrand narratives), rests on the

coherence of the spatio-temporal frame(s). Such narratives, I contend, are best captured within distinct categories. In foregrounding the importance of the number and coherence of the spatio-temporal frame(s), the multiform and multistrand categories more effectively differentiate between anachronic “modular” films such as *Babel* and what Cameron refers to as a mixture of subjective, schismatic³ modes, as well as films such as *Donnie Darko*, which exhibit unstable temporal modes (2008, p. 45). Additionally, these categories provide a home for films such as *Mulholland Drive* and *Jacob’s ladder* which ‘display a combination of subjective, schismatic and modular temporal modes’ (2008, p. 45), by foregrounding their spatio-temporal credentials. Lastly, they avoid the risk of downplaying the multistrand characteristics of a film such as *Elephant*, in favour of its temporal machinations.

In addition to the multiform category, I propose a further refinement to the *multistrand* category – *simple* and *complex*, based in part on the number of strands present. Here, Asconas’s work on what he terms ‘multi-protagonist’ films is useful in suggesting ways that the structural differences inherent in the multistrand structure are being taken up at the thematic, moral, and cultural levels of film narrative – the implicit or connotative layers. At the level of implicit meaning, films such as *Syriana* and *Babel* highlight the fragility and precariousness of human agency in the light of random multiple connections (2010, p. 124). Ascona points out that *Syriana*’s complexity, for example, stems from the number of different strands used to create suspense, which drives the story forward (2010, p. 129). Furthermore, the multiple points of view and the emphasis on random chance and chaos suggest that no simple or closed solutions are possible. Ascona rightly notes that the serendipity, chance

^{3 3} Schism, in the sense of temporal rupture (Cameron 2008, p. 31).

encounters, and even the anxious uncertainty present in films such as *Syriana* and *Babel*, resonate well with our contemporary globalised world operating under a network logic that has transformed most areas of economic, political, and social life (2010, pp. 136-39 & 141).

While Geoff King's *American Independent Cinema* deals primarily with independent film production, he does dedicate sections on Classical Hollywood narrative as a backdrop to a more intimate examination of how independent cinema interrogates, acquiesces with, or subverts, normalised cinematic conventions. What is interesting from the point of view of this thesis, however, is that King, too, tends to place multi-protagonist films such as *Short Cuts* (1993), *Pulp Fiction* and *Magnolia* together with *Mulholland Drive*, *Lost Highway* (King 2003, p. 102) and *Memento* (2000) (pp. 97-101). This is because King's approach is to explore the influence of industrial, genre, narrative, formal, and socio-political conventions of independent film. Linda Aronson's *The 21st Century Screenplay* further emphasises the differences in methodology between this thesis and existing literature. In exploring newer forms of storytelling, Aronson identifies categories such as parallel (Aronson 2010, p. 165) tandem (p. 182), multiple protagonist (p. 207), double journeys (p. 246), flashback (p. 252), consecutive stories (p. 328), and fractured tandem narratives (p. 376), by examining structure *at the level of the syuzhet*. This means that the finer structural grain that differentiates multistrand and multiform films *at the level of the fabula*, specifically with regards to spatio-temporal frames, such as *Nashville* (1975) and *Being John Malkovich* (1999), runs the risk of being overlooked.

Whilst acknowledging Ascona's, Cameron's, King's, Buckland's, and Aronson's contribution to our deepening understanding of complex narratives, certainly at the level of the syuzhet (with the exception of Cameron, who more clearly distinguishes between temporalities at the level of the fabula), this thesis urges the clarification of the diegetic spatio-temporal layers as a way of expanding our understanding of the implicit and connotative meanings of complex texts at the level of the fabula. It does this by insisting that the coherence of the fabula relies in establishing and tracking the spatio-temporal credentials of the diegesis in the first instance, prior to exploring its cultural, socio-political, economic, thematic, philosophical, and moral strata. This exploration is facilitated by the creation of new categories – multiform and multistrand – each with its own unique characteristics.

1.1 The Back Story

The expression of crisis, real or imagined, is nothing new to an institution as flamboyant and shot-through with hyperbole and excess as Hollywood. The arrival of the 'talkies' in the late 1920s was regarded by some as trumpeting the death of the established visual art of the silent cinema: sound would immobilize the fluid camera by imprisoning it in soundproof booths; characters would chatter rather than enact the drama through action; cherished conventions would be thrown out of the window, while others would be hastily invented (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1986, p. 304). And even when these fears proved to be unfounded as cinema adapted to the challenge, not only surviving, but evolving in complexity and finesse, there was always the next crisis on the horizon to worry about: 'the box'. Feeding the paranoia was the timing of its introduction. Free-to-view television marched into the 1950s

households at a time of declining cinema attendances. To make matters worse, the Paramount anti-trust decrees of 1948 had wrested the theatre chains away from the studios, breaking the latter's monopoly on exhibition (Gomery 1996, p. 409). The days of the studios as monolithic sites of pre-production, production, post-production, and exhibition were ending just at the time it was feared that new electronic technology would not only steal cinema's audiences, but by promoting its own creative and technical imperatives, would damage the way a reshuffled Hollywood could tell its own stories. But if there were those who feared the worst, it was only because they misunderstood Hollywood's capacity for adaptation and appropriation. Gomery repudiates a number of myths surrounding the business side of Hollywood, including the notion that the institution had ever functioned apart from other mass industries such as popular music and radio:

The year 1930 marked the end of the industry's manufacture of a single product. For more than sixty years Hollywood corporations have done more than produce money-making movies. During the late 1920s Hollywood companies took over the popular music business.

In the 1950s they added television production and theme parks. For more than a generation Hollywood corporations have operated as diverse industrial operations (Gomery 1996, p. 407).

What is true, then, is that while by the late 1940s, the days of the studio as a large movie factory had ended, a slimmer more agile version of the Hollywood institution had sprung up to replace it. Taking the fight to television, it struck back in ways that the new medium could not immediately emulate: it improved the technical quality of its product by enlarging the size of selected theatre screens to take advantage of wider viewing aspect ratios, enhanced the quality of its sound, and promoted development of its colour film negatives, while profitably co-opting television by allowing it to exhibit its films, especially product that had run its course through the

theatre circuit. Gomery notes that the industry has always been organized and transformed by intrusions from the outside. The studio era that began with the introduction of sound, another external development, would survive, even if it meant that by 1960, filmmaking had become an ancillary business and Hollywood, in large part, the world's television supply factory. Of course, seen from a wider and longer term perspective, there is little doubt that television's impact has spilled beyond economics into the inner sanctum of film form itself – that 'television's distinctive seriality, lack of narrative closure, fragmentation and flow, and the domestic context of reception' (Stadler & McWilliam 2009, p. xix) has helped in promoting a familiarity and acceptance of concepts that bare some resemblance to the sorts of formal structures that are the subject of this thesis, especially with regards to multistrand film.

A more immediate result flowing from changes to the studio system, however, was the creation of a more competitive environment in which independent directors and producers with diverse and fresh ideas could offer their services to studios as free-lance filmmakers allowing studios themselves to act as film financiers and distributors. By the late 1960s, the 'New Hollywood', as it was christened in the press, was creatively defined by a new batch of directors with a passion and knowledge for American and international art cinema. Unlike the great studio directors of the past such as John Hawks and John Ford, these new directors regarded themselves as auteurs rather than hired hands (Biskind 1998, p. 15). Each espoused his own individual style, often under the influence of directors such as Kuroswa, Fellini, Bergman, Resnais, and Goddard. Collectively, they would re-examine and adjust established canonical Hollywood conventions: the single protagonist as an

action-driven, goal orientated hero; the causally interdependent plot lines of an external goal and its entwining with the pursuit of the woman as reward; the clear delineation of good and evil; the closed and satisfying ending (Field, McKee, Seger, etc.). The first wave comprising of white men, most of whom were born in the 1930s, included Francis Ford Coppola, Peter Bogdanovich, Warren Beatty, Dennis Hopper, Stanley Kubrick, Mike Nichols, Bob Fosse, Woody Allen, Robert Benton, Arthur Penn, John Cassavets, Alan Pakula, Paul Mazursky, Bob Rafelson, Hal Ashby, Robert Altman, Richard Lester and William Friedkin. The second wave included early baby-boomers born mostly after World War II – the film school generation dubbed the movie-brats: Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, John Milius, Paul Schrader, Brian De Palma, and Terrence Malick (Biskind 1998, p. 15). In all, this injection of new blood defined a new approach to conventional Hollywood filmmaking, both in the choice of subject matter and in its stylistic and formal treatment, coalescing into the ‘New Hollywood’ of the ‘golden ’70s’.

1.2 Adapt or Die

Inevitably, its originality may have proved its undoing. By the end of the decade, old doubts were returning. Biskind quotes Peter Bart, Vice President of production at Paramount at the time, as saying that the 1970s was ‘the last great time for pictures that expanded the idea of what could be done with the movies’ (1998, p. 17). Biskind himself agrees:

It was the last time Hollywood produced a body of risky, high-quality work – as opposed to the errant masterpiece – work that was character-, rather than plot-driven, that defied traditional narrative conventions that challenged the tyranny of technical correctness, that broke the taboos of language and behaviour, that dared to end unhappily. These were often

films without heroes, without romance, without – in the lexicon of sports, which had colonized Hollywood – anyone to ‘root for.’ (Biskind 1998, p. 17)

The unease lay in the notion that the coincidental confluence of factors that gave rise to the innovations and financial successes of the decade were simply not repeatable. In addition, the mid 1980s saw the beginnings of the transformation in ownership that by 1994 would find all six major Hollywood studios in different hands: Disney, Fox’s Twentieth Century Fox, Matsushita’s MCA/Universal, Viacom’s Paramount, Sony’s Columbia, and Time-Warner’s Warner Bros. The immediate challenge these companies faced (as part of larger conglomerates with diverse products and interests) was to position themselves advantageously for the coming battles over the information and entertainment electronic superhighway that are still being fought today (Gomery 1996, p. 407). Instability wrought through change was once again in the air, once again promoted by new technology. Recognizing that projected revenues from ticket sales in the United States generally account for less than one-fifth of total income, the corporations inevitably sought to exploit their access to multiple channels to enhance the earning potential of films produced by their studios. Sony, for example, favoured projects that could cohere with its Playstation video games and music divisions; Disney factored in the role of its theme parks. Various, the strategy promoted projects that could support the creation of ancillary products, in effect, potentially turning popular movies into multi-faceted billion dollar assets (Gomery 1996, p. 408). It comes as no surprise, therefore that the result of this kind of synergy has been to promote films which have good merchandising potential or which have proven track records in other media such as video games.

1.3 The Inciting Incident

One of the current markers of the Hollywood film is the influence on filmmaking of the widely successful 1970s ‘movie-brat’ directors – the film school generation born mostly after World War II, such as George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. Others, such as James Cameron, have followed in their footsteps. Indeed, as of this date of writing, Cameron’s *Avatar* (2009) and *Titanic* (1997) respectively hold the top two positions as the biggest box office earners of all time. Characterised more by their grand effects and/or use of ‘name actors’ than allegiance to specific genres, such films may be aptly characterized as ‘blockbusters.’ Of course, Hollywood is no stranger to the successful big budget genre as evidenced by *Gone with the Wind* (1939) *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Spartacus* (1960), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), and the hugely successful *The Sound of Music* (1965) (Hall & Neale, 2010, pp. 113-180). The expensive failure of films such as *Cleopatra* (1963) *Dr. Dolittle* (1967), and *Star!* (1968), however, proved that a big budget is no guarantee of success. In this respect, the foray into the experimental low cost features of the New Hollywood directors was welcomed by a nervous industry deeply in the red to Wall Street (Carroll 1998, p. 257). But as a string of small budget films began to stabilize finances in the early 1970s, the studios’ belief in the expense-spells-success formula resurfaced. Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather Part II* (1974) broke the box office record for most tickets sold, and William Friedkin’s *The Exorcist* (1973), generated the enormous buzz worthy of the blockbuster. Hollywood, which had always suffered from a selective amnesia, became ebullient once again about risk versus the reward. The success of films such as *Star Wars* (1977), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *Jaws* (1978), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *E.T.* (1982),

The Terminator (1984), and *Titanic* (1997), entrenched the idea that a successful blockbuster could be predicted. The recipe called for a ‘name’ director, a well-crafted canonical Hollywood screenplay, often centered on important, weighty, or epic-mythical subject matter (King 2003, p. 115), A-list actors, a large budget, and elaborate computer generated special effects (Allen 2003, pp. 108-9). Unlike most of their New Hollywood counterparts who had been influenced by art cinema, these directors reinvigorated the invisible, seamless, feel-good movie in the Old Hollywood tradition. Importantly, then, the idea of a blockbuster has evolved to include not only a sense of largeness, of supersize, a sense of each film superceding the next in terms of budget and subject matter, but also a continuous pressure for technological advance, especially in the area of 3-D effects (Allen 2003, p. 103). This has often meant that the blockbuster’s true home is the multiplex cinema, with its added facility for large screens, surround sound, and, increasingly, 3-D projection (Jancovich & Faire 2003, p. 190). This adds a further point of differentiation from ‘ordinary films’ through an extended association with the ‘money/spectacle nexus’ that has been in evidence since the earliest blockbusters (Stringer 2003, pp. 5-8). Inevitably, successes at the box-office had deep aesthetic consequences for the Hollywood film. It did not only encourage imitation through sequels, (*Raiders of the Lost Ark* I – IV, *Star Wars* I – VI, and *The Terminator* I – IV), it fuelled the pursuit of similar themes in canonically told stories that were heavily reliant on computer generated special effects at the expense of less spectacular, more varied, character-driven films. As the studios began staking their futures on their latest blockbuster – that one big payday that would insulate the company against financial ruin for years to come – they became increasingly reluctant to stray too far from the formula. Peter Bogdanovich declared that the blockbuster ultimately curtailed the way Hollywood

told stories, stating that ‘*Jaws* was devastating to making artistic, smaller films. They forgot how to do it. They’re no longer interested’ (Biskind 1998, p. 255).

Biskind sees Spielberg as the ‘Trojan horse through which the studios began to re-establish their power’ (1998, p. 278). He quotes screenwriter and director Paul Schrader declaring that ‘*Star Wars* was the film that ate the heart and soul of Hollywood. It created the big-budget comic book mentality’ (Biskind 1998, p. 317). Biskind, however, also suggests that the rise of the blockbuster may have been a child of its time, coinciding with the rise of moral fundamentalism in the United States. Still licking its wounds over Vietnam, the country needed to counter feelings of impotence, moral vulnerability and economic disparity, through an identification with the fantastical, the indestructible and the mighty – the Action Hero and the Superhero. After years of character and theme based movies, of esoteric flashbacks, psychedelic dream episodes, and splintered narratives, audiences seemed once again ready for the balm of heroism and individualism – for a ‘new’ kind of entertainment.

The film [*Star Wars*] pioneered the cinema of moments, of images, of sensory stimuli increasingly divorced from story, which is why it translates so well into video games. Indeed, the movie leapt ahead – through hyperspace, if you will – to the ’80s and ’90s, the era of non-narrative music videos, and VCRs, which allowed users to view film in a non-narrative way, surfing the action beats with fast-forward. (Biskind 1998, p. 343)

Stylistically, then, the action/special effects blockbuster marks the swing away from the art cinema influence of the New Hollywood directors, towards the large-scale production that favours grand spectacle and cutting edge special effects. This development coincides with another Hollywood formulation – the high concept. Biskind (1998) points out that the formula was developed at Paramount in the 1980s before spreading like wildfire throughout the Hollywood studios. It marks the final victory of producers over the directors of 1970s.

Although not inevitable, high concept often foregrounds the unique and catchy idea at the expense of authentic story and character development. Increasingly, films begin to resemble the comic books which inspired them – *Sin City*, *Watchmen*, *Batman*, *Superman*, *Ironman*, *Spiderman*, and *X-Men*. Spielberg defined high concept as an idea told in twenty-five words or less, which ‘you can hold in your hand’ (1998, p. 402). In a fast-paced industry perpetually on the lookout for novelty, high concept becomes the most common way to structure and pitch a film. Under its influence, screenwriting reverts to the more predictable narratives of the old Hollywood but without the pithiness, genre stability, and patience of the latter. In addition to its ideological underpinnings, the blockbuster’s successes may lie in its role as a vehicle for making visible what before has only been possible through the imagination. By marshalling high-end software and hardware, the blockbuster creates spectacular creatures and environments in films such as *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Armageddon* (1998), *Minority Report* (2002), or *Avatar* (2010) that allow us to witness worlds at levels of realism (or, hyperrealism) that were not previously available to us in other ways. However, as realistically rendered effects become commonplace in other media, such as the super-graphics-card video game, film loses its monopoly over spectacle and with it, the ability to gloss over weakly crafted storylines and characters. Judged in this light, the earlier symbiotic relationship between films and videogames, both in the sense of generating money for the multinational media conglomerates and in their mutual use of similar storylines and characters, might well be tipping in the favour of video games, which, at least, offer interactivity over a weak film’s predictable canonical mode. Of course, there have been many blockbusters which have continued skilfully to marry special effects to

traditional storytelling: *Avatar* has not only proved to be the most profitable film as of this writing, but has received the thumbs up from critics too. But for every *Avatar* there is a *Pearl Harbour* (2001), which does poorly at the box-office (*Mailonline* 2010, p. 1). The failed blockbuster raises serious questions about the legitimacy of the formula as a pervasive strategy for the Hollywood studios, especially as revenues from video games threaten to match and exceed those of the box-office (Breckon 2007, p. 2).

It is against this general drift towards digital technologies such as video games and the Internet, then, that this thesis examines the threat to Hollywood's traditional storytelling. It takes seriously Steven Spielberg's remark that 'audiences are not looking as much as they used to for the security of a common narrative. I think audiences are looking for another way to tell a story' (*The Weekend Australian Magazine* April 26-27, 2008, p. 20). 'Common narrative' in this instance refers to the classical Hollywood mode of linear storytelling with established conventions and expectations. This is a highly significant comment from a director who, together with George Lucas, had marched the newly sophisticated 1970s audiences, reared on the diet of European and New Hollywood films, back to the ideological and narrative simplicities of the pre-1960s movie era (Biskind 1998, p. 343). Of further significance, is Field's view that:

As of this writing, I think we're in the middle of a screenwriting revolution, a time where screenwriters are pushing the form in new directions. The traditional way of 'seeing things' has changed, and we're looking for ways to match our experiences and incorporate the new technology at our fingertips. (2006, p.131)

Of further note is the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's launch of a Centre for Future Storytelling whose task will be to ascertain 'whether the old way of telling stories – particularly those delivered to millions on screen, with a beginning, a middle and an end – is in serious trouble' (Cieply 2008, p. 1).

This thesis, then, addresses the problem of how Hollywood's linear, non-interactive traditional cinema is adapting to the growing popularity of digital media such as the Internet and video games, while simultaneously attempting to retain the coherence and meaning of the stories it tells. Its examination of non-traditional narrative categories will be framed by this argument that Hollywood has a tendency to reinvent itself when subjected to external pressure while at the same time preserving its core identity by maintaining continuity with its past (Gomery 1996, pp. 407-408). This view borrows from the idea of invention as remediation in which an older medium prompted by new challenges, refashions itself by mixing the old and the new to produce a new amalgam (Bolter & Grusin 1999, pp. 3-15). If Hollywood's classical narrative itself is undergoing remediation, then, how might it structure its content? And what is the likelihood of its success? The answers to these and related questions have important implications for those of us who care deeply about film as a coherent and important medium through which we might continue to examine ourselves.

1.4 Method

In seeking to explore this topic in more detail, it is necessary to say something about the tools and methods I intend to use, since this shapes the results that flow from the enquiry itself. I argue, along with Castells (1996), that artefacts such as film do not

exist apart from the technology, culture, institutions, and ideology that produce them. Society both constitutes and is constitutive of its product. In this, technology has always played a particularly crucial role. To use the old-fashioned but still relevant metaphor, if society is the hand, then technology is the mallet that helps to pound it into shape. Sometimes, however, the blow may miss its target, with unintentional consequences. It is clear that any examination of the shift in the Hollywood screenplay should include a wide spectrum of influences. As this is a thesis about the form of the Hollywood screenplay, however, I align myself with the assertions of researchers that I find appropriate to my enquiry; I do not attempt to prove or disprove them. I take the view, along with Bordwell (1996, p. 3) and Carroll (1996, p. 40), that an inclusive middle-level approach to scholastic enquiry, backed up by a 'piecemeal' posture towards theorizing, offers the best way to explore film. I reference the Marshall MacLuhan and Raymond Williams debate over determinism to support my claim of a strong impact of digital media on culture and its artefacts, but I do not attempt to settle the debate itself (Lister et al. 2003, p. 72). Additionally, I argue that the changes to the screenplay are in step with changes in contemporary society. I appropriate discourse from the postmodern debates to support my analysis, but I do not substantially contribute to the polemic surrounding them. Lastly, I argue that important mechanisms of change and its transmission are relational structures variously referred to as 'schemata' (Bordwell 1985, p. 36), 'schemas' (Branigan 1992, p. 13), or, 'scripts' (Smith 2003, p. 34). Schemata are individual components of larger meaning-making patterns. Collectively they support the creation of wider narratives, discourses and patterns at play in society. Essentially, schemata are the relational units of meaning that guide us in everyday problem-solving (Bordwell 1991, p. 33). Again, as this is a thesis about film narrative and not cognitive science,

I present the film-scholars' distillation of these concepts without digging too deeply into their primary sources. My approach, then, is to illuminate my research topic from various theoretical and multi-disciplinary vantage points. Specifically, my method will:

1. Identify through a postmodern perspective, the forces that have helped to shape the proposed new categories of film. This will require an inventory of features that distinguish the postmodern epoch from its predecessors.
2. Present evidence through a series of case studies in support of my formulation of the discreet categories of *multistrand* and *multiform* film, and their various sub-categories.
3. Utilize and expand upon existing taxonomies.
4. Develop indicative schemas that may provide an initial approach to the writing of *multistrand* and *multiform* films. The models should be general and flexible enough to accommodate shifts and exceptions, where they arise.

1.5 Key Concepts and Terminology

It is time to define some of the key terminology that I will take as given later. I do this here because the terminology rests upon concepts integral to the methodology itself, and because I wish to avoid lengthy and distracting diversions from the argument in the chapters that follow.

David Bordwell (1985, pp. xi-xiv) suggests three ways to understand narrative – as representation, as structure, and as process. The first has been widely influential in

the West and has its roots in Ancient Greek thought and writings, especially those of Aristotle. The second is exemplified by the likes of Vladimir Propp and Tzvetan Todorov. Film theorists such as Edward Branigan and Bordwell favour the third approach. This thesis, true to its earlier declaration, adopts a middle-level, piecemeal stance, but with structuralist and cognitive leanings similar to those of Bordwell and Branigan, especially with regards to the contribution of cognition in the understanding of audience participation. Briefly, Bordwell sees film narrative as an activity that selects, orders, and presents story information to a perceiver through a series of normalised audio-visual cues (1985, p. 204). In much the same way, Branigan defines narrative as a cognitive process that arranges spatio-temporal information into a pattern that represents and explains experience (1992, p. 3). A real strength of this wider theoretical posture, as mentioned above, is its flexible contribution to explaining audience activity.

1.5.1 The Fabula, the Syuzhet, and Style

Bordwell (1985, pp. 49-53) defines three further concepts that are crucial to my method. The *fabula*, first identified by the Russian Formalists, is the imaginary construct that we as an audience continually create, adjust and readjust by making assumptions and inferences at the prompting of on-screen events, using a variety of heuristics and schemata. It is never palpably present on the screen or on the soundtrack. Crucially, the *fabula* embodies our conception of a chronologically constructed series of events linked by cause-and-effect within a conventional understanding of space and time. Another way to think of the *fabula* is as the story we are able to recount through a verbal synopsis. The *syuzhet*, by contrast, is the

palpable configuration and presentation of narrative events in the film. As a system of cues guiding us to construct story information, the syuzhet arranges the narrative components such as character, action and place into a temporal sequence according to specific principles. *The syuzhet may respect or disrespect a coherent fabula depending on the former's use of narrative mode.* The canonical mode, for example, deploys a syuzhet that is largely in step with the fabula. Art cinema, in contrast, mixes subjective and objective spatio-temporal frames, often without warning, in order to draw audiences into the inner state of the protagonist. Parametric cinema takes this a step further, often disallowing the audience the construction of any fabula at all. *Style* is also a system because it uses principles of organisation to order specific film techniques into a set. In a narrower definition of the term, however, we are less concerned with 'style' as the embodiment of the recurrent features of structure or mood as in 'New Wave' or 'Neorealist', for example, than we are in its sense of being the systematic use of cinematic devices. If we regard both the syuzhet and style as co-existing forces that actively cue audiences to structure the film's components, the former specifically arranges the film's *technical* elements, while the latter acts upon its *dramaturgical* ones.

1.5.2 The Strategic Syuzhet

Bordwell lists several further tactics of the syuzhet (1985, pp. 57 - 61). These tactics, which constitute the syuzhet's broad narrational strategies, determine what information is given, left out, or retarded and for what effect: Bordwell, drawing upon Meir Sternberg's work, recounts three categories:

1. The syuzhet's own knowledge of the fictive world may vary between the omniscient and the partial. A knowledgeable syuzhet may choose not to distribute its knowledge evenly throughout its unfolding in order to achieve suspense or intrigue, such as when it withholds from us that Norman Bates and his 'mother' are one and the same person in *Psycho* (1960). Or, it may display a seeming lack of knowledge by failing to offer an explicit explanation of specific outcomes, such as the unexplained temporal convolutions in *Donnie Darko*, or the puzzling character switches in *The Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* (2001).

2. A *communicative* syuzhet may freely reveal information to the audience concerning character and story intentions, or remain *uncommunicative* by suppressing them, or it may vacillate between the two poles. One way it does this is by creating gaps in a character's motives, or in the audience's awareness of location and temporal status of events of the story. A *permanent gap* is one that permanently withholds information, while a *temporary gap* fortuitously releases information at specific points. A gap may also be *flaunted* when the syuzhet foregrounds missing information, or *suppressed*, when the audience is left unaware of such missing information. An example of a diffuse and suppressed gap inside a *knowledgeable* syuzhet occurs in the first part of *The Matrix* (1999), where we are unaware that Neo is living inside a computer-generated world. A gap may also be *focused*, leading the audience into forming 'an exclusive and homogeneous hypothesis, while a diffuse gap yields room for more open-ended inferential work' (1985, p. 55).

3. A third narrational strategy occurs when the syuzhet presents material in a *reflexive* or self-conscious way by drawing attention to its own devices. Examples of

this occur in *Stranger Than Fiction* (2006), when the protagonist displays awareness that he is a character in a story that is being written by an omnipotent author, or when a character (Blanche Tyler) looks directly at the camera in *Family Plot* (1976). Crucially, in art or parametric cinema, the syuzhet is at odds with the fabula, often standing in the way of its coherent construction. This conflict is essential to the production of unconventional, suppressed, or aberrant meaning in this type of cinema.

1.5. 3 Narrative Modes

Bordwell (1985, pp. 149-309) also provides us with four in-depth renditions of narrative *modes* in cinema:

1. The *Classical mode* is a specific configuration of normalized options for representing the fabula and for seamlessly manipulating the presentation of the syuzhet and style. Within this mode, canonical, or, traditional Hollywood narration presents psychologically-defined characters that pit themselves against opposing forces in order to achieve specific goals. The ending is the culmination of events based on character causality and presented as an unequivocal victory or defeat in the pursuit of the stated goals. In terms of the fabula, these characteristics are salient to the canonical format. Most importantly, in terms of the syuzhet, the classical film respects *the clearly signalled sequential logic* of a 'normal' initial state, its violation and its reestablishment.

2. The *Art Cinema mode* renders a syuzhet which discombobulates time and space in order to capture the ambiguous and diffuse aspects of a life impacted by rapid change. The result is that the audience has to work harder than in canonical film to construct a coherent fabula. It is possible to present the types of manipulation utilised by this mode into three linked procedural schemata, namely, ‘objective realism, expressive or subjective realism, and narrational commentary’ (1985, p. 205). Conspicuously absent from this mode is ‘the clearly signalled sequential logic of an initial state, its violation and its reestablishment’, replaced instead by a search for meaning through the pursuit of problem solving heuristics under the three procedural schemata (1985, p. 205).

3. The *Historical-Materialist mode* is of interest to this thesis insofar as it has influenced art and canonical cinema. Its impact has been limited mainly to technical and stylistic devices rather than character and story development. As a mode of narrative within the Soviet example, it utilizes character as a prototype of a whole class, milieu, or historical epoch. There is a tendency to depersonalise the individual because, (to paraphrase Pokrovsky, quoted in Bordwell 1985, p. 235) ‘to the Marxist, personality does not make history but is rather the instrument through which history is made’. More importantly from our perspective, however, is the understanding that because this mode regards its message to be its *raison d’etre*, it does not obfuscate the syuzhet’s presentation of the fabula. In this sense alone, it is a lot closer to the Classical, than it is to art cinema’s mode of narration.

4. The *Parametric mode* is associated largely with solitary filmmakers constructing deviant and opaque films. The syuzhet’s function, which normally serves to cue the

audience to construct a coherent fabula has now to share the spotlight with the film's style as index to meaning – the idiosyncratic use of camera angles, lighting, acting, and editing. Parametric narration is best understood as the kind of process that 'goes on in 'mixed' arts. In a narrative poem, the construction is often subordinate to the demands of the verse' (1985, p. 275). The spectator's task then becomes one of recognizing stylistic repetition and variation as a means of attributing meaning.

Seymour Chatman's work on narrative provides us with further investigative tools for our enquiry. Although Chatman refers to *story* and *discourse*, rather than to the fabula and syuzhet, his *division* of narrative into two major categories – that of *content* and its *form* is essentially the same as that of the Russian Formalists.

Chatman assimilates some of Gerard Genette's most important observations on the temporal relationship between form and content, granting us additional ways to identify and describe complex temporal arrangements of narrative elements, such as *order*, *duration*, and *frequency*, and a host of additional features operating within each of these categories. Furthermore, his definition of *events* as actions and happenings, and *existents* as characters and settings, and his exploration of the way they operate at the story (or, fabula) level, is germane. *Existents* are indeed characters, objects and environments, but so is the empty space that envelops them. Screen space differs from real space in that the frame may dissect objects, as well as the spaces between them, but it does not negate their shared logic. *Existents* facilitate the story by virtue of their scale, contour, texture, and density, position, degree, kind, and area of illumination, colour, and clarity (1978, p. 96-98). *Events*, on the other hand, are either *actions* or *happenings* within the story-world, and entail changes in state. Whereas existents are products of space, however, events are products of *time*.

Order, frequency, and duration are the fundamental parameters that convey story meaning here (1978, pp. 63-84). The action that a character or existent undertakes may be physical and non-verbal such as running, but may also be a feeling or sensation, and of course, the verbal act of speech. Crucially, actions involve the existent as *effector*. Happenings, by contrast, involve the character, or existent, as the *affected* (1978, p. 45).

1.5.4 From Movement-Image to Time-Image

Of further use is Deleuze's categorization of cinema into 'movement-image' and 'time-image', essentially a description of differences between the canonical and art cinema mode (1989, pp. xi - xii). Deleuze distinguishes between pre-war (movement-image) and post-war (time-image) cinema. Movement-image depends on a normal recognition of familiar space within which meaningful action may occur. But, the post-war period in Europe resulted in a disjointed world that made strange the spaces and the situations unfolding within it, where the unity of actions and events could no longer be preserved. The simple sensory-motor schemata that had directed the movement-image gave way under the regime of the time-image to a more complex unfolding of time. No longer respecting the empirical temporal succession, the time-image presents the coexistence of discreet periods at multiple levels. It effectively topples chronological time from its earlier position of prominence to establish a mode in which characters become helpless observers of seemingly random events. Reality itself now takes on the guise of a dream, a nightmare, or a hallucination. Alan Resnais' *Last Year In Marienbad* (1961) is perhaps the most famously extreme example of this, so much so that Bordwell

classifies this film under his *parametric* rather than *art* film mode (1985, p. 233). At the level of the *syuzhet*, the breakdown in logic causes the audience, already struggling to order the *fabula*, to interpret events as the subjective mental state of the characters or, perhaps more fundamentally, as the author's lens which reveals reality as it truly is.

While the new Hollywood directors, then, often allude to aspects of European art cinema in their characters and themes, they mostly do so at the level of the *syuzhet*. By contrast, I will suggest that *multiform* narratives do indeed display fundamental aspects of the time-image *at the level of the fabula*, and therefore, in combination with classical cinema conventions, are true offspring of art and parametric cinema. In analysing new forms of Hollywood storytelling, I will be making use of theoretical concepts to study the function of a range of film elements. In each case, I shall be separating form from content in order to expose the *syuzhet*'s manipulation of the *fabula* at a level of detail not possible without this disentanglement. Of course, the study of narrative through the identification, function, and arrangement of components into *macrostructures* and topologies is always in danger of becoming reductive. Utilizing the aforementioned piecemeal approach, I shall therefore conduct my investigations within a broader framework of codes operating within aesthetic, cultural, and social spheres. The approach presupposes some relativism on my part or at least a suspicion of sweeping *a priori* arguments. At the same time, I remain aware of the important role that commonalities between cultures play in shaping narrative, as illustrated by the notion of 'contingent universals' that underline basic human cognitive traits (Bordwell 1996, p. 91). I suggest that by assimilating conventions of art cinema at a more fundamental level than before, Hollywood is creating hybrid

modes of narration that warrant their own taxonomical descriptions, namely, *multiform* and *multistrand*. I do not offer a full definition of these two crucial terms here as that is the task of the bulk of this dissertation. I merely point out, for the moment, that I take multistrand and multiform to be categories that exist at a deeper hierarchical level than that of genre. More specifically, within these categories, and especially with regards to multiform narrative, the *syuzhet* forces us to construct the *fabula* differently to that of classical cinema, marshalling and grouping narrative elements into unique sets *across* genres.

1.5.5 1960s and 1970s Cinema Versus Post-1990s Cinema

It should be stressed that although the new Hollywood directors of the late 1960s and 1970s borrowed widely from art cinema, such borrowing was mainly incorporated at the level of *allusion* (Carroll 1998, pp. 240-264). Allusion references aspects from another work without necessarily employing or indeed understanding the fundamental deep structure of the original(s). Additionally, Bordwell reminds us that the uniqueness of art film lay in the author's oeuvre as the essential organizer of transtextual relations, whereas New Hollywood selectively adopted features of art cinema 'which fitted generic functions' (1985, p. 232).

The so-called American 'indie' movement is an interesting case. Geoff King argues that the movement is difficult to pin down because its industrial, narrative, formal, generic, as well as its social, political and ideological dimensions are in a complex dynamic with classical and art cinema (2005, pp. 1-3). King makes the point that although the boundaries between the cinemas are blurred, one practical way of

categorising membership is by determining the extent to which a film's narrative conventions depart from the familiar Hollywood ones. He identifies 'narrative drift' (2005, p. 71), 'absence of change' (p. 72), complex or moral ambiguity (p. 76), an enhanced verisimilitude based on mundane details (pp. 82-3), 'unconventional temporal shifts' (p. 96), a general loosening of cause-and-effect, typical of art cinema (p. 101), and a tendency to 'complicate established genre conventions' (pp. 166-7), as providing the markers for the broad spectrum of independent film production. J.J. Murphy espouses a similar view, suggesting that the films of Jarmusch, Van Sant, Tarantino, Hartley, and others, fall variously into a spectrum between the canonical and art film modes. Indie films may best be described as hybrids which incorporate aspects of both the canonical and art film (Murphy 2007, p. 16), but with definite leanings towards the latter – especially with regard to ambiguous, passive characters, meandering open ended stories, and impoverished terrains and settings.

Why, then, not juxtapose the multiform and multistrand film categories against the indie movement rather than the canonical Hollywood tradition? First, the spread of Hollywood film and its ideologies beyond its national borders has been enormous. The 'Hollywood' in 'Hollywood film' refers more to a range of normalized stylistic expectations and storytelling conventions than to a specific locale. Yvonne Tasker reminds us that contemporary Hollywood is less a physical place and more a mindset 'relentlessly referred to within American and other films' (1993, p. 55). She asserts that the collapse of the studio system, far from spelling the end of the institution, promoted its diffusion and proliferation beyond its borders, including independent production. Its impact on audiences merits study from this viewpoint alone.

Furthermore, historically, the Hollywood narrative mode encompasses a stable set of

narrational strategies against which to plot mutation and change. By retaining a large core of normalised conventions alongside emerging techniques and strategies, Hollywood film is normalising the latter by association. In selecting my case studies, I have picked out those films that best illustrate a wide spectrum of pertinent narrative features. Not all the films, then, are Hollywood films in the narrow sense. *Donnie Darko*, for example, was independently produced. So, again, in what sense is it legitimate to study this film as an illustration of the changing canonical narrative mode of *Hollywood* film? In addition to reasons noted above, I reiterate the point that the traditional norms and expectations have been shifting. A film such as *Next*, made and financed in Hollywood, displays the kinds of alternative realities, ambiguities, and discombobulated timeframes that critics have attributed to indie or art films.

Murphy, like King, points to the blurred lines between Hollywood and independent film. He indicates that Hollywood money, for example, often finds its way into indie pockets, if not initially, then at least after a film proves its potential for profit as a re-release, on television or on the DVD market. As a result, some filmmakers view indie film as a showcase for their talents, a preparation for the Hollywood majors (Murphy 2007, p. 4). A film, then, warrants study from within the evolving Hollywood tradition if, in addition to its strong non-conventional features, it displays *some* normalized conventions, such as a strong protagonist (Donnie), a formidable antagonist (Fate), a powerful goal (the desire to save the world), familiar stars or actors (Drew Barrymore, Patrick Swayze, Mary McDonnell), and familiar behavioural character traits. In *Donnie Darko*, Donnie's parents are clearly motivated by a deep love for their son; his sister plans to study at Harvard; Donnie and his friends fantasize about sex like any normal teenage boys. Interestingly, the re-

released Director's Cut (2004) film version features a remixed sound track with hit music by *INXS*, and incorporates excluded footage and additional special effects. These elements add to an already polished rendition of the *mise-en-scene* achieved through the accomplished long takes of the early sequences, inviting a favourable stylistic comparison between *Donnie Darko* and any Hollywood studio film. Indeed, one of the strengths of the film lies in the implication that a challenging or mixed narrative mode need not appear badly lit, employ impoverished sets, and use amateur actors to attract a large cult audience.

As the body of work produced by indie filmmakers grows and its influence spreads, a case could be mounted for exploring the influence of indie films on Hollywood narrative conventions as distinct from the European art film tradition. For the moment, however, the notion of art film, with its emphasis on the interrogation of form, style, and subject matter (indie, or otherwise), tied to its mainly European origins, will suffice⁴.

1.6 Selection of Texts

A word about my choice of texts. I have selected *Avatar*, *Donnie Darko*, *The Matrix*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Next*, *Crash*, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *Syriana*, and *Babel* as case studies because they are indicative of some of the most important trends and structures in canonical, multiform, and multistrand film. Clearly, no list is ever complete. There will always be films that could have been included as further and arguably more nuanced explorations of the categories

⁴ In his book, *Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema*, Allan Cameron points to the close relation between what he terms Hollywood's modular narratives and art cinema (2008, p. 5).

mentioned. The purpose of a robust theoretical framework, however, is precisely to accommodate excluded examples without harm to the categories themselves. Indeed, further examples should be welcomed as providing additional opportunities for refinement of any proposed framework. One final word about the selection of format: the screenplay, the written *words on paper* (or word processor), is the start of a process of narrative construction, which terminates only when the film is ready for release⁵. My examination of each film, therefore, is at the level of the release print, which is one step ahead of the 'shooting script' since changes may still occur during shooting. In short, I take the final narrative to be what we see and hear on the screen. This begs a series of questions, such as whether there exist two or more versions of a narrative – that of the written text and that of a transcribed enactment on the screen, and which is more appropriate as an object of study. A way to clarify this is to consider music – say, a Symphony, as existing as sheet music (the score), and as a specific rendition or performance through an orchestra on CD. The score is the basis of the performance, but exists in its own right as a *potential* for a specific performance. The actual performance may vary to a lesser or greater extent from the original score's notation in such aspects as pacing, inflection, and 'colour'. It is even possible that a performance deviates so much from the intent of the score that it becomes a parody of itself or of the wider movement that it represents (Friedman, n.d., p. 6). Ultimately, however, the score's purpose is to be 'performed'. The changes and inflections that it undergoes in being rendered from one medium to another are important areas of study, but they are not the subjects of this enquiry. I will pitch my examination of film narrative, therefore, at the level of a work 'as already performed' – the release print, with the screenplay (the words on paper)

⁵ Indeed, one might argue, along with Ronald Barthes (1974), that the process of text construction is completed only when an audience closes the circuit by reading/viewing it.

playing a supportive role. Where there is variation between a published screenplay and the release print, my focus will remain on the release print, unless there are significant reasons for doing otherwise.

1.7 Outcomes

An important goal of this thesis is to yield a practical outcome. As stated earlier, narrative features will be identified, in the first instance, through reference to the canonical film provided by a separate case study, as well by a wealth of existing research on this mode by academics, critics, and screenwriting teachers: the so-called manual writers. This will allow me to showcase the general transformations and patterns of narrative elements operating within multistrand and multiform film against an established base. Each case study foregrounds the differing narrative structures within the category, but also notes overlapping areas essential for legitimising membership. The goal is to establish flexible indicative guidelines for constructing this sort of storytelling. Again, my intention here is not the production of a complete and unassailable *poetics* of multistrand and multiform cinema based on *a priori* principles, but rather a *contingent* one, based on case studies against the backdrop of conventions flowing from a range of contemporary codes and practices. This exploration of context is the purpose of the next chapter. The case studies commence in Chapter 3 with *Avatar* (2009) as a prime example of traditional Hollywood narrative. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 plunge us into multiform and multistrand films respectively. The last chapter distils the findings into indicative schemas of each narrative form, much as Syd Field, Michael Hauge, Robert McKee, Linda Seger, and Christopher Vogel have done for the canonical film, albeit it in less detail.

CHAPTER 2: THE [R]EVOLVING FACE OF FILM NARRATIVE

2.1 Verisimilitude and Narrative Form

In ‘Multiple Plots in Recent Cinema’, which appeared in the 1997 November edition of *Script Magazine*, John Egan suggests that a new type of film structure emerged in the 1990s that discombobulates conventional dramatic structure. He describes this trend as the ‘90’s New Wave’. Citing *Pulp Fiction*, *Secrets and Lies* (1996), *The English Patient* (1996), and *Kansas City* (1996), he explains that whereas traditional film focuses on a central lead throughout, ‘in the New Wave there are no easily recognisable leads and no clearly defined plot in relation to a lead’ (p. 1). While it is undoubtedly true that the 1990s did indeed see a proliferation of unconventional films, Bordwell and Campora are just two of several commentators who disagree that this sort of film structure is indeed new. To wit, one of Bordwell’s chief claims in *The Way That Hollywood Tells It* is that the 1990s merely brought about a new ‘surge’ of the old Hollywood tendency to innovate that which had always existed in the studio system (2006, pp. 72 -73). Putting forth a similar view, Matthew Campora states that:

The adaptation of art cinema aesthetics to commercial ends common in contemporary cinema is by no means a new trend. Examples can be seen in the 1930s and the 1940s, when German directors migrated to Hollywood and incorporated expressionist elements into studio features, and in the 1960s and 1970s, when young Hollywood directors borrowed from the aesthetic experimentations of the various international new waves. What is novel about the recent appropriations, however, is that multiform narrative structures – which were generally developed in contexts that overtly rejected classical Hollywood storytelling – are being used to create unusually challenging films for mass audiences, demonstrating that, as in other areas of popular culture, the formerly clear boundaries between the aesthetics of art and commercial forms have blurred. (2009, p. 122)

But if complex narratives have existed throughout the history of film⁶, why have they only recently become viable Hollywood fare? Why had the industry's early experimentation with ontological and existential relativity through such films as *Laura* (1944), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), and *Harvey* (1950), have to wait until the mid-1990s in order to coalesce into a trend? One way to approach this question is by exploring it within the context of the epoch that frames it. This has the added advantage of allowing us access to additional fields, such as science, technology, economics, and digital media and to trace their contribution to the epoch's salient features, which find aesthetic expression in cultural forms.

By narrative form I mean the shape the narrative takes by flowing through major structural points that define the story, such as the inciting incident, the first and second turning points, and the mid-point – discussed in detail later. Since the content of a work is, in part, the aesthetic reflection of a society's various knowledge, ethical and belief systems, I suggest that contemporary notions of morality, identity, causality, space, and time, are routinely mapped by the writer onto the diegetic world to imbue his work with *verisimilitude* – an important aspect of appearing relevant and familiar. The sense of verisimilitude authenticates not only the actions of the characters within the diegesis but also the shape of the diegesis itself. As Stadler and McWilliam argue, there are 'ethical implications [to] form and content [...] that form itself makes a statement, and that some forms of representation may be more appropriate than others' (2009, p. xiii). Traditionally, this form is teleological, presenting a beginning, middle, and end in which all loose ends are resolved in a linear, progressive way that reflects the ethos of the epoch. A belief in God or at least

⁶ Bordwell (2006), cites *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) as one of the earliest and most famous film examples to employ a shifting ontology, while Janet Murray refers to Jorge Luis Borges' *The Garden of Forking Paths* (1941) as the quintessential multiform narrative (1997, p. 30).

in a universal morality is perhaps best reflected in stories espousing a solid and linear structure which terminates in a closed ending – one in which the Hero (good) is rewarded for righteous actions while the villain (evil) is punished for wrongful ones. The questioning of such structures, which finds expression in the Modernist⁷ movement, however, escalates into a suspicion of the grand narratives in general, reflecting a loss of confidence in received values, ontological boundaries, and foundational concepts (that we routinely use to determine the verisimilitude of a story). Again, because verisimilitude is the result of the habituation and acceptance of pervasive moral, cultural, and scientific features (Chatman 1978, pp. 48-52), stories and formats which might once have seemed authentic, now appear increasingly contrived and unrealistic – such as when the hero is inevitably rewarded for his sacrifice and successes by prevailing over the villain and winning the girl, as demanded by the typical Hollywood ending. In order to expand our understanding of how verisimilitude is reflected in the shape and content of a contemporary story, and how this spells danger for the traditional approach in canonical film, it is important to delve a little deeper into the characteristics of the postmodern epoch.

2.2 A Postmodern Perspective

Although there is much debate around the definition of *postmodernism* and its relationship to its siblings – *postmodernity* and the *postmodern* – I take the view, along with Simon Malpas (2001, p. 3), that all three are united in their attempt to communicate the notion of a transforming effect across the entire array of arts and humanities disciplines so as to constitute a single, if multifaceted, concept. Fredric

⁷ Modernism supports the legitimacy of an overarching system of meaning (a grand narrative) while questioning and criticising traditional forms. 'Hard' Postmodernism tends to deny that there is any legitimacy to such a grand narrative at all (Jameson 2001, pp. 34-36).

Jameson, for example, regards the postmodern as ‘not just another word for the description of a particular style. It is also [...] a periodising concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and economic order – what is often euphemistically called modernisation, postindustrial or consumer society, the society of the media or spectacle, or multinational capitalism’ (2001, p. 23). What then are some of the features that differentiate this epoch from its predecessors? In the first instance, it is important to note, in general terms, that the magnitude of separation in definitions between the modern and postmodern is measured mainly along linguistic and cultural lines. French postmodernists, for example, may be described as ‘poststructuralist’ and encompass structuralist readings of Freud and Marx. They also see the events of May 1968 as a watershed moment in intellectual thought. Their work tends to inflect a schism between the modern and postmodern. Italian thinkers such as Vattimo, by contrast, emphasise the historical in preference to the revolutionary. Here, the focus is on continuity, narrative, and difference within continuity, rather than discursive gaps. Both, however, see postmodernism as implied or made inevitable by modernism itself (Aylesworth 2010, p. 1). Drawing primarily on the work of Baudrillard, Jameson, Lyotard, and Vattimo, I proffer the following short summary: postmodernism’s incredulity towards metanarratives stems from ‘the fact that knowledge is no longer principally narrative’ (Lyotard 1984, p.26). Lyotard sees this as a result of the rapid growth of technologies which has shifted the emphasis of knowledge from the ends of human actions to its means (Lyotard 1984, p.37). This has eroded the speculative game of philosophy and allowed science to develop independently of philosophical grounding (Aylesworth, 2010, p. 8). One consequence of this is what Baudrillard has called an *implosion* of categories

(Baudrillard 1983, p. 70), since the preservation of ontological relationships relative to legitimizing structures can no longer be justified. If, for Baudrillard, modern society is organised around production (Baudrillard 1993, pp. 6-42), postmodern society revolves around simulation – cultural modes of representation that simulate experience through television, virtual reality, and cyberspace (Baudrillard 1983, pp. 49-58 & pp. 96-102). The collapse of a reality based on overarching metaphysical values such as God gives rise to what Vattimo has labelled *de-historicization* (Vattimo 1988, pp. 4-10), namely, the collapse of history, as a teleological *unitary* process, replaced instead by a series of partial and differing technologies which can only be judged aesthetically (Vattimo 1988, pp. 12-13). In reading Nietzsche's 'death of God' (the devaluation of the *highest* value) and Heidegger's annihilation of metaphysics (insofar as Being is transformed completely into exchange-value) together, Vattimo argues that the true nature of value may now emerge – value as 'processing the capacity for convertibility and an indefinite transformability of processuality' (1988 pp. 20-21). The process, accelerated by technology itself, flattens out experience at the level of simultaneity. Yet, for Vattimo, continuity of contemporary experience *is* possible through the unifying power of art and rhetoric with information from the sciences and a philosophy to propose a 'rhetorically persuasive', unified view of the world (1988, p. 179). In terms of specific aesthetic effects, Jameson sees the breakdown of legitimizing overarching structures as inevitably giving rise to *pastiche* (Jameson 2001, pp. 24-29), since, in the absence of a superior metaphysical or universal position, not even parody is possible; additionally, the collapse of the subject as a continuous entity due to the breakdown in our experience of the progressive nature of time, results in an extension of the 'now' into a perpetual present, expressed in the individual as a kind of *schizophrenia*

(Jameson 2001, pp. 28-34); aggravating matters even further, digital media, which promotes a different experience of agency, identity, time and space, has entrenched itself in most aspects of our life, resulting in a sense of ontological confusion in the way that we view and define ourselves.

While Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality⁸ renders history illusionary, and Vattimo, (who sees postmodernity as a new twist in modernity), sees a *universal unitary* history as dissolving and is to be judged only aesthetically (Vattimo 1988, pp. 9-13), Ricoeur's views on human action, which he sees as being analogous to discourse (Ricoeur 1991, pp. 146-167), (viewed through his notion of the unifying power of narrative), allows for the recognition of the self as agent, with positive consequences for history, ethics and politics. Rejecting Cartesian dualism, as well as radical anti-Cartesian conceptions of the self, Ricoeur holds that the self consists both of an embodied identity – its *idem*-identity, and its *ipse*-identity – its ability to initiate new action to itself and to other selves. If the self is capable of action and discourse within a larger narrative context, meaning and intentionality are preserved. Such an identity is narrative in nature (Ricoeur 1992, pp. 147-48). Central to Ricoeur's anthropology is his notion of time. In order to make sense of any action, one has to recognise that its meaning is distinguishable from its occurrence as a particular spatio-temporal event. Meaning, therefore, is something that is associated with a spatio-temporal event, but is distinct from it. Yet, without an adequate understanding of time and the way it mediates cause and effect, no meaningful anthropology is possible.

⁸ Baudrillard regards hyperreality as the last stage of simulation where a sign or image is no longer related to the real but is its own simulacrum – a mere effect of the symbolic process (Baudrillard 1983, pp. 141-42).

In his three volume work, *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur suggests that time has a tripartite character, and provides a way of reconciling analytical time – the time of the cosmic – large scale, and the time of computers – the nano-second – to ‘lived time’, which is experienced by the individual as the time of the now (Ricoeur 1988, p. 99). Cosmic time is the time of the world. It rolls out as a sequence of uniform undifferentiated moments in which change occurs and in which the present is defined relative to its placement in the sequence. Lived time is the time in which we experience our lives as being lived – the here and now. Yet, some moments are more important than others such as the birth of our first child or the death of a spouse. Lived time is thus inexorably bound up in the things that we value - the interpersonal relationships that define our lives. Clocks, calendars and other devices effectively create a link between cosmic and lived time. Collectively they give rise to what Ricoeur calls ‘Historical time’ (1988, p. 104). Historical time is the time of action, of inauguration of new sequences and things. Such sequences are documented in the language of narrative and involve human identity and action within an interpersonal and public temporality that gives meaning to its own agency within the private and public social context (1988, pp. 116-26). Historical time, therefore, presents a framework which relates the incomprehensible aspects of analytic time, with lived time (1988, p. 99). It allows for the emergence of a meaningful and universal narrative for humanity – in stark contrast to Baudrillard, for whom no such narrative is possible.

Ricoeur’s work, therefore, resists late modernist and postmodernist tendencies to *demote* narrative as a universal unifying force (Aylesworth 2010, p. 32).

Interestingly, this philosophical preoccupation with time, causality, identity, and

meaning, finds its analogue in the works of a variety of twentieth century story-tellers. Ricoeur notes that the late modernist experimentation with narrative technique is aimed at exploding the very experience of time or at least to render it incomprehensible through endless bifurcation. This experience is independent of character psychology and represents a late modernist and postmodernist attack on the very fabric of time at an existential level. Certainly, the work of late modernist authors such as Julio Cortazar's *Hopscotch* (1963) resist recuperative readings in favour of disjunctive labyrinthic structures in which a linear time flow is impossible to establish (Cameron 2008, p. 32). This tendency may be traced to the early modernist experimentation with time and narrative found in the Jorge Luis Borges's short story, *The Garden of Forking Paths* (1941) a forerunner to the forking-path narratives such as *Groundhog Day* (1993), *Run Lola Run* (1998), and *Donnie Darko* (2001). Cameron points out that the schismatic tendency within the temporal framework of late modernist cinema of the 1960s and 1970s is somewhat tamer than in the corresponding literature of the period – with the exception of a film such as Alan Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad*, where the schism between spatio-temporal frames is irreconcilable (Cameron 2008, p. 34). On the other hand, flashback films such as *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), through to *21 Grams* (2003) and *Irreversible* (2002), present no enduring difficulty in reordering time to make sense of the narrative at the level of the fabula. The distinction, then, is between schism, which points to existential realities that cannot be framed within a single spatio-temporal framework, and modularity – the tendency of narrative to question its own temporal ordering of events (Cameron 2008, p. 3). Here, modularity functions at the level of the syuzhet and is intended to inflect the sense of complexity of contemporary life⁹.

⁹ I note here that my categories of open and closed multiform narrative, by contrast, are intended to capture both forms of disjointed narrative - modular and schismatic.

2.3 New Physics and Digital Media

In the previous section, I sketched the modern/postmodern dichotomy as a backdrop to the rise of complex narratives, suggesting that such narratives did not emerge from a vacuum. In this section, I want to draw attention to the notion that the foregrounding and questioning of time in complex narratives is also consistent with developments in science and digital media.

In the early part of the twentieth century Einstein's theories of Special (1905) and General Relativity (1915) fractured Newton's fixed clockwork universe and showed us that motion, acceleration, and mass are intimately related to point of view. Quantum mechanics, which Einstein reluctantly helped to spawn, built on Heisenberg's *uncertainty principle* by suggesting that reality is one of many possibilities governed by a statistically weighted chanciness. The double slit experiment, in which light emerges from slits as a particle or as a wave depending upon how the apparatus is set up, captures the schizophrenic nature of modern existence. Brian Green, in his three-part documentary *The Elegant Universe* (2003), traces some of the most curious aspects of modern physics – parallel universes, time travel, and multiple selves – notions that are routinely enacted in games such as *Doom 3* (2004), or *Resident Evil 4* (2008) by simply replaying a saved session or by adopting a new character. The fracturing and multiplying of the subject which in turn leads to the realization that 'schizophrenia is not only a human fact but also a possibility for thought' (Deleuze 1994, p. 148), is postmodernism's bedrock.

But if the new physics introduced a new lexicon into our vocabulary, technology – specifically digital media – has allowed us to play with this lexicon through computer games and the Internet¹⁰. With regards to our topic, and at the most trivial level, such play is seen in the shared use of words describing the operation and components of Hollywood films, digital media, and quantum theory; namely, *hyperlink or network cinema*, the *butterfly effect* and *alternative futures* (Bordwell 2006, p. 95). Drilling deeper, the Public Broadcasting Service’s (PBS) programme entitled *Digital Nation* (2010), explores a multitude of views from researchers, practitioners, and commentators as they seek to chart the impact of the Internet on the way that we work, partake in politics, make war, entertain ourselves, and construct our identities. One important observation is the spill-over effect that occurs between virtual and real experience. The program notes, for example, that the self-confidence that we gain by making ourselves appear taller *in a virtual environment* flows over to our normal relationships and negotiations, indicating that, in a very real sense, what happens in the virtual realm affects the real world. Traditionally, the exercise of individual agency has been that of real actions producing real-world results through a process of cause and effect. One worked in a factory or office, handling real people, materials, machines, and paper and was rewarded by being paid with ‘real’ money so that one could sustain and entertain one’s self in the physical world. Agency, in other words, involved physical and public acts that had physical

¹⁰ Any claim about the impact of digital media upon society, including its cultural artefacts, presupposes a stance towards the ongoing polemic over determinism that is encapsulated by the opposing views of Marshal McLuhan and Raymond Williams. Although I reject the notion of a simple linear casual relationship between technology and society, I hold that the tools that man fashions to serve his needs may indeed influence his future actions and ambitions in ways not originally foreseen or intended. Without wishing to extend the polemic, I point out that recent work on chaos theory has highlighted the existence of unpredictably complex, non-linear, but pervasive links that exist between elements within systems as diverse as weather, flocks of geese and social behaviour in general (Lister M, Dovey J, Gidding S, et. al, 2005, pp. 72-92).

and public consequences. The real was that which could be touched, acted upon and thought about – albeit through a veil of signifiers.

Digital media, primarily the Internet and video games, may be helping to erode the status of what constitutes ‘real’ identity, agency, time, and space – at the very least, in the cultural sense. This is seen nowhere more clearly than in America’s war on terror and its use of remote drones to attack the enemy. Here, the ‘pilot’ is able to destroy his target despite being separated by thousands of kilometres (*Digital Nation* 2010). Removing the visceral physical aspect from traditional combat in which opposing forces occupy a proximate space, may serve to desensitise a combatant by making his engagement with a target similar to that of a computer game. In a sense, *agency* has burst its ontological borders, extending our reach over the ‘real’ world through access to the virtual world, where time, space and action no longer mean the same thing. It is a short series of mental hops from here to that most radical of all philosophical claims that reality itself is a chimera – nothing other than a simulacra, signs stripped of their referents, simulating themselves. Now, even war becomes, at best, ontologically confused or, at worst, unreal – a mere advertisement of the West’s weapons industry (Baudrillard 2001, pp. 63-74).

One way to assimilate the complex relationship between digital media, science, and the modernist and postmodernist offerings from the cultural domain, then, is to recognise that they both mark a preoccupation with space and time. Cameron suggests that digital culture is a development which occurs from within cultural postmodernism rather than a departure from it (Cameron 2008, p.38). In Cameron’s view, digital culture springs from the ever increasing use of social media and digital

literacy in general, which then grants us the ability to rearticulate time in a meaningful way (2008, p. 40). Whereas modernist and postmodernist discourses centred on the dislocation or schism of the temporal, discourse around digital media offers the opportunity to rehabilitate time through the hyper-link (2008, p. 43). In a similar fashion, while a film such as *Pulp Fiction* ostensibly presents a syuzhet that fragments its temporal and spatial spaces, it simultaneously invites links between the narrative fragments through association (2008, p. 43). Indeed, that *Pulp Fiction* coincides with the proliferation of the personal computer and with the accelerated growth of the internet as a cultural medium is perhaps no coincidence. Hayles and Gessler put it even more strongly than this with regards to *Mulholland Drive*: ‘The nonlinear narrative of *Mulholland Drive* further suggests that the technologies of virtual reality feed back into the culture to change how stories are conceived and created, even when the technologies are not literally present’ (2008, p. 1).

The relationship between science, technology, and culture is complex and is not easily unravelled. The discovery of simultaneity popularised by Relativity theory has been underscored by the recent growth of mobile telephony and internet use while, paradoxically, simultaneously fostering a tendency towards asynchrony, where the separation between live events, automated messages, and delayed broadcasts becomes difficult to disentangle. This asynchrony forms the opposite pole to simultaneity and points to the increasingly complex and ambiguous spatio-temporal flows of the digital era with its emphasis on non-linearity (Cameron 2008, p. 145). If this tendency is reflected in the narrative structures that are the subject of this thesis, then digital media may be viewed as part of the cultural context that has infused complex narratives with their cultural currency and readability – less so as cause and

more so as an indication of the growing acceptance of a new narrative aesthetic by the viewing public.

2.4 Changing Schemata and Storytelling

Having identified some of the specific characteristics of the epoch that find their analogues in the aesthetic expression of cultural objects such as the Hollywood screenplay, it is time to say something about the mechanisms through which this is done. In the section on method, I identified schemata as being underlying structures that edit semantic fields¹¹ into smaller units of meaning to create cognitive maps that we use in everyday problem solving (Bordwell 1991 p. 129). Invoking a cognitive perspective, Bordwell reminds us that, ‘in making referential meaning, the ordinary perceiver brings into play real-world assumptions about space, time, causality, identity and so forth’, drawing on a network of schemata to do so (Bordwell 1991, p. 134). Importantly, from the point of view of this thesis, fabula construction draws on such assumptions to make sense of the diegetic world at the referential or denotative level. In *Making Meaning*, Bordwell suggests that in attempting to make sense of a film, critics and spectators construct four types of meanings: the first two, *referential* and *explicit*, make up the ‘literal’ meaning of the text and are concerned with the coherent construction of spatio-temporal dimensions and causal aspects of the diegetic world as well as assigning a ‘point’ to such an arrangement; *implicit* meaning is often associated with the theme or ‘point’ of a story; the fourth, the *repressed* or *symptomatic* meaning, is one that the film reveals unintentionally and may be regarded as arising from the artist’s obsession or neurosis (pp. 8-9). This

¹¹ In *Making Meaning*, Bordwell defines a semantic field as a ‘set of relations of meaning between conceptual linguistic units. Thus city/country can be said to constitute a semantic field by a relation of opposite meaning’ (1991, p. 106).

thesis emphasises the importance of referential meaning, especially with regards to multiform narrative, since without it, it would be difficult to construct a fabula that successfully navigates the category's ontological and existential frames.

Kant seems to have applied the term 'schema' both to a knowledge structure and the procedure through which we produce and use such structures (Kant 2003, pp. 180-187). A typical example is the *buy-sell schema*, which consist of two components, a buyer and a seller, linked by an exchange of money for goods. Although schemata are continuously retrieved and adjusted throughout the process of cognition, they generate *prototypical* effects, which may then be applied to a wider range of situations. The *face-to-face* exchange of money for property, for example, is one such effect (Bordwell 1991, p. 137). What is important from the point of view of this thesis, however, is that prototypical schemata are complicit in the process of norm creation since they share the defining characteristic of appearing as 'given', natural or verisimilar – so palpably true as not to require further attention or explanation. Chatman puts it in this way: 'Audiences come to recognise and interpret conventions by 'naturalizing' them. [...] To naturalize a narrative convention means not only to understand it, but to forget its conventional character [...], to incorporate it into one's interpretive net' (1980, p. 49). It is my contention that digital technology, through its pervasive ability surreptitiously to transgress ontological borders, is inflecting core practices and concepts and reshaping a range of prototypical schemata that we routinely use to make sense of the world. The change to our notion of personal *agency* from one that is embodied (temporarily and spatially localised), to one that is disembodied (spatially and temporally diffuse), to give but one example, suggests that it is no longer valid to regard the *face-to-face* physical exchange of money for

product as the prototype of the buy/sell schema, as any user of e-bay will attest to. This has a profound effect on what we regard as normal and authentic and may well help answer the question posed at the beginning of this chapter, namely, why it is that art film inflected cinema, which gained acceptance in early post-war Europe, is increasingly gaining traction with today's general audiences: the assault on identity, agency, time, and familiar spaces inflicted on Europe, as a result of World War II, resulted in a dislocation and de-familiarization of foundational concepts and schemata which was reflected aesthetically, partly in the discombobulation of narrative forms and partly in its subject matter. Digital media, it may be argued, operating within the general postmodern context, has contributed to a similar disturbance of fundamental schemata – a disturbance that finds aesthetic expression in the *shape* and *structure* of cultural objects such as multiform and multistrand films.

2.5 The Future of Story

Such is the concern over the canonical story that several former Hollywood executives have teamed up with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Laboratory to ponder its future. In a recent article published in the *New York Times*, Michael Cieply notes that the researchers will explore whether the traditional way of telling stories, especially for screen, is in trouble (2008, p.1). David Kirkpatrick, a founder of the project, declares that the goal in current storytelling is how to keep meaning alive in the new century. The article identifies text-messaging, cell phone calls, and computer games as mitigating Hollywood's ability to tell meaningful stories. Peter Guber, a film producer and former chairman of Sony Pictures

Entertainment, is quoted in the same article as saying that traditional narrative, ‘the kind with unexpected twists and satisfying conclusions – has been drowned out by noise and visual clutter’ (Cieply 2008, p. 1). Additionally, Gary Hayes, who designs curricula for cinematic games and virtual worlds at Australian Film Television and Radio School, points to the increasing number of films (nearly 80 of them currently in production) with game-like story arcs: ‘It does make you wonder how many screenplay writers are sitting in front of their Xbox/PS3/Wii’s looking for inspiration nowadays’ (Hayes 2008, p. 2). This enforces the notion of a strong cross-influence between the two media. In the film *Doom* (2005), for example, we cut to the point-of-view of Reaper, gun in shot. This is a direct appropriation of P.O.V. shots from the game. Another point of confluence between games and film is the use of similar digital tools for the creation of effects, characters and environments. As the look and feel of worlds created by sophisticated 3D software for film and games become increasingly indistinguishable, and the transportability of the audience/player from one medium to another becomes more seamless, so does the shared narrative experience. Of course, this is a two-way flow, with films influencing games as much as games influence films. Extra-diegetic elements, then, tend to wrap around an awareness of the narrative, especially with regards to the blockbuster, which is accompanied by a following of related products and activities (Hills 2003, pp. 179-80). What is noteworthy from the point of view of this thesis, however, is the notion that digital media is helping to contextualize the way that we craft, consume, and enjoy films.

Of course, none of these attempts to answer the question posed at the beginning of this chapter would mean much if audiences did not vote with their feet. The critical

and financial success of *Pulp Fiction*, which earned over one hundred million dollars in the U.S, and, to a lesser extent, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* which earned around thirty-four million, (Campora, 2009, p. 129) lent financial credibility to film makers that wanted to create cinema that questions the traditional story structure, espouses fringe, arty and somewhat opaque themes and narrative techniques from art and experimental cinema, yet still attract A-list actors, once the reserve of big studio productions, willing to act in smaller productions. The recent success of Christopher Nolan's multiform film, *Inception* (2010), which earned 60 million dollars in its opening week in the United States alone (<http://www.imdb.com>) suggests that this trend is set to continue.

CHAPTER 3: ESTABLISHING THE BASELINE

3.1 Canonical or Formula Film

Much has been written about the canonical story, both by academics and practitioners, stretching as far back as Aristotle, and later, by others such as Propp, Campbell, Todorov, Chatman, Barthes, Branigan, and Bordwell, that the very mention of these names calls forth a pantheon of scholars glaringly omitted from the list. Such omissions are regrettable, but not damaging, providing that the major perspectives are represented in this thesis. With that said, and using *Avatar* as exemplar, I explore the central mechanisms of the canonical film, not at the source, but as they have evolved and been promulgated primarily through the work of the so-called manual writers such as Syd Field, Linda Seger, Robert McKee, Christopher Vogler, and Michael Hauge, although some reference is made to critical analysis beyond these five. John Egan, for example, in describing the Best Picture Oscar winning film, *Jerry Maguire* (1996), provides us with as succinct and useful a definition of the well-written Hollywood formula as any given by the manual writers. He suggests that it involves *a single plot* which entirely revolves around a *single protagonist* who is supported, opposed, and offset by a cast of secondary characters (1997, p. 1). Secondary characters make up what we generally refer to as the subplot. Such characters may indeed generate their own story streams within the overall structure but these streams, in so far as they are causally distinct from the protagonist, are essentially irrelevant to the plot, serving instead to enrich the narrative at a thematic or emotional level through parallels and contrasts.

The requirement of a *single plot involving a single protagonist*, then, is one of the essential differences between canonical and multistrand films that we shall be exploring later. Additionally, each character operating within the traditional framework populates the plot and sub-plot and collectively, represents different sides or perspectives of the story premise or argument. In *Avatar*, the premise asks what would happen if a marine hired to help overcome the indigenous population of a far-flung world changed sides? The film's answer gives rise to the overall theme of the story, proving which character's perspective was correct. Broadly stated, the theme in *Avatar* affirms the triumph of nature over technology. Despite the usefulness of critical and academic comment from a variety of sources in unravelling the screenwriting process, my main focus must remain on tools and techniques drawn from the manual writers, since they, more than anyone else, have packaged much of the wisdom on canonical film narrative into a practical set of codes and conventions currently used by Hollywood writers.

3.2 Case Study #1: *Avatar*

James Cameron's *Avatar*, the world's highest grossing film as of this writing, beating the director's own all time box-office champion *Titanic* into second place, has been praised by critics for a number of reasons, chief amongst them being its groundbreaking CGI, its foregrounding of environmental issues, and its well-rounded story and believable characters. Ebert describes it as 'sensational entertainment' that 'would reward repeated viewings' (Ebert 2009, p. 1). His chief praise is that the film's 3D environments and characters stand on their own merits rather than being mere vehicles for the breakthroughs in 3D rendering and viewing technology.

Adding to the praise, *The Hollywood Reporter*'s Kirk Honeycutt, points out that, in the absence of an underlying novel or myth on which to base his story, Cameron taps into contemporary environmental issues via the Western, stretching as far back as *The Vanishing American* (1925), and more specifically *Dances With Wolves* (1990). He also finds that much of the story is informed by America's experience in the Vietnam War, implying that this is a complex film with multiple ideological layers.

What is noteworthy from the perspective of this thesis, however, is the extent to which exotic ontologies have become conventionalised within both the canonical and the *closed* multiform narrative categories (a classification to be explored later), forcing the relegation of disorientating subjectivity experienced in films such as *Lost Highway*, *Donnie Darko*, or *Vanilla Sky* (2001), to the *open* multiform category instead (again, to be explored later). Indeed, *Avatar* has much in common with *The Matrix*, since both films deal with out-of-body-experiences communicated to audiences primarily through the redundant use of markers and explanatory devices. But whereas *The Matrix* contains a single but lengthy unheralded ontological transgression that is only explained deep into the first act, *Avatar* avoids disorientation all together by deploying markers at each existential/ontological crossing to the point of redundancy. Yet, despite this formal difference, such has been the extent of absorption and normalisation of existential and ontological border crossings by contemporary film, facilitated in part by the proliferation of digital media that I do not hesitate to situate *Avatar* within the canonical rather than the multiform category.

3.2.1 Method: Syuzhet Breakdown

Before launching into an in-depth study of the film's narrative operations, our first step will be meticulously to describe and index events presented to us by the syuzhet. This detailed material will be found in an appendix at the end of the thesis in order to make the reading less cumbersome. This will be the method used for all nine case studies. The syuzhet, we are reminded, is the palpable but subjective arrangement and presentation of narrative events in a film by the filmmakers. Separating the syuzhet from the fabula allows us more easily to differentiate style from content in an effort to uncover the logic essential for establishing narrative coherence. This will become even more necessary later on, as we delve into the existential and ontological transgressions that populate the multiform film category. The approach involves a detailed description of events spanning several pages. To preserve clarity and ease of access, numbers are to be assigned to each significant unit of action, usually a shot, scene or sequence. Items not assigned a unique number are to be indexed by the previous number in the sequence.

3.2.2 A Brief Survey of Additional Terms as Defined by the Manual Writers

Although each manual writer emphasizes different aspects of the screenwriting craft, they all adhere to a similar structural approach that agrees with Egan's definition of a screenplay telling 'a story that involves *a single plot* which entirely revolves around *a single protagonist* who is supported, opposed and offset by a cast of secondary characters'. Of the five manual writers mentioned in the previous section, perhaps only Christopher Vogler offers a somewhat different inflection at first glance –

although even he employs a structural template in his use of *the quest* as a generic structure. Simplifying for the sake of brevity, one may regard Field's contribution as focusing primarily on the structure of the main plot centred on a protagonist who struggles to achieve his chosen goal against mounting obstacles. Field, who claims to be one of the first manual writers to package Hollywood codes and conventions into a single paradigm (Bordwell 2006, p. 29), asserts in *The Screenwriter's Workshop*, that 'before you can express your story dramatically, you must know four things: 1) the ending, 2) the beginning, 3) Plot Point I¹², and 4) Plot Point II. These four elements are the structural foundation of your screenplay' (Field 2006, p. 58). He later adds a fifth element, the mid-point, which he defines as '*a link in the chain of dramatic action*' (p. 203). Additionally, the mid-point 'expands the character's depth and dimension' (207). Field sees the typical film as comprising three acts, balanced by the mid-point, which breaks up the middle act into two units roughly of equal length. Each act is about 30 pages, or 30 screen minutes in length and focuses on the vicissitudes of the protagonist's fortunes.

Seger follows a similar line, but offers more detail about subplots. In *Making a Good Script Great*, she writes that 'subplots give the protagonist an opportunity to smell the flowers, to fall in love, to enjoy a hobby, to learn a new skill' (1994, p. 39).

Emphasising that the function of subplots is to support and add density to the main plot, Seger stresses that subplots have their own beginning, middle, and end and are most effective when they intersect and connect with the plot line. Importantly, subplots carry the theme of the story (p. 40). But no canonical story is possible without a central lead. Hauge lays down five essential pillars for crafting a successful

¹² Field defines a plot point as 'an incident, episode or event that 'hooks' into the action and spins it around into another direction' (p. 50). This thesis uses the terms 'plot point' and 'turning point' interchangeably.

protagonist or Hero, the inclusion of which he sees as the first essential element of a well-crafted canonical story (2007, p. 23). In *Writing Screenplays That Sell*, Hauge asserts that the Hero, as the vehicle that drives the story forward, must allow for audience identification, pursue a clear and visible goal, face seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and show some sign of courage (2007, pp. 22-24). Interestingly, Hauge does not place character growth, which he defines as the 'character's search for courage [which] results in greater self-knowledge, maturation, or actualization' (p. 32), within the first five *essential* elements of his story-concept checklist, although he does include it at number thirteen, after high concept, originality and familiarity, subplots, genre, medium, and cost, and before theme (pp. 25-33). Lastly, Hauge defines *theme* as 'a universal statement about the human condition that goes beyond the plot. It is the screenwriter's prescription for how one should live one's life' (p. 84). Theme, then, is generated from the premise or argument of the story within a wider context of received moral and ethical values.

Robert McKee's *Story*, in addition to concepts already explored above, includes a survey of major non-canonical forms which he labels 'anti-plot' and 'miniplot', as well as a detailed examination of genres. From the point of view of this thesis, however, McKee's definition of the following terms proves useful: the *Premise* is that which shapes the dramatic context of the story by asking an open-ended question – 'What would happen if...?' (1997, p. 112); a *beat* is 'an exchange of behaviour in action/reaction' (p. 37); a *scene* is 'a story event, usually in continuous time and space' (p. 35); an *act* is 'a series of sequences that peaks in a climactic scene which causes a major reversal of values' (p. 41); the *inciting incident*, as 'the first major event of the telling, is the primary cause for all that follows' (p. 181); and the

‘obligatory scene’ or *crisis*, is ‘an event the audience knows it must see before the story can end’ (p. 198), which most often takes the form of a final confrontation between the protagonist and antagonistic forces. Christopher Vogler, by contrast, injects a mythological approach to his ruminations, inspired by the work of the American mythologist Joseph Campbell, defining the screenplay in terms of a quest. In *A Hero’s Journey*, Vogler describes each stage of the narrative as a journey undertaken by the Hero as he struggles to achieve his goal. Thus the Hero starts in the Ordinary World, receives a Call to Adventure, which initially results in The Refusal. He typically meets with The Mentor, Crosses the First Threshold, is Tested by Enemies and assisted by Allies, approaches the Inmost Cave, suffers an Ordeal, is Rewarded, begins his Journey Back, is Resurrected, and finally Returns with The Elixir (p. 8). In doing so, he is aided and impeded by a host of archetypal characters (or combination thereof); namely, the Mentor, the Threshold Guardian, the Herald, the Shapeshifter, the Shadow, the Ally, and the Trickster (p. 26). This approach to storytelling has much in common with Propp’s description of the fairy tale put forward in his *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (1968) in terms of character function. Although some of Vogler’s offerings seem ostensibly different from the other manual writers, his definition of character and character action, in adhering to a predetermined template based on structuring narrative elements according to function, remains much the same as Field’s, Hauge’s, Seger’s, and McKee’s.

3.2.3 *Avatar*’s Narrative Structure

Using an aggregated approach gleaned from the manual writers, and in reference to the detailed breakdown of the syuzhet in Appendix 1, we may now proceed to lay out

Avatar's skeletal structure by asking and answering a series of key questions.

Collectively such questions and answers capture the main components of the story as well as its premise and theme:

A. Who is the protagonist?

Jake Sully.

B. Who is/are the antagonist(s)?

Colonel Quaritch and Selfridge – the Company stalwart from whom Quaritch takes his orders. But also, in a general sense, our insatiable thirst for resources at the expense of, and without regard to, the environment and the indigenous population,

C. What is the main conflict?

The conflict emerges from the clash between Nature vs. Technology – the Company (represented by Quaritch and Selfridge) vs. the Na'vi – the indigenous inhabitants of Pandora. Also, the inner conflict between Jake's loyalty to his species and the marine core, and his growing identification with the Na'vi life way of life, experienced through his avatar.

D. What is the main plot?

The plot usually asks a central question, which is resolved only at the end of the film. In *Avatar*, the question is: Who will win the conflict between the humans and the Na'vi, (and what is the protagonist's role in this?). Initially, Jake Sully is brought in by the company to replace his brother, a scientist participating as an avatar driver in Dr. Grace Augustine's research program in Pandora before being murdered in a random act of violence. Sharing the same genes as his brother ensures that Jake can step into the avatar program and

thus save the company's substantial investment. Jake, an ex-marine, who has been crippled by an incident in the core, is unable to afford to have the operation to restore the use of his legs. Ostensibly there as an aid to the scientific research effort, Jake is asked by Quaritch to infiltrate the Na'vi to try to persuade them to move to a different location so mining can go on. In return for playing Judas, Quaritch promises Jake the operation to restore the use of his legs. Initially agreeing, Jake literally experiences a change of heart and mind as he merges with his avatar body and begins to identify with the Na'vi way of life in the living forest, participating in their daily rituals, and finally falling in love with Neytiri, the clan leader's daughter. Rejecting his orders, Jake eventually leads the Na'vi to victory against the Company and unites Pandora's disparate clans by gaining mastery over the mythical Leonopteryx – a deed achieved only once before. The Na'vi reward Jake through a mystical ceremony at the Well of Souls that transfers his consciousness from his broken human body into his avatar's, in effect turning him into a true Na'vi destined to rule side by side with Neytiri.

E. What are some of the most important subplots?

Subplots, too, ask questions that are largely resolved by the end of a film. In this case, the questions are: Will Jake find love enduring in Neytiri? Will Jake fulfil his true potential, as exemplified by the Na'vi? Will nature triumph over technology and exploitation? The answer is 'yes' to all three questions.

F. What is the inciting incident?

Jake tacitly accepts Quaritch's offer to infiltrate Hometree and to spy on the Na'vi (Appendix 1: 28).

G. What is the first turning point leading to the end of act one?

Neytiri saves Jake from the viperwolf (1: 37), thus paving the way for him to be taken into the clan as a student (1: 41). This leads directly to the developments, complications, and reversals of the second act.

H. What is the second turning point leading to the end of act two?

Jake, in avatar form, wakes up in the forest next to a distraught Neytiri who is desperately trying to drag him out of the way of the advancing tractors. Jake tries to stop the machines, smashing the cameras to prevent the transmission of images to the Operations Base (1: 87). This incident reveals that Jake now clearly sees the Company as the enemy and is willing to oppose it. This leads to the third act in which Jake stands with the Na'vi against the Company.

I. What is the mid-point?

Jake admits in his video log that he is beginning to forget what his old life was like as he transitions between two forms of existence (1: 71). This realisation occurs roughly mid-way through the film and marks the point in which Jake realises that he is more a Na'vi avatar pretending to be human than a human pretending to be a Na'vi.

J. How does the story end?

The plot and subplot questions are answered – will the Na'vi defeat or be defeated by the humans? Will Jake fulfil his true potential and find love and his true identity? The Na'vi, led by Jake, defeat the Company and its efforts to exploit Pandora. Quaritch is killed while Selfridge and most of the humans are sent home to earth. Of the remaining humans, only a few scientists stay. Jake and Neytiri look forward to a life in the enchanting forests of Pandora devoid of human exploitation (at least until the sequel).

3.2.4 Mapping the Narrative

With the major narrative events chunked into acts, we can now depict the flow diagrammatically, using a composite approach based on the work of manual writers, primarily Field (2006, p. 44) and Seger (1994, p. 20), but largely supported in principle by McKee, Vogler and Hauge (see Fig.1, below). The diagram, based on the ideas of Field and Seger on the canonical screenplay, arranges narrative events into three acts. Each act is preceded by a major turning, which changes the direction of the story. The ascending arcs indicate the mounting stakes as the narrative races towards its climax and resolution. The page numbers indicate the range within which each chief structural formation may typically be found.

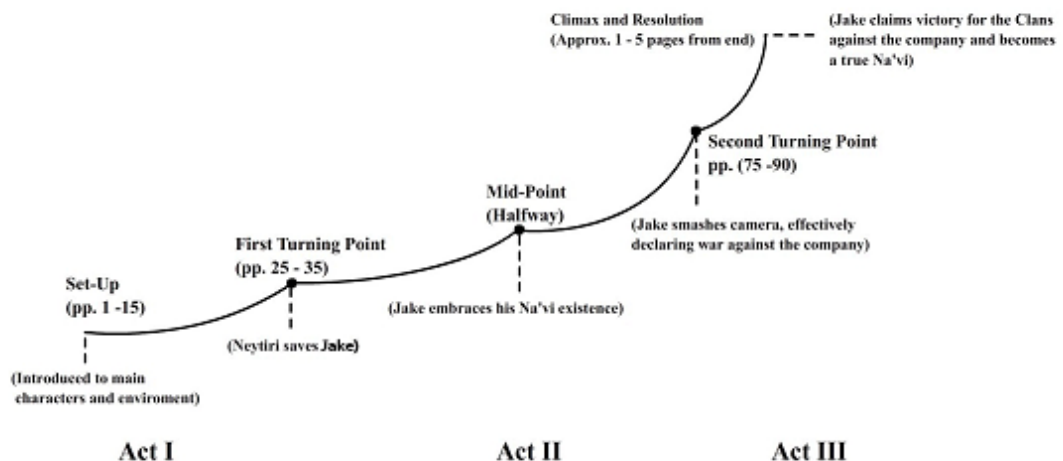


Fig.1

What should be immediately apparent from the diagram is that the Hero is present at each crucial stage of the narrative. Indeed, each major event turns on his actions, reactions and decisions. In a very real sense, the Hero, driven by a compelling desire to achieve certain goals, and constantly challenged by obstacles, *causes* the story to advance. Jake propels himself into the Na'vi way of life through Neytiri, initially as a

spy. He falls in love with her and *chooses* to align himself with the Na'vi against his own kind. Lastly, he *chooses* to shed his human boy and become a true Na'vi, incarnating his changed goals and values. Inevitably, then, the canonical story is the Hero's story, experienced largely from his unique point of view. Further, the diagram may be read as representing the Hero's growth towards self awareness, prompted by a series of crisis, which cause him to reevaluate his current standing in the community, his beliefs, and his original goals. Importantly, the mid-point is the last best chance in which the Hero may choose to go back to his old life, or forward to a new one. Once the decision is made, however, the Hero is swept up in an escalating vortex of consequences that inevitably lead to the fulfilment or defeat of his readjusted goal(s).

3.2.5 Coherence and Redundancy in Canonical Narrative

Although the mechanism of the Hero is crucial in transmitting information to the audience, it cannot do so without the coherence provided by adequate exposition and a generous use of supporting devices. Indeed, a communicative syuzhet, as Bordwell maintains, is one of the chief hallmarks of canonical narrative. Whereas a film such as *Donnie Darko* purposely dispenses with formal markers to indicate ontological and existential shifts in perspective (helping to place it within the *open multiform* category that we shall be exploring next), *Avatar*, as an exemplar of the canonical screenplay, is at pains to herald and explain each shift. The connecting and disconnecting of humans and avatars, typically seen through shots of characters entering and exiting their link units, for example, is painstakingly heralded and highlighted throughout the film: (Appendix 1: 19-21; 25-26; 29; 50; 53-54; 58; 71;

82; 84; 87; 95-97; 113-114; 123-124; 139; 146-147; 150 & 154-155). The liberal use of Jake's voice-over throughout the film is a further device that serves to feed the audience a constant stream of coherent meaning. The story begins with Jake providing crucial exposition. We learn that he has been in suspended animation or almost six years while on route to the planet Pandora where he is to replace his brother in the avatar project (1: 1-10). Crucially, Jake's pivotal realisation, recorded as a video-log entry, that he is beginning to forget what his old life felt like – that he is, in effect, being transformed into a Na'vi warrior – is conveyed to the audience as a voice-over (1: 71).

3.3 General Characteristics of Canonical Film Narrative

Genre is perhaps the most influential strategy available to the writer in managing the subject matter, direction, and form of the canonical screenplay. By genre, I mean the label that we ordinarily attach to a film according to recognisable codes, conventions, and subject matter associated with the *film as type*. Hollywood has embraced generic formulations as economic signposts to assist studios in identifying the kind of film that audiences wanted to see. It has allowed the institution to tailor-make films according to formulas that have proven themselves at the box-office. Genre thus enables the institution to promote certain sorts of films over others (Powel 2006, p. 59). Typically, this means that audience expectations are shaped by elements associated with the genre, such as 'up' or 'down' endings, good triumphing over evil, etc. One consequence of this formula, however, is that verisimilitude is more often than not left by the wayside – especially in the Hollywood blockbuster. The name

‘blockbuster’, which may be applied to a variety of genres¹³, is an indication that the film in question typically involves expensive computer generated effects, star or name actors, a large narrative canvas, and favours an ‘up’ ending, since Hollywood believes such endings tend to do better at the box-office (Hauge 1988, p. 107). Of course, genres themselves are not, and never were, static. Hollywood’s thirst for novelty and innovation has meant that new elements and their treatment are constantly absorbed and paraded alongside older and established fare. Reminiscent of a kind of narrative version of Darwinian evolution, successful combinations – John Wayne’s anti-hero in the Western, *The Searchers* (1956), for example, may go on to seed similar explorations in the genre – such as Clint Eastwood’s William Manny, the retired killer who straps on his gun for one last pay-day in *Unforgiven* (1992).

Avatar, then, may aptly be described as science fiction, a genre which McKee defines as reflecting ‘hypothetical futures that are typically technological dystopias of tyranny and chaos, [in which] the science fiction writer often marries the man-against-state’ (1997, p. 85). Certainly, the film explores this theme directly, albeit via the Na’vi who represent the unspoilt, noble, and natural side of human nature, pitted against its own insatiable and brutal thirst for resources (represented by the Company). In addition to referencing films such *Vanishing American* and *Dances with Wolves*, *Avatar* also imports elements from the fantasy and adventure genres, which tend to depict mystical events in a natural setting. This is seen most starkly in Selfridge’s rejection of the neuron-like connections between the trees and the Na’vi as mumbo-jumbo (92). Despite some cross-genre influences – a trait that is not

¹³ The blockbuster, which shares production values such as those mentioned above, does not itself constitute a proper genre in the sense of a narrative category which shapes elements such as time, place, and appropriate (or inappropriate) character action. The blockbuster is not limited to the sci-fi or Action genre, for example, as films such as *Lord of the Rings I, II, and III* clearly demonstrate.

uncommon as the presence of a love story in most genres clearly shows – *Avatar* fits firmly within the sci-fi category as defined by McKee. I emphasise this here, since genre stability will prove elusive as we move to the open multiform category. In concluding this chapter, I offer a summary of important features operating within the canonical film category:

General Characteristics of Canonical Narrative

1. A communicative syuzhet, supported by a strong exposition and a generous use of markers and explicatory devices give rise to a single fabula that is largely in step with the syuzhet.
2. A single Protagonist, or Hero, is aided and impeded by a host of secondary characters as he strives to attain his goal.
3. Follows a three act structure.
4. The single plot revolves around the Hero's goal. Subplots, which usually involve secondary characters, serve to highlight the main plot, through theme, parallels and contrasts; subplots typically *intersect* with the Hero's plotline through a love interest, and shared places and characters.
5. Largely adheres to genre conventions.
6. Typically employs an 'up-ending'.
7. Cause and effect, generated from the Hero's desire to achieve his goal drives the diegesis forward.
8. Allows time for strong character growth and development.

CHAPTER 4: OPEN MULTIFORM NARRATIVE

4.1 Bifurcating Plotlines and Alternate Realities in Multiform Narrative

In *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (1997), Janet Murray uses the term *multiform* to describe a narrative that contains a bifurcating plotline and at least one further and *distinct* ontological reality as one of its strands, and situates it within a cultural ethos that is at least partly shaped by science and mathematics:

Whether multiform narrative is a reflection of Post-Einsteinian physics or of a secular society haunted by the chanciness of life or of a new sophistication in narrative thinking, its alternative visions of reality are now part of the way we think, part of the way we experience the world. To be alive in the twentieth century is to be aware of the alternative possible selves, of alternative possible worlds, and of the limitless intersecting stories of the actual world. (Murray 1997, p. 38)

To Murray's remarks about the contribution of 'Post-Einsteinian physics' (quantum mechanics), the notion of 'chanciness', the 'sophistication' of 'a new narrative thinking' in contemporary life, and the awareness of possible alternative selves and worlds, I would add the effects of digital technology and its carrier channel, the Internet, not only in the way they have allowed ideas to disseminate throughout society, but in their contribution to our changing sense of identity, time and distance, objectivity and subjectivity (as explored in Chapter Two). Field sums it up more simply:

As of this time of writing, I think we're in the middle of a screen writing revolution, a time where screenwriters are pushing the form in new directions. The traditional way of "seeing things" has changed, and we're looking for ways to match our experiences and incorporate the new technology at our fingertips. (2006, p.130)

In a chapter titled '*Of Time and Memory*', Field identifies the fusion of time and memory as one of the central concerns of writers trying to communicate a subjective perspective that reflects the consciousness of contemporary characters: 'It is here in the subjective reality of the character, where the past influences the present and dreams collide with reality' (2006, p.130). Although Field does not apply the label *multiform*, his remarks are consonant with the term.

A far more detailed definition of multiform narrative will emerge as a result of our case studies. I shall, for example, be paying particular attention to how multiform narrative maps time and space, *since these parameters are fundamental to an understanding of causality, and therefore, to the formulation of a coherent fabula*. As Grodal suggests, the 'experience of time is linked to cognitive processes evaluating causal chains in the (diegetic) world, based on schemata of 'objective time structure' and linked to the construction of the fabula' (2002, p. 141). For now, I note that *multiform* is a category of film that entails more than one distinct narrative stream and, on occasion, more than one fabula; that at least one of these streams and/or fabulas depict a different ontological or existential reality; that it cuts across genres; that it reflects an increased subjectivity; and that it attempts to reflect our complex and often ambivalent contemporary experience.

4.2 Case Study # 2: *Donnie Darko*

Donnie Darko, written and directed by Richard Kelley, was released by New Line in 2001, and again in 2004 on DVD as a Director's Cut version after having attracted a large cult following with its original release. The film is a prime example of

multiform narrative: the narrative does indeed consist of more than one ontologically/existentially distinct level, it exhibits a high level of subjectivity rooted in the protagonist's consciousness, it cuts across genre, and it presents us with a sophisticated and complex view of life as seen through the subjective perspective of its protagonist. I want to return to the complicated way that the film lays out its narrative and suggest that a helpful way to unravel its complexity is to use a watered down, garden-variety version of the parallel universe theory proposed by Bryce De Witt and David Deutsch (cited in Wolf 1991, pp. 95-96 & 280-282). It is important to examine these ideas in a little more detail as they provide a general framework for understanding the workings of multiform films that routinely use time travel or alternative realities as the basis of their stories¹⁴. The other important framework for multiform film utilizes ontologically distinct flows based on dreams, nightmares, or hallucinations. In fact, one possible way to view *Donnie Darko*, according to Kelley (Powell 2004, p. 53), is as Donnie's dream. This is not the view I take here, reserving it for a later case study, namely, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. Before launching headlong into a simplified version of quantum theory then, let us focus on a somewhat less slippery concept – the use of genre in *Donnie Darko*.

4.2.1 Genre in Multiform Film

As noted earlier, genre in the canonical film is used to structure narrative events, as well as to manage audience expectations. In *Donnie Darko*, however, genre tends to subvert and confuse our expectations. Indeed, the film is so effective in cutting across genres that mainstream distributors were at a loss of how to market it and

¹⁴ In *Postmodern Hollywood*, M. Keith Booker asserts that *Donnie Darko*'s 'convoluted plot is impossible to assemble into a coherent whole' (p. 202). While this might be true at the level of the syuzhet, this thesis suggests that one way to make sense of the film is to regard it as consisting of multiple fabulas.

initially failed to pick it up at *Sundance*, the showcase for independent films (Powel 2006, p. 65). The film illustrates the tendency for some multiform narratives to utilize genre, not as a single discreet category, but as *pastiche*, to mimic the ontological confusion, disconnectedness and ultimately, the irreconcilable relativity of contemporary existence. Rather than utilizing a specific genre to help structure narrative expectations based on past exemplars of a *specific* kind, multiform film winks at the whole parade, appropriating snippets from previous films and putting them to work, not so much at the level of fabula or syuzhet construction as at the level of mood and theme.

This decay of the traditional function of genre as template, then, is very much a product of our times. Lyotard declares that we live in an age where our long held notions of progress and history, coded into metanarratives – rules that connect bodies of knowledge to create an overarching paradigm of meaning – are presently being treated with suspicion. Jameson goes as far as to suggest that not even parody is possible since it relies on underlying assumptions about the existence of a superior position from which to poke fun at the object; hence, *pastiche* – the mere quoting of disconnected, free-floating, stylistic segments operating beyond an overarching value-based structure. With Rationalist notions of progress already having been brought under the scalpel of Modernism, it is not unreasonable to imagine that the epoch which follows cuts even deeper, primarily through the proliferation of *digital media*. This poster child of Postmodernism, with its emphasis on artificial image creation, manipulation, simulation, and transmission over the Internet – itself a mode that promotes the breakdown in linear rationalist thinking – delivers the deepest cut. With the once captive audience now splintered by the sheer diversity of media

options at its disposal, there is mounting pressure on films to reflect the growing hybridity, relativity and intertextuality in our culture. One way to do this is through an eclectic amalgam of sources.

In short, many contemporary Hollywood films are composed almost entirely from generic elements hijacked from both popular and high culture and reassembled in ways that either circumnavigate, short circuit or contradict singular generic understanding. (Nelmes, cited in Powell 2006, p. 59)

Of course, the weakening of genre as a formulaic tool is not a recent development. We see signs of this most clearly in the Western's changing depiction of the Hero. In the early films of John Ford such as *Stagecoach* (1939), Ringo Kid, played by John Wayne, is tough but righteous, inhabiting a world of clear contrasts. Audiences know, by and large, that the Ringo Kid will defeat the enemy and restore equilibrium by the end of the film. But in *The Searchers*, Ford has clearly moved beyond such clear contrasts. John Wayne's character, Ethan, is a racist with murderous intentions towards his niece who has been kidnapped and raised by Indians. Although he is able to prevent himself from doing so, he remains an alienated figure, unable to integrate with family or society at large. An even more extreme example is found in the strongly revisionist Western, *Unforgiven*. Here, actor/director Clint Eastwood presents us with a complex portrait of a tainted hero. William Munny (played by Eastwood) is a killer of women and children, reformed in later years by his wife, who has since died. When the town's sheriff refuses adequately to punish the men responsible for the disfigurement of one of the prostitutes, they hire Munny to kill the men. Although he has not held a gun in years, Munny's instincts soon take over as he coldly and methodically kills the sheriff and his men.

Films such as *Unforgiven*, then, clearly show that conventions within genres are mutable, playing with audience expectations. But genre, as noted earlier, has not only lost cohesion within its own borders. Genres have also bled into each other with greater abandon and increasing fluidity. In the past, films as the Fantasy/Adventure *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the coming-of-age Teen/Horror movies such as *Carrie* (1976), or *16 Candles* (1984), or Sci-fi/Romance films such as *The Abyss* (1989) combined types that cohered easily together. The sub-genres resulting from such unions such as the Action/Adventure *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and the Horror/Musical/Comedies *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) and *Little Shop of Horrors* (1986), functioned in the old way – as narrative templates. In other words, they operated at the level of story structure to fashion and manage audience expectations. Notably, templates could be stripped down and recombined to form new *seamless* sub-genres. There was little scarring to the connective tissue. The process espoused that most prized of Hollywood rules: the construction of *invisible and self-effacing narratives*. Films such as *Donnie Darko*, however, break with this tradition. This is not to suggest that multiform narratives may not use genre in a more conventional way. *The Matrix* is an example of a multiform film that allows for a more traditional role of genre in shaping its narrative. What is certainly true, however, is that it is a characteristic of both multiform and multistrand films that they option the right to deconstruct genres and recombine them in a way that highlights this process, perhaps pressured to do so by our postmodernist suspicions of grand narratives and our search for new forms that better reflect the media-drenched experience of contemporary life.

4.2.2 Intertextuality and Indirect Quoting

What, then, can we specifically say about the new use of genre in *Donnie Darko*?

Firstly, there is the sheer number of genres referenced. Powell (2006, pp. 40-44) lists Romance, Comedy, Teen, Horror, Sci-fi, Fantasy, and Adventure, to which I would add Drama and Super-Hero. Clearly, the film cannot use such diverse templates in the traditional way for narrative construction. Traditional genre, certainly, can not explain the essential feature of *multiple temporalities* in the film. It makes far more sense to place the film within the multiform category and to suggest that it is a characteristic of this category that it appropriate snippets from a variety of genres at the level of theme and mood. This appropriation works through intertextuality.

Intertextuality reflects what Jim Collins has described as the sophisticated hyperconsciousness that characterises contemporary cinema (Powell 2006, p. 59). It showcases a growing tendency in some films to highlight the reflexive nature of their texts by alluding to other media. Powell points out that this tendency is not new. The French New Wave of the 1960s routinely used intertextuality to break down conventional formulas. What *is* new, however, is its accelerated use in Hollywood film that allows texts to appropriate snippets from other texts through a process of direct and indirect quoting (Bordwell 2006, p. 7). Direct quoting, in this sense, is the overt sprinkling of elements appropriated from films in other genres throughout the surface of the target film: Rose Darko reading a Steven King horror; Donnie's reference to the sci-fi film *Back To the Future* (1995) in the school lab; Gretchen asking Donnie whether his alliterative name means that he is some kind of Super Hero; *Watership Down*, which replaces the school text, *The Destructors*, as class text when Kitty Farmer complains that the latter is corrupting the youth; the horror and

religious films, *The Evil Dead* (1981) and *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), on the cinema marquee.

Indirect quoting also abounds in the form of covert allusion to other texts from within the target film. Powell (2006, pp. 40-44) points out the following references: *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986) in the dresses worn by Sparkle Motion based on the dress originally worn by Kathleen Turner; Frank, dressed in a giant rabbit suit which reminds us of the time-pressed rabbit in Lewis Carroll's, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865); *Men in Black* (1992) alluded to in the figures of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) – men in suits and dark glasses who come to investigate the jet engine crash; *Halloween Part III* (1983), suggested by the pumpkin carved out by Donnie; *Scream* (1996), in which Drew Barrymore also plays a role; the use of the eye in close-up, which reminds us of the scene in *Blade Runner* (1982) in which an eye examination is used to determine whether the subject is human or a replicant; Elizabeth Darko's costume based on Kubrick's *Lolita* (1962), hinting at the paedophile subplot; and the kids-on-bicycles-scene, reminiscent of the rescue/saviour theme in *E.T.* (1982). There are also striking resemblances with the fantasy film *Harvey* (1950), starring James Stuart as the kind drunk who raises the consciousness of those around him by getting them to perceive things in a more profound way (Powell 2006, p. 61). Here, Stuart's character, Elwood P. Dowd, cavorts with a giant bunny rabbit called Harvey, a creature that no one else sees and which has power over space and time. This is strongly reminiscent of the Donnie/Frank relationship. Indeed, Harvey like Frank is a messenger of a greater truth, which is, nonetheless, dismissed by society as delusion.

4.2.3 A New Narrative Paradigm

Up to now, I have been speaking about *Donnie Darko* in a general way, pointing out ways in which it appropriates materials from a wide variety of genres through intertextuality. I indicated that this appropriation functions at the level of mood, theme, and texture rather than acting as a macrostructure to the story itself. But if genre is not the chief organising axis in this film, how is the story structured? In order to answer this question we need to take a short scenic detour. In trying to make sense of any film, or event in everyday life, we seek modes and templates to guide us. We tend to understand something new by relating it to something else that we are already familiar with. When I ask a friend what skydiving feels like and he replies that it is like scuba diving, I nod sagely, attributing notions of exhilaration, peacefulness, and the like, even though I might never have stepped off a plane with a parachute strapped on my back. I suspect that Neo, in *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003) and Donnie, in *Donnie Darko*, being Saviours/Heroes of their diegetic universes, may have to die in order to save the world, because Christ had to die in order to save humanity. Most often, the stories, schemas, and mental maps upon which we base our everyday inferences rest on *normalized* assumptions about values and morals within a common paradigm. The ‘good’ is valorised over the ‘bad’ and is used as justification for ‘tough’ actions. This moral dimension is so pervasive that the action itself seems natural, inevitable and justly pleasurable to audiences (Kellner 1995, pp. 38-39). Indeed, it is in the nature of ideology that it not only hides from scrutiny, but that it guarantees its propagation through pleasure.

Yet, several contemporary thinkers and commentators warn that ‘the referent’ is a chimera, that existence beyond the surface play of signifiers is an illusion – simulation simulating itself (Baudrillard 1993, p. 7). They warn that we live in an era of uncertainty characterized by ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’ (Lyotard 1984, p. xxiv). But if metanarratives and the morals and values that support them are not to be trusted, what faith should we then place in the templates that we extract from them? The answer, with regard to canonical cinema, which, after all, is most vulnerable to such criticism (since it embraces such values in the very teleology and linearity of its form), may be to rein in the template so that it reflects specific solutions to a set of questions within a bounded area, without making any grand claims beyond its range of play. Indeed, as stated in the chapter on method, this middle-level approach is the *modus operandi* for this thesis as a whole. If a template seems to provide a satisfactory explanation of certain types of narrative structures, then it is sufficient reason to use it, until it stops doing so. The chief criterion for the legitimacy of the arguments that flow from it is that they remain self-consistent. But here again, we are presented with several approaches. In a paper entitled ‘Twisted Tales: Cognitivism and Narrative Distortion’, David Mitchell (2002) explores alternative futures/realities depicted in films such as *Blind Chance* (1981), *Too Many Ways to Be No. 1* (1997), *Sliding Doors* (1998), and *Run Lola Run* (1998), from a cognitive perspective (cited in Mitchell 2002, p. 5). Mitchell points out that Bordwell, for example, identifies several conventions, the seventh one being that in a story, ‘all paths are not equal; the last one taken or completed, is the least hypothetical one’ (cited in Mitchell 2002, p. 6). This is because the last option ‘conforms to our propensity to weight the ending, to treat it as the culmination of what went before it

...even if all of what went before couldn't really have come before' (cited in Mitchell 2002, p. 6).

The cognitive stance downplays the denotative or referential spatio-temporal aspects of the diegesis, focusing instead on the folk psychology of ordinary processes, to shed light on the workings of convoluted narratives. It is important to note, however, that this tends to happen only if we fail to construct a coherent fabula from data presented by the syuzhet. In other words, in the absence of a coherent fabula, we tend to fall back on the syuzhet's sequencing of events as our guide to meaning-making. I suggest that this need not be so. By attempting, instead, to establish coherence from inferences inherent in the fabula(s), supported by a raft of theories that allows us to shed light on existential problems, we may well be able to see through the obfuscating machinations of the most uncommunicative syuzhet. Earlier, I lauded the utility of a cognitive approach, especially in explaining the encoding of social and cultural conventions into narrative episodes. In explaining the flow of discombobulated events in *open* multiform narratives, however, I suggest a more unconventional route that focuses on fabula construction at the referential level, as will be explained in more detail later. This approach necessitates that we contextualise the denotative aspects of a story within a stable and coherent spatio-temporal framework. This, of course, has consequences for narrative interpretation. A cognitive stance, for example, might read paradoxes in a story as an effect intended to solicit a specific emotional response from the audience, at the expense of referential coherence. My approach, however, is to suggest that lucidity cannot be swept under the rug; instead, I seek to restore clarity by eliminating paradoxes at the referential level, albeit at the cost of having to construct separate fabulas in which to

place them. This somewhat radical move draws inspiration from an existing scientific theory based on a version of quantum mechanics that posits the need for an infinite number of parallel universes to explain contradictory subatomic phenomena. It so happens that this framework is especially suited in providing an explanation for those films that have time travel or alternative realities as their subject matter.

The theory is based primarily on the work of its inventor, Hugh Everett, but has been developed further with varying degrees of enthusiasm by physicists such as Bryce De Witt, John Wheeler, and Neill Graham (Wolf 1991, p. 259). The supporters of the theory believe that it holds the promise of unifying Einstein's Theory of General Relativity and Quantum Mechanics into a unified Theory of Everything – the holiest of grails for contemporary science. What is remarkable about this theory from my more humble point of view, however, is the ease with which it translates into a template for structuring multiform narrative, and its injection of coherence in the presentation of existentially distinct strands. It is important to emphasise right away that its utility for multiform film lies in its providing both filmmakers and the audiences with a self-consistent framework for the coherent ordering of narrative events. It does not purport to replace, at the more local level of scenes, the long list of well-established dramatic techniques and devices such as the protagonist, antagonist, goals, motivation, conflict, and the like. These continue to work, albeit in a modified form, within the macrostructure by tying it to a range of essential emotional responses.

4.2.4 The Many Worlds Interpretation – The Garden Variety Sort

Quantum theory comes in several flavours, but a nutshell, garden-variety version might go something like this: in order to explain how the Universe behaves at a subatomic level, we must dispense with commonsense views about the world; at the quantum level, time, if it exists at all, can flow in any direction, particles can appear in any location, and effect can precede cause. At the centre of all of this is *Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle*, which states that it is intrinsically impossible to determine the momentum and position of a particle in a single reading (Gribbin 1995, p. 16). If you want to know where a particle is, you cannot know where it is going, and if you know where it is going, you cannot know where it is. But since the ordinary world is composed of subatomic particles, it must be subject to the same puzzling laws. The reason we do not ordinarily see people, tables, and trees popping in and out of existence and clocks running backwards is that each is made up of a staggering number of particles. Taken as an aggregate, the quantum effect is tamed and the world appears to behave in a rational way. But if we are to understand the chemical and electric processes that are essential to our lives, we simply cannot ignore the subatomic level, and that means facing up to some very bizarre notions.

One of the earliest attempts at explaining quantum events has been the Copenhagen Interpretation, put forward by Niels Bohr in 1930. Curiously, it remains the official line to this day, despite embracing some very strange ideas. At its core, and simplified in the extreme, it states that the Universe only 'really' comes into being when someone looks at it. This is called the *observer effect*. Otherwise, it remains in a superposition of all possible states – a probability wave awaiting collapse through

the act of observation. Understandably, a growing number of physicists have been unhappy with finding themselves both dead and alive in some ghostly superposition of states and have sought alternatives. The *Many-Worlds Interpretation*, known variously as the Multiple or Parallel Universes, Many-Minds, or Many-Worlds Theory, has been the most imaginative and striking result (Wolf 1995, pp. 20-21, 179, 222 & 253-257). Instead of being both dead and alive, the observer and the entire Universe he occupies (or some notion of it), including an experiment, a roll of a dice, or the time on his wristwatch, *splits* at the instant of observation into as many versions as are necessary to accommodate all possible outcomes for the object observed. The resulting universes are identical except in this small detail and share the same history prior to the split. This has gone down a little better with those physicists who are only too happy to increase their reputation by populating all possible universes with their image. Although not widely accepted by the majority of physicists, the many-worlds theory yields the same accuracy of results as the official line. All of the theories accept the notion of action-at-a-distance (meaning that one event on earth mysteriously and *instantaneously* propagates to the furthest reaches of space) and that contrary to Einstein's claim, God *does* play dice with the Universe, that time-travel is not prohibited, and that self-consistency is a chief requirement. The added advantage for choosing this theory, as I shall attempt to show later, is that it seems particularly well-suited in explaining certain types of multiform narrative.

Equipped with these tools from our brief survey, then, let us now plough more deeply into the fecund soil of *Donnie Darko* to see what we can uncover. The first step in this process, prior to attempting to assemble a coherent fabula, is to list events as presented by the syuzhet. In attempting this, however, we immediately come up

against a problem. In order to maintain the principle of self-constancy in the film's diegesis, it appears that we have to give up the notion of a single fabula. To explain what I mean by this, I will begin as usual by listing in some detail the events as presented to us by the syuzhet.

4.2.5 Will the Real Donnie Darko Please Stand Up?

With the syuzhet's presentation of *events* and *existents* laid out in some detail, let us attempt to assemble the fabula, using an amalgamated approach that draws on the work of Field, Hauge, Seger, McKee, and Vogler. As we saw in the chapter on *Avatar*, the approach of these manual writers is to diagrammatically represent, distribute, and relate dramatic units in essentially similar ways – along a line or series of curves that primarily indicates the turning points of the Hero's journey towards his goal. Because the manual writers differ only in the fine detail of what constitutes good drama, it is possible for us to talk of a common approach and apply it as a coherent bundle of analytical tools. We begin by giving some provisional answers to a set of preliminary questions of the sort we asked in relation to *Avatar*:

A. Who is the protagonist?

Donnie.

B. Who is/are the antagonist(s)?

Fate. But also, Seth, Jim Cunningham, and his deluded supporters – Mrs. Farmer and the Principal.

C. What is the main conflict?

The conceptual roots of the conflict revolve around Free Will vs. Determinism, Sanity vs. Insanity, and Self Preservation vs. Self Sacrifice. Donnie must fight to hold onto his sanity, use his knowledge of the future, and sacrifice himself to save the world.

D. What is the main plot?

Donnie must save the universe and his sanity.

E. What are some of the most important subplots?

Donnie's relationships with Gretchen, his family and his psychiatrist.

Field also poses the following set of deeper structural questions intended to arrange the dramatic elements into acts and reveal the overall shape of a film:

F. What is the inciting incident?

G. What is the first turning point leading to the end of act one?

H. What is the second turning point leading to the end of act two?

I. What is the mid-point?

J. How does the story end?

In trying to answer these questions, however, we immediately run into problems: for, what *is* the inciting incident in *Donnie Darko*? Is it that Donnie has stopped taking his medication? Is it Frank's appearance? Is it the jet engine that crashes through his bedroom? Certainly, any one of these could be correct, *depending on which existential stream we are referring to*. A direct consequence of this is that we cannot chunk events into acts, at least in the conventional sense, since acts are filled and ordered by structural elements such as the inciting incident, and more importantly,

turning points operating within a *single* fabula. The result is a narrative that flows in an open and non-formulaic way as the audience works to resolve paradoxes in the syuzhet. Of course, we could impose a three act structure on the narrative, *based on the film's running time*¹⁵, but such an arrangement would be superficial.

As things currently stand, then, nothing quite seems to add up. In trying to come up with a single fabula to explain the syuzhet, we run up against a series of temporal and spatial inconsistencies. Paradoxes abound. In his commentary in the Director's Cut DVD, Kelley defends the unexplained contradictions in the narrative as being in the nature of time-travel stories, although he also emphasises that he has tried to base his tale as far as possible on the science. Kelly hints at the existence of multiple universes through the pages of Roberta Sparrow's *The Philosophy of Time Travel*, a book that speaks of a 'tangent' universe. But apart from obscure and occult references to fire, air, metal, and water as important elements for time travel, as well as the 'manipulated dead', dreams and the like, Kelly does not provide a coherent framework for overcoming paradoxes in his narrative. But eliminating paradoxes is precisely the reason that physicists have come up with the many-worlds interpretation of quantum theory (Wolf 1991, pp. 210-212). In the seminal double split experiment, for example, a beam of light is shown to behave *both* as a particle and as a wave, depending on how the apparatus is set up. This paradox is resolved by invoking separate worlds in which to place the contradictory results. In the one world, light manifests as a particle, while in the other, as a wave. Indeed, the many-worlds theory holds that the Universe splits to accommodate each alternative at the moment of observation, although this is at the cost of an infinite generation of

¹⁵ Roughly speaking, a typical 2 hour Hollywood film arranges its three acts in the following way: Act one – 30 minutes; act two – 60 minutes; act three – 30 minutes (Field 2006, pp. 44-45).

distinct worlds. As noted earlier, it is my contention that a garden-variety version of the theory is remarkably well suited to forming the basis of a narrative framework for certain categories of multiform film, specifically films which deal with time travel or alternate realities. Not only is the theory inherently fascinating, but the colloquial version, which has developed through the many books and television programs that routinely use examples from ordinary life to illustrate what are otherwise complex mathematical proofs, has allowed it to provide us with a usable set of conventions that we can put to work in the service of narrative theory.

4.2.6 Fabulas and Fabulets

Before proceeding further, let me pause to say something about the relationship that exists between a *fabula* and a *fabulet*¹⁶. Earlier I noted that a *fabula* is the result of the logic that we apply to the narrative in order to make sense of the *syuzhet*.

Bordwell, we are reminded, defines the *fabula* as ‘the pattern which perceivers of narrative create through assumptions and inferences’ in order to make sense of a story (1985, p. 49). In attempting to create order within a coherent spatio-temporal framework, we often find ourselves extracting events from their original sequence presented by the *syuzhet*, and rearranging them in our minds according to a variety of logical and heuristic processes that are external to the *diegesis* itself. The more out of step the *syuzhet* is with this framework, the harder we have to work at constructing a coherent *fabula*. In this sense, the *fabula* is an expression of the coherence and self-consistency that we impose on the *diegetic* world. What I propose here is that we

¹⁶ I have chosen to invent the word ‘*fabulet*’ (rather than use ‘strand’) as a further refinement of the idea of separate existential flows which I began in the analysis of *Donnie Darko*, and as a way of *differentiating* between a segment that requires a distinct spatio-temporal framework and one that does not. This might help to avoid confusion when dealing with ‘strands’ in multistrand narrative.

accommodate, within separate fabulas, all intentional logical inconsistencies and paradoxes which are the result of a breakdown in causality and the common spatio-temporal framework, since failure to do so would render the narrative nonsensical. I further propose that this accommodation take place within a new sub-category to be described in more detail later, namely, *open multiform narrative*. Another way of saying this is that logically inconsistent narrative streams presented by the syuzhet generate separate fabulas in order to restore coherence by promulgating new, but related, versions of an ostensibly familiar world – much like narrative generated by distinct sessions in a video game, a film sequel, or a television series. Later, I shall say more about what this relation might resemble. For now, I note that new story branches resulting from a common fabula, share the *same* history (back-story), as well as some *similar events* and *existents*, such as common characters and places. By *fabulet* on the other hand, I mean a *shorter, ontologically distinct* narrative strand, each with its own spatio-temporal framework, operating *within*, or, *subservient to* the overall narrative – such as the virtual training programs *within* the Matrix itself. In the case study on *Next*, I shall be saying more about two sorts of fabulet types that arise within the multiform category.

4.2.7 The Observer Effect – Bifurcating the Fabula

Having spoken further about what constitutes a fabula, and having drawn a distinction between a fabula and a fabulet, I can now turn back to the analogy from quantum physics (Wolf 1991, p. 50-52) and posit a bifurcation of *distinct fabulas*, typically through the *observer effect* – the notion that the world of a story, when confronted with conflicting alternatives, splits into separate fabulas in order to

accommodate coherent outcomes. The benefits of this are clear. Paradoxes now become indicators of pivotal junctions through which one may seek to differentiate multiple fabulas into new flows and relationships. In short, *when a narrative no longer makes sense as a single story at the referential or denotative level due to spatio-temporal inconsistencies, one may regard the offending segments as constituting alternative versions of the story*, linked by commonalities of theme, mood, character, and location.

I have indicated that the chief contradiction in *Donnie Darko* stems from its presentation of two versions of the jet engine crash and ensuing events. In the one version of the story, Donnie survives by spending the night on the golf course. In the other, he sleeps in his bed and is killed. If one substitutes the word ‘story’ for ‘fabula’, one may infer that the syuzhet generates *at least* two fabulas – one in which Donnie lives, and another in which he dies. But how do we, as an audience primarily brought up on linear film narrative, make sense of multiple fabulas? Let us defer answering this question for the moment and come back to it later. Remembering that the jet engine crash indicates a junction point, we may deduce that any split in the fabula must occur before the crash. But when might this be? I have suggested that the observer effect marks the split that occurs at the moment of decision or observation. I might mention here, as an aside, that although the theory posits that the effect (indicated in the film by the recurring close-up shots of an eye, or by the appearance of Frank) invariably causes a split in the fabula, I have chosen to portray only those splits that occur *in avoidance of a paradox* as being significant enough to show up as sizable deflections (separate fabulas) in our schema (see Fig.2, below).

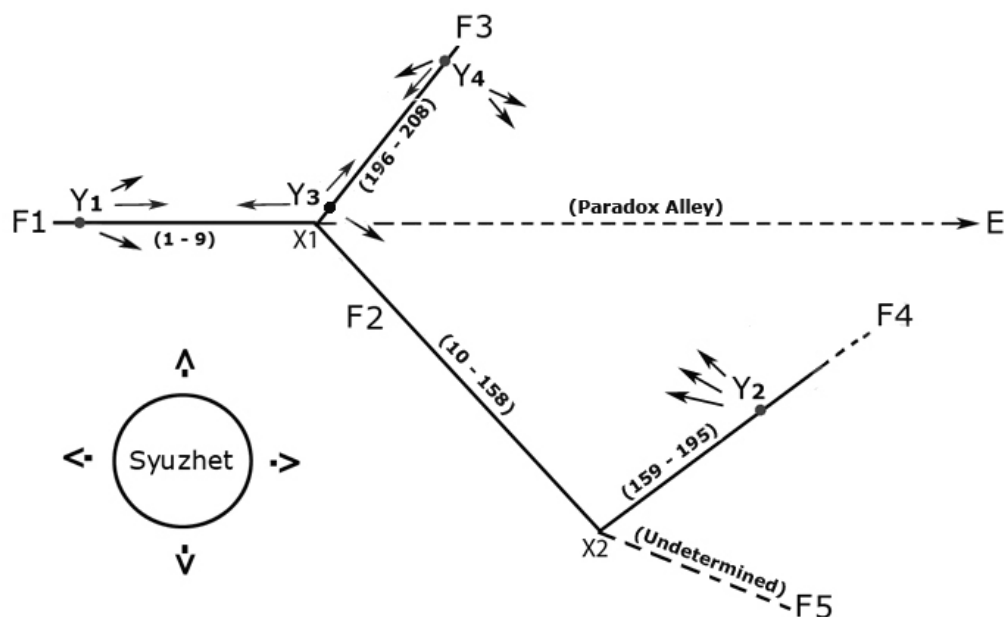


Fig.2

Figure 2 lays out the narrative in diagrammatical form. Although the syuzhet is largely uncommunicative, it has the ability to generate a number of fabulas in the network (F1 – F5), pointing to the following principles in action: 1. A fabula may be of varying length (F1 – F5); 2. A bifurcated fabula shares the same history as its adjacent neighbour - F1 is common to F2 and F3, and F2 is common to F4 and F5; 3. A branch (F2) may itself be the result of a bifurcated fabula (F1); 4. All fabulas share the same parent (F1); 5. Insofar as the fabula is about the protagonist, it will also terminate shortly after his death (F3), or, if the protagonist survives but is no longer perused by the syuzhet, the fabula may become undetermined (broken line at F4); 6. A fabula may also be undetermined from the start (F5) and may therefore be largely ignored although it is included in the diagram for the sake of completion. We should note here that the formalism of bifurcation posits that a fabula will display a different outcome to its adjacent neighbour with regards to the object of observation after

splitting. For example, if F4 indicates the result ‘W’, then F5 must necessarily indicate the result ‘not-W’ at the same instant. Hence, a largely unspecified fabula (F5) will entail at least one knowable but unspecified aspect; 7. A fabula may exchange information at specific points with other fabulas through resonance (Y1 = 1, Y2 = 190, Y3 = 195, and Y4 = 208); 8. Each fabula occupies its own temporal and spatial orientation relative to any other; 9. Where the observer effect combines with a potential paradox (X1 & X2), the resultant fabulas show a significant deviation in orientation from the branch, but where the observer effect occurs in the absence of paradox, the split represents a trivial deflection from the branch and is not represented here; 10. The long broken line (E) represents a tendency for an audience to look for a single ongoing fabula based on the syuzhet and aided by the ‘primacy effect’, which we may define as the propensity to organise new data with reference to initial data (Bordwell 1985, p. 38). An audience, therefore, abandons the initial fabula in favour of alternatives only when forced to do so by unsolvable paradoxes.

This filtering is necessary to avoid the unnecessary clutter resulting from too strict an adherence to the model’s bifurcation formalism. I therefore nominate X1 in the diagram (when Frank asks Donnie to ‘wake up’) as the moment in which fabula 1 splits, generating fabula 2 and fabula 3. Fabula 3 tells the story of a world in which Donnie does not wake up. But the syuzhet does not show this just yet. Instead, it generates fabula 2. Here, Donnie does indeed wake up. It would seem, then, that at some point around the time when Elizabeth arrives home from her date that the syuzhet has to generate an additional fabula in order to avoid the approaching paradox of Donnie being both killed and not killed by the jet engine crash. Let us nominate Appendix 2: 195 in our index for this point. But things are even more

complicated than this. We have surmised that fabula 2 runs from 2: 10-195. But upon closer inspection we find that this cannot be correct. Frank repeatedly appears to Donnie throughout fabula 2 dressed in a Halloween-inspired rabbit suit and mask (the latter intended to conceal both his identity and, I assume, the bullet lodged in his right eye). Donnie shoots Frank at 2: 181; yet, Frank reveals the bullet lodged in his eye at the cinema as far back as 2: 113. Therefore, the events that play out between 2: 10 and 2: 195 cannot be explained by the same fabula: Frank could not have attended the Halloween party sporting a bullet in his eye socket. Therefore, according to the many-worlds theory, somewhere between 2: 113 and 2: 168, when Elizabeth casually asks the party guests if anyone has seen Frank, fabula 2 must have split yet again, generating fabula 4 and fabula 5. Invoking the observer effect once more, I nominate the split to have occurred at 2: 159. This is when Frank appears to Donnie at Dr. Thurman's rooms. At this point, the syuzhet prevents the paradox by generating fabula 4, which describes a parallel world in which Frank has not (yet?) been shot. To recap, let us rearrange the resultant fabulas in sequence (Fig.2): Syuzhet = fabula 1 (1-9) + fabula 2 (10-158) + fabula 4 (159-195) + fabula 3 (196-208) + fabula 5 = (0?)¹⁷.

4.2.8 Resonance: Bridging Ontological and Existential Boundaries

I have suggested that one way to maintain narrative coherence in multiform film is to see the syuzhet as generating several fabulas espousing mostly existentially distinct spatio-temporal frames. We are reminded of Murray's comment that a multiform story is one that describes 'a written or dramatic narrative that presents a single

¹⁷ Fabula 5 is mainly unspecified by the syuzhet, although we may infer at least one incident, namely, that Frank has been shot, based on our theory's formalism.

situation or plotline in multiple versions, versions that would be mutually exclusive in our ordinary experience' (p. 30). I say *mostly* existentially distinct, because at times the characters seem to transgress existential boundaries by displaying an awareness of competing realities. Let us call this awareness, *resonance*. Examples of this are the occasions in which Donnie seems privy to events beyond his ordinary ken (Y1 = 1, Y2 = 190, Y3 = 195, Y4 = 208) or, when Dr. Thurman, Cherita, Cunningham, Dr. Monnitoff, and Frank, upon waking after the jet engine crash, sense something ineffable (Y = 205).¹⁸ Interestingly, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle provides support for the notion of resonance by demonstrating the existence of *measurable interactions* between 'virtual' states (read, many-worlds) exhibited by the electron cloud (Gribbin 1995, p. 218). Additionally, the concept of non-locality, or action-at-a-distance, which allows for *instantaneous* communication between 'entangled' particles separated by huge distances (in contradiction to General Relativity), provides added support.

Thus far, my examination of multiform structure has by no means been exhaustive. In an effort to keep things moving, I have focused on specific details in *Donnie Darko* while skimming over others. I have, for example, sought neither to indicate every point of resonance nor to resolve all paradoxes in the narrative since a sufficient basis from which to continue our investigations has already been established. Although the diagram at Figure 2 might have at first glance seemed pedantic, it summarises aspects of fabula bifurcation in the film, capturing some of our most important gains thus far. Let us now see if we are better placed to answer the questions that we posed earlier (F – J), beginning with the inciting incident in

¹⁸ Further examples of resonance occur in several episodes of the *StarTrek* series. In the episode entitled *Cause and Effect*, for example, events are recycled time and again, each occasion, save the last, ending in the destruction of the Enterprise. As the cycle repeats, however, information leaks from one spatio-temporal frame to the next, allowing the crew to avoid ultimate destruction.

Donnie Darko. Unfortunately, our having laid the problem of articulation at the feet of bifurcation has not made it go away. The concern remains that the inciting incident is partly defined by its relationship to other structural elements, such as its position in the first act (McKee 1997, pp. 198-207), and its relation to the *Obligatory Scene* (1997, pp. 198-199). But fabula 1 is far too short to have more than one act, and an Obligatory Scene. It therefore makes no sense to refer to an inciting incident at all. The same holds true for the first and second turning points, as well as the midpoint. It seems that once we allow for more than one fabula, the conventional rules that we seek to apply to the film simply fall apart. Consider the question of how the story ends. We cannot, in the strictest sense, provide a single definitive answer since Donnie's future(s) in fabulas 2-5 contain information that is partially or fully undetermined. The syuzhet leaves him lying in bed in fabula 4 (2: 195) and re-invokes fabula 3 where the jet engine, which he avoided in fabula 4, kills 'him' (2: 200). I mention as an aside that the displacement of the jet engine from one spatio-temporal frame to another is the most palpable indicator of *resonance*.

4.3 Taking Stock

Thus far, we have not made much progress by using the conventional approach. I stated earlier that answers to questions A to E, were of a preliminary nature. How, then, might we adapt our response in the light of our most recent observations? Even accounting for the existence of distinct versions of Donnie, we might want to retain our position in this case, providing that we continued to regard our answers as *general*. This is because we tend to treat questions of this nature as answerable by reference to *class*. We might, in much the same sense, endorse Captain Kirk as the

protagonist (question A) of the original *StarTrek* television series, and the various hazards of space, including alien enemies (question B) as the antagonist(s).

Similarly, we could claim that the conflict (question C) is between the crew of the *Enterprise* and the very same hazards, and that in each case, the subplots (question D) explore the variations of the main plot. We may infer from all this that multiform film resembles a serial, or more precisely in the case of film, a grouping of sequels. We may notice, for example, that Batman, deployed as an enduring and specific character throughout the number of follow-up films, seems to exist in an atemporal state. How else could we account for his lack of ageing, despite his growing number of adventures that would ordinarily span decades? This effect is, of course, in keeping with a general postmodern disregard for spatio-temporal linearity, and the implosion of ontological boundaries in general, as evidenced by the growing influence of video games on film and vice versa.

As the look and feel of worlds created by sophisticated 3D software for film and games becomes increasingly indistinguishable, and the transportability of the audience/player from one medium to another becomes more seamless, so does the shared experience. In the video game *Enter the Matrix* (Atari 2006), for example, there is an unprecedented level of collaboration between Hollywood and the game's creators. The script is written and directed by the Wachowski brothers, the writing-directing duo behind *The Matrix* movie trilogy. The game showcases footage not seen in the film version and utilizes the likeness and voice-overs of key characters from *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003). Through the unparalleled collaboration between the game producers and the movie production crew, including musicians and sound effects artists, the game establishes a stylistic coherence, which acts to authenticate

the player's experience by drawing on a familiarity established by the film version. This supports the plot and characters, and is expressed as additional possibilities within the story, enriching the player/audience experience of the game or film. By imploding the boundaries between the narrative and its expansion through a myriad of supporting media, our experience of a story may extend well beyond the running time of the film.

4.4 Making Sense of Multiple Fabulas: General Characteristics of Open Multiform Narrative

I now turn to the related question that I posed earlier: how do we as an audience primarily brought up on conventional film narrative, make sense of multiple fabulas? In the strictest sense of a film being composed of a single fabula that is devoid of existential and ontological paradoxes, the answer must be that we do so with difficulty, or not at all. But if we are willing to allow for a more relaxed definition of story, I see no reason why truly multidimensional tales such as those told by multiform films, cannot continue to gain traction. One consequence of competing fabulas is that the narrative needs placement within a subcategory which acknowledges this multiplicity, namely, open multiform narrative. Unlike closed multiform films (which I will be examining next), open multiform narrative employs a syuzhet which fails adequately to signal or resolve shifts in ontological status, forcing this task on the audience. Interestingly, approaching such stories from the perspective of puzzle-solving may allow for a more active experience and may serve to vitiate the threat posed by video games. Of course, an open-ended approach to storytelling is not new. Poetry and experimental or avant-garde films and novels

routinely do this. What is new, however, is the attempt to develop this approach into a normalized framework for writing contemporary screenplays, based on the identification of emerging narrative conventions stemming from contemporary physics, digital technology and culture. In concluding this case study as an example of the open multiform subcategory, I offer a summary of *Donnie Darko*'s most prominent features, as indicative of the general characteristics of open multiform narrative in film.

General Characteristics of Open Multiform Narrative

1. A high level of subjectivity, highlighting the role of time and memory in character consciousness.
2. An uncommunicative syuzhet with flaunted and permanent gaps, lacking the markers and exposition that herald and explain existential and ontological shifts in the spatio-temporal frame(s); chiefly out of step with the fabula(s).
3. Strong paradoxes, resolved through the creation of multiple spatio-temporal frames resulting in multiple fabulas.
4. Promotes the formation of distinct but familiar fabulas as episodes, or sequels involving the same, or similar, characters and locations. At the level of drama, these fabulas involving copies of the protagonist explore different perspectives on the original premise, or story argument.
5. Exhibits a high level of intertextuality. Cannot be reduced to a single genre.
6. Takes the form of an open, free flowing narrative not easily arranged into a conventional three act structure.

This subcategory, then, allows for an irreducible plurality of readings at the level of the fabula(s). This weakens Bordwell's claim, made from a cognitive perspective, that the last path presented by the narrative is the preferential one (Mitchell 2002, p. 6), since the order and presentation of narrative events by the syuzhet is based on the aesthetic, stylistic, and personal preferences of the film-makers, rather than on the overriding logic of the fabula(s). Peter Howitt's *Sliding Doors* (1998), David Lynch's *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* (2001), Steven Soderbergh's *Solaris* (2002), Shane Carruth's *Primer* (2004), Charlie Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York* (2008), Christopher Smith's *Triangle* (2009), and Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010), are further examples in the open multiform category.

CHAPTER 5: CLOSED MULTIFORM NARRATIVE

5.1 Case Study # 3: *The Matrix*

The reader might well ask why it is that *The Matrix* is situated after *Donnie Darko* in our sequence of case studies? One reason is that I am less concerned with chronology itself than with assembling and explaining the fundamental narrative strategies that define multiform film, which necessitates a preferential order that best illustrates this stance. Additionally, *The Matrix* is the first in a trilogy of films, the last of which was released in 2003, with an extended extra-diegetic narrative. Certainly, the film's *syuzhet* is not as uncommunicative and experimental as *Donnie Darko*'s; nor, is it quite as conventionalised as *Avatar*'s. But, more importantly, if *Donnie Darko* represents the non-communicative, subjective, gap-filled and open side of the multiform spectrum, then *The Matrix* represents a more objective, communicative and normalized side – *closed* multiform narrative. I shall be saying more about the characteristics of this subcategory later in this section. For now, I mention that, as in other multiform narratives, the film presents us with distinct realities, references multiple genres through the use of intertextuality, and contains at least one large and suppressed ontological gap that is closed only well into the first act. Most crucially, however, *The Matrix*, unlike *Avatar*, comprises ontologically distinct strands united under a *single* fabula. Interestingly, the film's march towards the sort of coherence favoured by Hollywood is supported fairly effortlessly through the old strategy of normalization through redundancy – the liberal mixing of familiar devices with the new and unfamiliar ones (Bordwell 2006, pp. 16-17).

Of course, as I have shown in the first chapter, Hollywood has long been aware of shifting and disorientating narratives through its acquaintance with art cinema. But, although it flirted with the form, it did so without committing to it. The end of the millennium, however, marked a change in approach, resulting in a steady release of films featuring the kinds of narrative reversals and temporal disturbance typical of art cinema – *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), *Pulp Fiction*, *The Usual Suspects* (1995), *eXistenZ* (1999), *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *Fight Club* (1999), and *Jacob's Ladder* (1999) – that continue to be made to this day, with Inarritu's *Babel* (2006), Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York* (2008) and Scorsese's *Shutter Island* (2010) being but a few of the more recent examples. Seen in this light, *The Matrix* stands both at the start and the end of a cycle of innovation and normalisation of the canonical mode that culminates with the release of *Avatar*. By 'innovation', I am referring to the suppressed but lengthy gap at the start of *The Matrix*, usually associated with the art cinema mode, which presents the world as ordinary until something or someone (in this case, Morpheus) reveals it to be an illusion. By 'normalisation', I mean that once explained, ontological shifts are constantly illuminated through redundant cueing. With the release of *The Matrix*, then, Hollywood seems to strike a balance in form between innovation and convention, before going on to experiment more overtly with a more uncommunicative and gap-driven syuzhet in productions such as *Eternal Sunshine Of the Spotless Mind* (2004). If box-office is anything to go by, *Avatar*, which in many ways continues the strategies and conventions of the sort used to establish coherence in *The Matrix*, once again proves the salience of a canonical approach made novel through a liberal borrowing from competing cinemas, a dose of computer animation, and an appropriation of contemporary discourses and ideas.

5.1.1 Reception

The Matrix received a moderate critical reception. Robert Ebert praised its technical virtuosity and compared it to *Strange Days* (1995) and *Dark City* (1998) but found it to be ‘without the intriguing motivations for villainy’ of the latter (1999, p. 2). He viewed the film as being ‘more like a superhero comic book in which the fate of the world comes down to a titanic fist-fight between the designated representatives of good and evil’ (1999, p. 2). Todd McCarthy of *Variety* gave it a ‘10’ for special effects and a ‘0’ for the screenplay (p. 1). He criticized its running length for being too long and for a perceived overloading of elements such as:

Christian motifs and mysticism, half-baked Eastern philosophy, Lewis Carroll refs, ambiguous oracular prophecies, the co-existence of two realities, pod-grown babies, time travel, creatures capable of rebirth and, all importantly, the expectation of the arrival of the Chosen One – as to prove utterly indigestible. (McCarthy 1999, p. 2)

Clearly, McCarthy is uncomfortable with the sort of genre-bending that was to become such a prominent part of future filmmaking. Michael O’Sullivan of the *Washington Post*, however, betrays no such problem with the film’s intertextuality, seeing it as an entertaining evocation of:

“Alice in Wonderland,” “Men in Black,” “Blade Runner,” The Holy Bible, Greek mythology, TV’s old “Kung Fu” series, James Bond, “The Terminator,” “High Noon,” “Alien” and “Star Wars.” Let me see, am I leaving anything out? Oh, yes, there is also an element of “Sleeping Beauty” thrown in, with a kick-boxing princess (k.d.lang look-alike Carrie-Anne Moss) instead of the prince and a sleeping beauty who looks like . . . Keanu Reeves. (1999, p. 1)

Audiences seemed to agree. *The Matrix* went on to gross \$463,517,383 worldwide, no small achievement for a film that was shot in Australia for only 60 million dollars (McCarthy 1999, p. 2). Indeed, the film has gone on to become a classic in the

science fiction genre, and one of the most popular films in general, listed at number 27 in the top 250 best films as voted by regular International Movie Data Base (IMDB) users (n.d., p. 1, viewed August 21, 2010). Before examining the film's narrative operations in more detail, let us once more present a breakdown of the syuzhet, paying particular attention to the virtual/real world boundaries.

5.1.2 Genre Again

Like all multiform films, *The Matrix* displays a high degree of intertextuality. There are various references to *Alice in Wonderland* (10 & 11), the *Wizard of Oz* (1939) (29), Christ and the *Bible*, and resurrection, as well as in the very names of the characters and places such as Trinity, Nebuchadnezzar, Zion, and references to 'The One' (Appendix 3: 11, 12, 36, 39, 44, 45, 171, & 244). Martial arts movies are evoked by the many fight sequences and training programs (3: 47, 48, 51, 217, 219, 221, & 245). *The Matrix* is also a love story and a fairytale, in that the central event that allows Neo to survive is structured around Trinity's love and belief in him as the saviour of humanity, and embodied in her life-giving kiss (3: 240). Yet, the film retains a stronger use of genre as a narrative-shaping force than *Donnie Darko*. *The Matrix* is clearly science fiction in that it rehearses well-worn arguments from the genre such as those of a Dystopia brought about by humanity's uncontrolled use of technology. The role of the anti-authoritarian protagonist engaged in illegal hacking activities, as well as the selling of the cyber-drug, mescaline, set against a dark computer-saturated world, reflects the cyber-punk milieu of William Gibson and Philip K. Dick. Further, the saturation of sci-fi imagery and the pervasive use of technology help to root the narrative more firmly in the tradition, while allowing it to

quote genres outside this frame without destabilisation. By achieving a balance between the old and new, and most crucially, by presenting the narrative within a normalised and coherent spatio-temporal frame, it would appear that the film preserves a role for genre in the traditional sense, at the level of macrostructure.

5.1.3 Causality, Time, and Space in Multiform Narrative

My approach in the previous case study was to resolve paradoxes in the narrative by positing a bifurcation of fabulas. While I stressed the importance of the spatio-temporal frame as the stage upon which events unfold, I did not indicate the time-space axis on the diagram. Although time spent examining such a framework might be somewhat at the expense of a more conventional analysis of the drama, and might be viewed as a redundant exercise in purely canonical narrative, the ontological density of multiform film demands that we shed light on these *fundamental* parameters since the very notion of story presupposes causality unfolding in time and space.

Earlier, I stated that *The Matrix* consists of a single fabula. This might at first glance seem somewhat paradoxical, since a single fabula favours a normalized spatio-temporal frame. Like all multiform films, *The Matrix* does, after all, depict at least two realities. Following our previous arguments, this would suggest that we need to separate events occurring in different frames by generating two distinct fabulas in order to avoid paradoxes. Crucially, however, in *The Matrix*, no such paradoxes exist. To understand how the film achieves this, we now turn our attention to its depiction of time and space. The first thing to note is that experiences across both

worlds are *consistent at a micro-level* (notable exceptions are the special abilities that allow Neo and the agents to move faster than normal in the Matrix). A character will, therefore, experience his rate of walking, breathing, eating, and the like, as normal despite his transgressions across frames, primarily because he is able to apply the same conceptual ‘visuo-motor schemata’ (Grodal 2002, p. 73) in the real world that he acquired in the Matrix. Indeed, ‘the specific schemata of the way in which limbs move relative to one another at different natural speeds evoke specific objective time-expectations’ (p. 143), which the film presents as normal despite transgressions across the virtual/real boundary. If this were not the case, Neo could not awaken in the real world as an adult who has spent his entire life in the Matrix and, after a short physical rehabilitation, continue to behave as before. In fact, any significant breakdown in his *subjective visuo-motor experience* of ‘reality’ would mean that he not only would have to relearn how to walk or run, but how to think and talk since ‘the perceptual categorization and its level of abstraction are typically linked to its use in the motor interaction with space, objects and animate beings’ (Grodal 2002, p. 73). Nor could the numerous ‘normal’ telephone conversations that characters conduct with each other across existential borders occur if the real and the virtual worlds were out of synchronisation.

We see further proof of this in the fight sequences where a character in the real world reacts to a punch delivered in the virtual world in a way that ties the two worlds together through the synchronisation of *cause and effect*, (3: 220 in the syuzhet breakdown). Further, a character that dies in the Matrix also dies in the real world, since, as Morpheus tells Neo, ‘the body cannot live without the mind’. This, of course, is not to say that there are no important differences between the two frames.

Virtual reality may, after all, potentially depict time and space in a multitude of ways. Yet, the machines have a vital interest in presenting a virtual world that appears authentic if they are to maintain the illusion of normality, since any ‘deviations from the ‘objective’ representation of space and objects will be perceived as an expression of a subjective factor’ (Grodal 2002, p. 143); namely, illusion. Of course, Grodal is referring to normal perception conditioned in the ‘real world’ and not to perception reared solely inside a constructed reality. Nevertheless, agent Smith hints at the existence of hard-wired human schemata favouring a temporal and spatial frame which *ostensibly* obey, rather than disobey, objective physical and social laws despite any programming to the contrary. He admits as much to Morpheus, when he informs him that in its first incarnation, the Matrix was a virtual Utopia meant to provide the maximum ease for humanity; but the human mind rebelled against it, forcing the machines to recreate the world at a lower level of perfection. Of course, any character who has awakened to the real world, may ‘jack’ back into the Matrix at any location he chooses (providing there is a hard-line connection), thereby breaking with his normal experience of a continuous space within a specific time-interval. Such glitches, however, occur mostly at the existential borders, and are not experienced *locally* from moment to moment by the characters. For all practical purposes, and apart from minor variations, then, the narrative presents a *coherent* spatio-temporal frame, which permits us to represent all ontologically separated events using a single pair of axes.

Most significantly, events and existents occurring within discreet existential planes are *causally linked* to each other through *preserved* character goals and effects within an ostensibly single and coherent framework of time and space. This allows discreet

strands to generate *a single fabula*, despite their ontological relativity. Additionally, narrative coherence is further supported by the use of traditional continuity editing, and a redundant use of indicators marking existential border crossings (with one important exception to be noted later). Having thoroughly stressed the importance of a coherent temporal and spatial framework, let us now look at this a little more closely.

5.1.4 Depicting the Flow

There are several ways to schematically depict the spatio-temporal flow of a fabula that is largely in-step with the syuzhet. Figure 3a, for example, represents a narrative slice from an objective or ‘real world’ perspective, plotting a character’s statically suspended body while his mind remains active inside the Matrix (‘moving’ only in time). This is indicated through the vertical orientation of solid blue lines running along the time axis. In this schema, the black line (Fig.3a: 1) represents the title sequence. The red lines running at a forty-five degree angles indicate the progression through time and space for characters operating within the real world. This method of representation, however, is clearly inadequate since it does not allow for the depiction of action in time and space *as experienced by the immersed subject*. It also fails to emphasise the causal links known to exist between the subjective and objective streams.

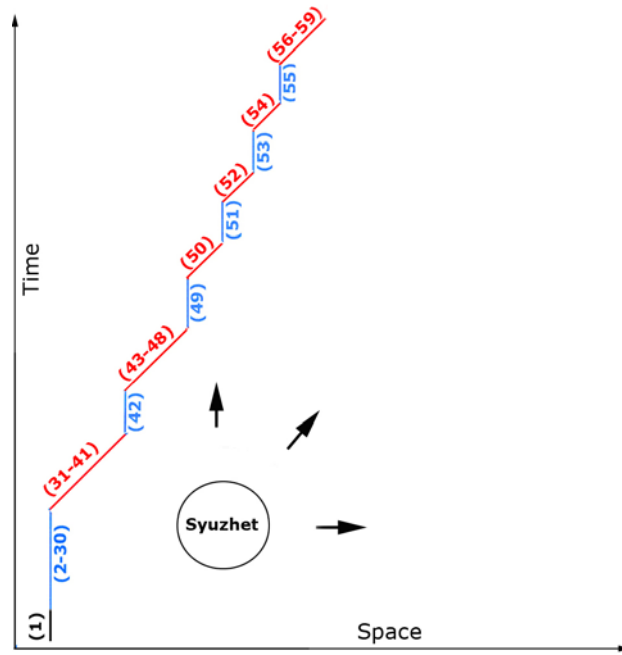


Fig.3a

Figure 3b, by contrast, arranges the various segments presented by the syuzhet in parallel in order to preserve the progression and interrelationship between them.

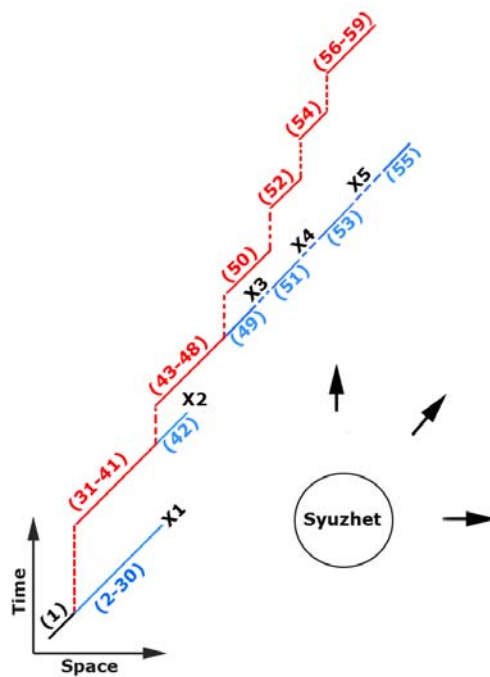


Fig.3b

This approach allows us to illustrate breaks and continuities in the fabula at specific exit and re-entry points of the syuzhet, namely, at X1, X2, and X4, and at X3, X4, and X5 respectively. The short black line drawn at 45 degrees (Fig.3b: 1) represents the opening titles. The dotted vertical red lines indicate the passage of objective time for a stationary (suspended) character while inside the Matrix. The dotted blue lines depict the unspecified but continuous march of the fabula (inside the Matrix) in the absence of its depiction by the syuzhet. An example of this is the crosscutting that occurs between the two streams when the crew watches Morpheus and Neo fight it out in the Construct (Appendix 3: 49-56). But such an arrangement complicates the depiction of the narrative flow without further benefit to my claim that events occurring in separate existential streams, which share an ostensibly familiar spatio-temporal framework when viewed through a character's subjective experience, exhibit the strong consistencies, links, and correlations typical of a single fabula. I have therefore chosen to represent the story as a single ascending line comprising mainly red and blue segments (Figures 4a to 4h).

These graphs map the fabula in eight sections for reasons of legibility. The syuzhet employs a largely redundant and communicative approach in constructing a fabula across ontological borders within a consistent spatio-temporal framework. This is based on a crucial inference (noted earlier) that virtual time and space, *as experienced subjectively by a character*, appear to operate normally across existential locations. Further, such subjectivity is *objectively* viewable as code on a computer monitor. Again, the short black line (Fig.4a: 1) indicates the title sequence. The blue lines represent events occurring inside the Matrix, while the red ones represent

events unfolding in the real world. Additionally, Figure 4a maps the stasis of a character that has entered the Matrix as a *vertical* dotted red line along the temporal axis. To avoid clutter, this dotted line has been omitted from the remaining diagrams although its presence is assumed throughout. We note that the diagrams are meant as a loose approximation of events within a general framework and in no way purport to present an accurate and detailed mapping of the temporal and spatial displacement of characters. Such a mapping would require unnecessary detailing of the miniscule fluctuations and deflections in the blue line to indicate the relative and aggressive changes in acceleration, such as when Neo or an agent are able to move at incredible speed indicated by the ‘bullet time’ sequences (Appendix 3: 201, in Figure 4f).

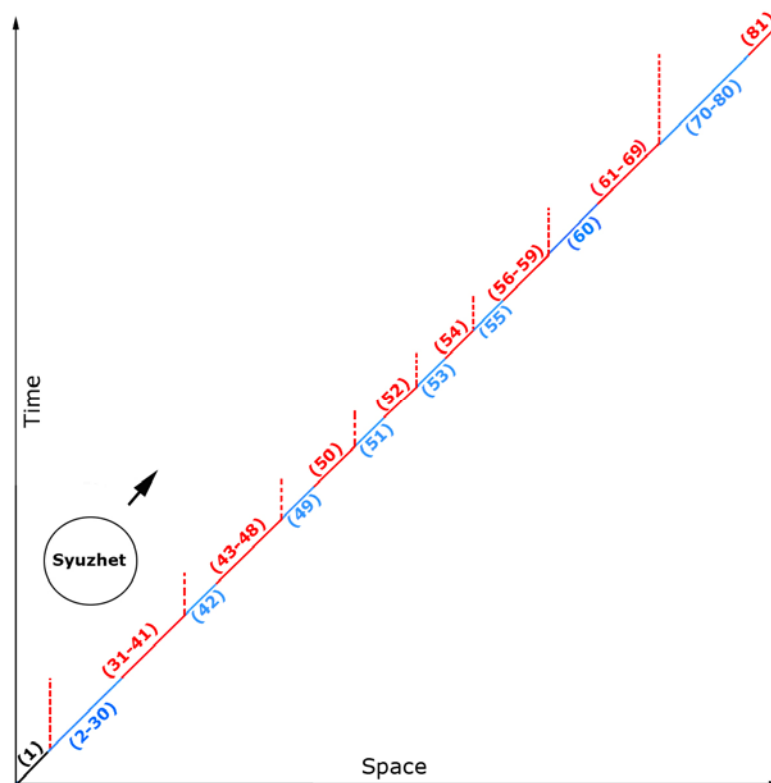


Fig.4a

This arrangement is not only the simplest, but offers the clearest reminder of our most important finding thus far, that *ontologically distinct strands may cohere within a single fabula providing they share a common and coherent spatio-temporal framework, which allows for the existence of causal relations between the levels.* Put another way, *The Matrix* consists of a syuzhet and a fabula that are essentially in step with each other.

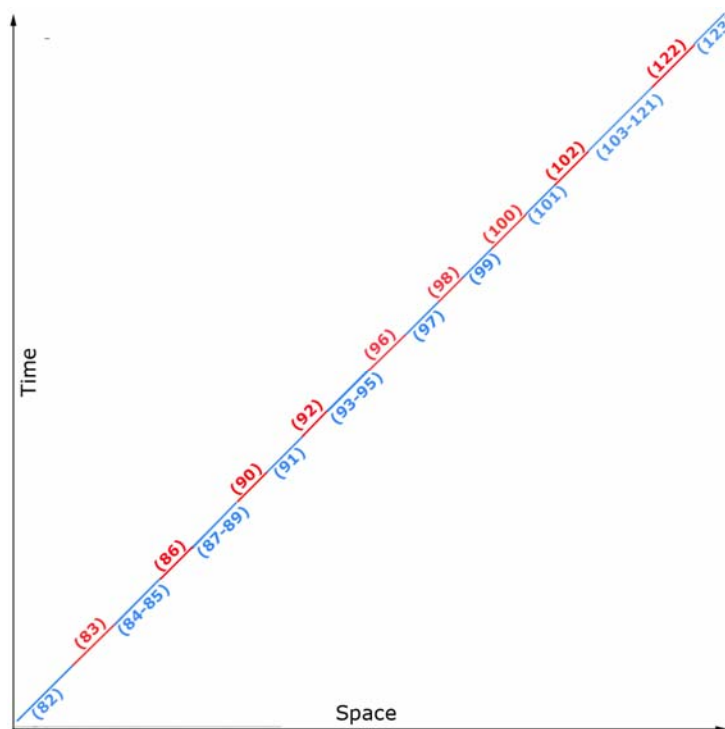


Fig. 4b

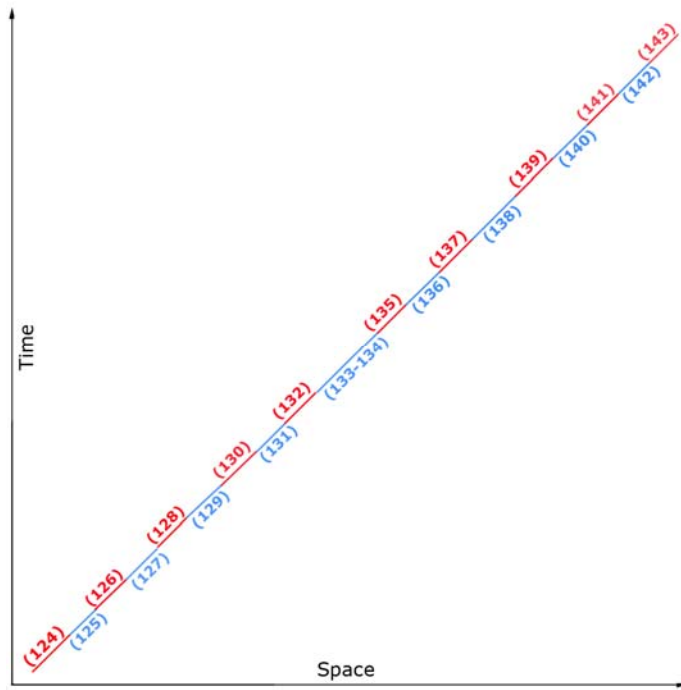


Fig.4c

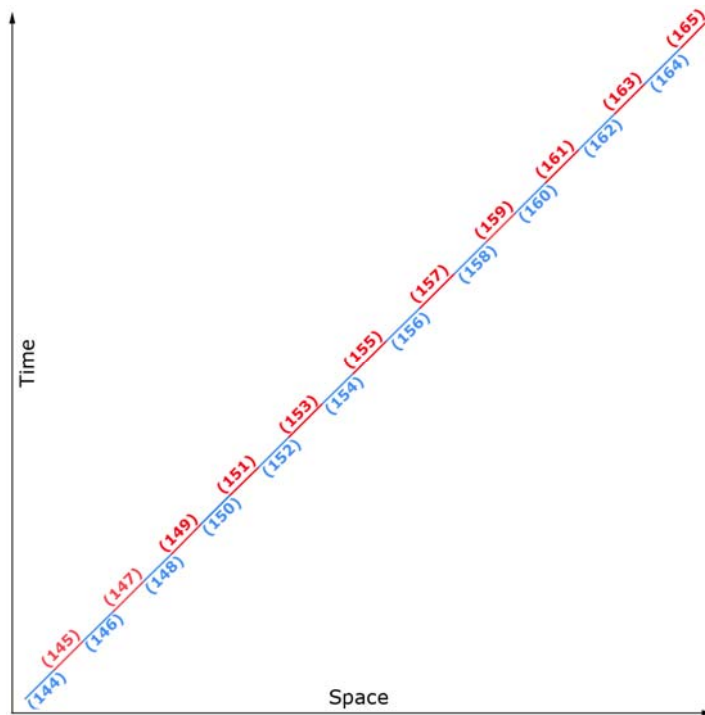


Fig.4d

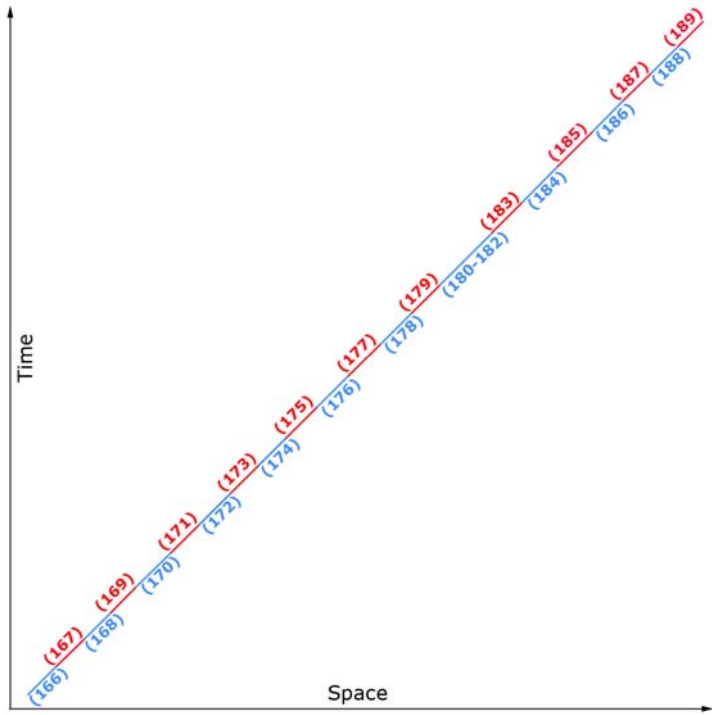


Fig.4e

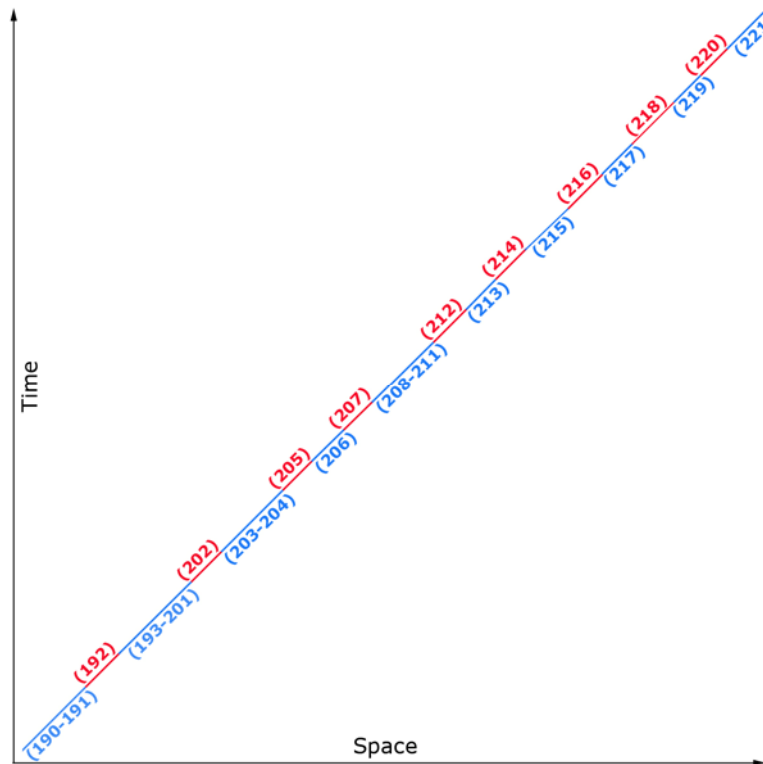


Fig.4f

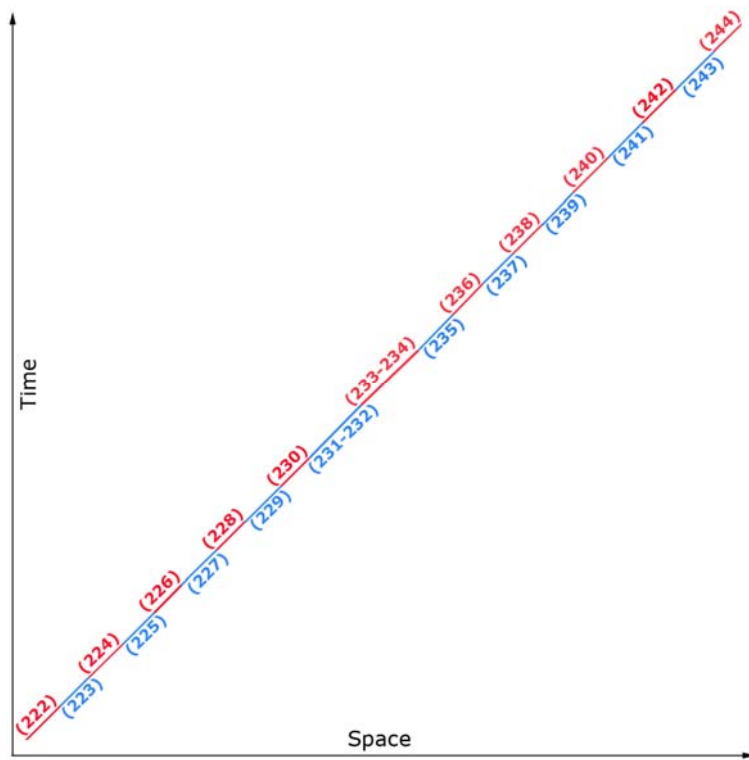


Fig.4g

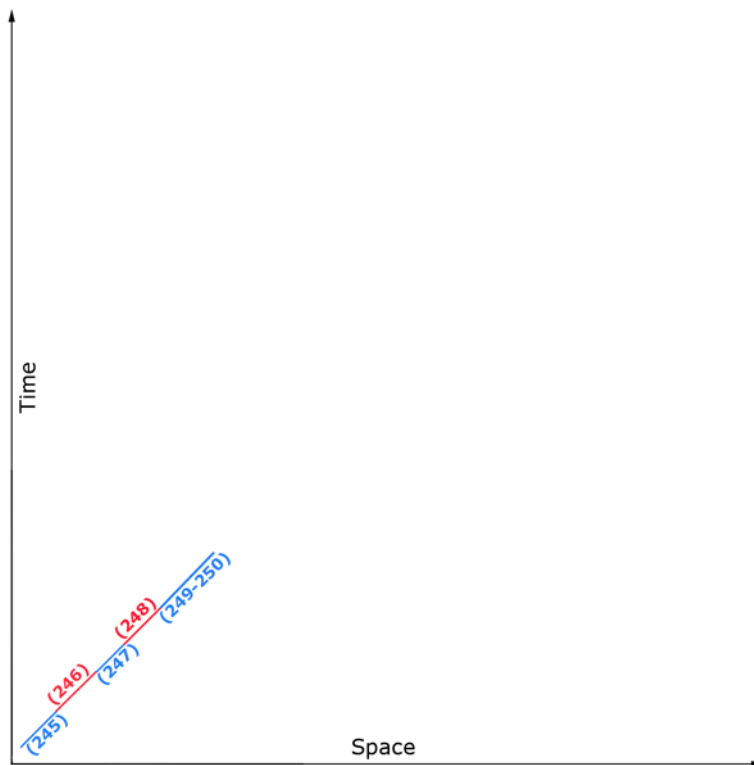


Fig.4h

Having established that *The Matrix* consists of a single fabula with multiple strands, we return to our usual set of questions:

A. Who is the protagonist?

Thomas. A. Anderson. (Neo).

B. Who is/are the antagonist(s)?

Agent Smith. The machines/agents.

C. What is the conflict?

Reality vs. Illusion. At the level of the drama, Neo must acknowledge that his existence up to the point of his awakening has been an illusion; he must realise that he is 'The One' in order to defeat the Matrix.

D. What is the main plot?

Neo must defeat the Matrix, in the guise of Smith and the other agents, in order to fulfil the prophesy and free humanity from the slavery of its slumber.

E. What are some of the most important subplots?

Trinity's growing realisation that she is in love with Neo, which results in her saving his life in the ninth hour. Cypher's attempt to betray humanity.

And on to the final questions:

F. What is the inciting incident?

Neo meets Trinity at the club. She confirms his suspicions that there is something wrong with the world. This initiates a course of action that will

inevitably lead to the *obligatory scene* and answer, in the affirmative, the dramatic question posed by the inciting incident, namely, is Neo ‘The One?’

G. What is the first turning point leading to the end of act one?

Neo meets with Morpheus who shows him the Matrix. This leads to the end of the act when Neo is flushed from the Matrix.

H. What is the second turning point leading to the end of act two?

Smith and the other agents capture Morpheus, which forces Neo and Trinity to re-enter the Matrix to try and rescue him.

I. What is the mid-point?

The moment in which Neo declares to the Oracle that he is not ‘The One’.

J. How does the story end?

Neo wins the battle against the machines and prepares to spread his message of an existence beyond the Matrix to the slumbering human masses.

5.2 Closed Multiform Narrative

If *The Matrix* is largely structured according to canonical norms, as the above answers would indicate, in what sense can it be considered a multiform film? The fact is that narrative coherence does not disqualify a film from membership of this category. After all, the story does present more than one ontological reality reflecting the relativity of contemporary life; it does exhibit a high level of intertextuality; and it does present a digitally saturated world. These are all features that we have associated with multiform narrative. Further, the film briefly experiments with the art cinema *mode*, through an initially uncommunicative syuzhet, that represses a lengthy ontological gap (Appendix 3: 2-30), before normalising the streams through a high

level of redundancy in its use of conventional cues and transitional devices. Of course, this is not to ignore a high degree of differentiation between films such as *The Matrix* and *Donnie Darko*, which represent opposite sides of the multiform spectrum; yet, such differentiation can be adequately described in terms of a communicative or non-communicative syuzhet which cues and modulates audience comprehension through open, closed, repressed, diffuse, or flaunted gaps, through the presence or absence of redundancy and through the concomitant evocation of objectivity or subjectivity in the narrative. Taken together, features exhibited in *The Matrix* place it in the *closed* multiform category – *closed* in the sense that a preferred meaning flowing from a single fabula is possible. This is in contrast to a film such as *Donnie Darko*, which forces plural readings through the presence of paradoxes, resulting in multiple fabulas of equal status.

General Characteristics of Closed Multiform Narrative, per *The Matrix*

1. A single plot centred on the Protagonist's goal, supported by subplots.
2. A balance between subjectivity and objectivity in the presentation of character consciousness.
3. After an uncommunicative start containing a diffuse and suppressed gap, the syuzhet is strongly communicative, supported by continuity editing and a redundant use of audio-visual markers.
4. A preferential spatio-temporal frame allowing for a single fabula, with multiple ontologically distinct strands, situates the film within the closed multiform category.
5. A fabula that is largely in step with the syuzhet.

6. Follows a three act structure.
7. Allows a more conventional role for genre.

5.3 Case study # 4: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

Having already examined what constitutes an *open* and *closed* multiform narrative, let us apply these insights to another example within the *closed* subcategory.

Ostensibly, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* would appear to fall well within the *open* multiform subclass since it seems to contain paradoxes that we ordinarily would seek to resolve by invoking discreet fabulas. The character played by Jim Carrey, for example, appears in repeating scenes at the beginning and end of the film; additionally, the narrative depicts a confusing jumble of episodes that reek of unmarked ontological border crossings. A closer investigation (aided by multiple viewings), however, reveals that the film contains a single fabula comprising several ontologically distinct strands, or levels. Because the fabula differentiates between an objective waking state and an internal subjective state, it is able to provide a coherent and *preferential spatio-temporal framework* for the former, despite the ostensibly spatial, temporal, and ontological relativity of the latter. In doing so, the film employs a mixture of canonical and art-cinema techniques that aid in tying up all *ontological* loose ends. Before laying out the syuzhet, let us once more examine the role of genre in the film.

5.3.1 Genre-Bending (Again)

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind is yet another example of a film that defies a simple generic description. The title is an appropriation of a line from an Alexander Pope poem, *Eloisa to Abelard*, which tells the story of a tragic love affair, where forgetfulness becomes the heroine's only comfort. Film critic Roger Ebert describes the film as 'a radical example of Maze Cinema, that style in which the story coils upon itself, redefining everything and then throwing it up in the air and redefining it again' (2004, p. 2). He claims that it would be virtually impossible to describe the plot, but declares that the film 'works' because of its solid emotional centre. James Christopher of *The Times* is less complementary. He describes it as a low-budget sci-fi romance that he would sooner forget (2004, p. 1). It seems that even professional critics may frequently misunderstand the structure of multiform film. In fact, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* went on to become one of the most beloved cult films of the decade, earning a gross profit of \$72,258,126 worldwide (Box Office Mojo, n.d., p.1).

The film is indeed, at the very least, a love story: Joel Barish (Jim Carrey) discovers that his girlfriend of two years, Clementine Kruczynski (Kate Winslet) has had him erased from her memory in order to break up with him without the attending pain and suffering. Hurt and angered by this, he decides to do the same. During the procedure, however, Joel realises that he still loves Clementine and wants to keep his memories of her. A large portion of the film relates how Joel, operating from a semi-lucid dream state, tries to hide his precious memories in secret corners of his mind to avoid their detection and erasure. The memory mapping and erasure scenes, complete with

computer screens, special helmets and wires, as well as an assortment of phrases such as ‘mind-mapping’, ‘read-out’, ‘C-Gate’ and ‘voltage-regulator’, fall squarely within the science fiction genre. But the film also draws on the fantasy genre in its use of nightmarishly distorted characters with partially erased or rearranged facial features, such as when Patrick is seen collecting dropped files from the floor in Dr. Mierzwiak’s office, or, at the Nobel & Barnes bookstore where, again, Patrick appears as a faceless head unable to spin around. A further example from the world of fantasy occurs when a diminutive Joel, dwarfed by the furnishings in his mother’s kitchen, is unable to reach the fridge handle, much like Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*, who is unable to reach the top of the table having drunk shrinking potion.

The film also contains horror elements – scenes in which Joel and Clementine run down dark, spooky corridors, rooms, and streets while all around them the world dissolves away. By way of contrast, the film also displays strong comedic elements. Patrick’s admission to Stan that he has stolen Clementine’s panties results in humorous, if unethical, banter, while Joel’s rummaging through his childhood memories dressed in tights and a red cape, only to be brought to his knees by a child bully only a fraction of his size, is genuinely comedic. On the other hand, Joel being pressured by the children into repeatedly smashing a hammer into a dead bird is reminiscent of the coming-of-age drama genre, as is his being seen in bed by his mother, masturbating over drawings of naked figures. More important than the sprinkling of multiple generic references, however, is the observation that the film, like many other multiform narratives, does not draw on any single genre to shape its content. This means that it has to rely on existing and new devices to aid audience comprehension. With reference to the syuzhet breakdown detailed in Appendix 4, let

us now embark on a closer examination of how these devices operate within and across individual ontologically distinct strands.

5.3.2 Diegetic Borders

Campora, who explores the film in his article “Art cinema and New Hollywood: multiform narrative and sonic metalepsis in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*” (2009), finds that it comprises two major levels, which he terms the ‘waking strand’ and an ‘internal-subjective strand’ (2009, p. 123). The waking strand, which makes up a small part of the film’s action, frames the story by appearing at the start and end of the film, and is marked by the traditional use of continuity editing, which promotes a stable flow of space and causality, typical of classical narration. He also finds that the waking strand has a false temporal linearity, since the major temporal gaps of the early part are not evident until later in the film. The internal-subjective strand, however, breaks with the continuity style and is ‘characterised by an inverted causality, circular spatiality (in which, at times, space bends back on itself like a Mobius-strip) and a retrogressive analeptic temporality (not unlike that of *Memento*)’ (p. 123). The aesthetic differences between the strands mark their distinct ontologies (pp. 123-124). Campora additionally distinguishes between the *intradiegetic*, the *extradiegetic*, and the *metadiegetic* levels of the film: ‘The extradiegetic is the level at which narration happens, and in a film, is represented by the camera-narrator’ (p. 124). The intradiegetic is the primary level of the story and is one level up hierarchically from the extradiegetic level. By contrast, metadiegetic levels arise as a result of extra narratives generated within the intradiegetic world, such as *Hamlet*’s play-within-a-play, but can also exist as a character’s memories, dreams, or

hallucinations. Campora situates the film's internal-subjective layer at the metadiegetic level.

Further, Campora identifies the boundaries between the different levels as being of two types: *ontological* or *illocutionary*. *Factual* strands, such as flashbacks of *actual* past events are illocutionary. Here, the intradiegetic and metadiegetic levels share the same ontology. The boundary between dreams, hallucinations, or *false* flashbacks, however, points to an existential difference and is, therefore, *ontological*. Lastly, *metalepsis* describes a transgression of boundaries by a character or narrator across different diegetic levels. There are also two types: *rhetorical* and *ontological*. Marie-Laure Ryan describes a rhetorical metalepsis as an intrusion into the current level by 'a voice that originates in or addresses a lower level' (Ryan 2004, p. 441). An example can be found in *A Cock and Bull Story*, a.k.a. *Tristram Shandy* (2005), when actor Steven Coogan directly address the audience as an actor playing a role. Such intrusions are self-conscious and serve to maintain and even highlight the existence of boundaries. When the metadiegetic penetrates the intradiegetic level to become part of it, however, the metalepsis is ontological. Examples of ontological metalepsis occur in *The Ring* (2002), when the ghostly Samara crawls out of the television screen and enters Rachel's living room. Typically, Hollywood narrative is careful to insulate the audience from any disorientating effects caused by such border crossing. In *Pleasantville* (1998), the ontological transgression that occurs when David and Jennifer enter into the world of a television series is explained through the use of a special television remote control. This is an example of how Hollywood uses the convention of building the explanation of an unusual or improbable event around an

actual object or device in the story in order to ensure narrative comprehension and thereby encourage the audience to suspend their disbelief.

In *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, however, no such continuity is provided, at least, not initially. The result is to disorientate the audience as it tries to navigate across the boundary separating the waking and the internal-subjective levels. But as the narrative unfolds, audio and visual markers, within an awareness of Joel undergoing a memory erasure procedure, increasingly herald such ontological changes. A typical example of this occurs thirty minutes into the film. A metaleptic sound bridge, which Campora defines as a sonic border crossing across ontologically distinct levels (p. 124), links the metadiegetic internal-subjective strand with the intradiegetic one¹⁹. The subjective strand shows Joel responding to the mementoes that mark his relationship with Clementine. This allows Stan to build a map of their location in his brain. This scene is twice removed from the intradiegetic level since it represents Joel's *memory* of the mapping and not the actual mapping itself.

Screenwriter Charlie Kaufman points out in fact that the narrative, except for a few framing fragments, presents Joel's reconstruction of people and events, rather than the people and events themselves (2004, p. 139). At the intradiegetic level, Stan and Patrick are in Joel's apartment, erasing his memory. This is an example of a rhetorical sound bridge since the conversation Stan and Patrick are having at Joel's apartment, while he lies unconscious in his bed during the erasing procedure, retrogressively intrudes into Joel's *memory* of himself sitting at the Lacuna mapping session (at the metadiegetic level). These intrusive fragments of the conversation

¹⁹ Some of the most common metaleptic border crossings include: *intradiegetic to ontological metadiegetic* (ID – OM), or vice versa (OM – ID); *diegetic to rhetorical metadiegetic* (ID – RM), or vice versa; and *rhetorical metadiegetic to ontological metadiegetic* (RM – OM), or vice versa (OM – RM). Although we have listed these for the sake of completeness, we are less concerned with such inflections than we are with identifying the narrative strands as either subjective or objective. This is because our primary purpose is to show that all strands are subsumed within a single fabula, aided by audio-visual markers.

reshape Joel's memory of events, and, therefore, constitute a different level within the metadiegetic level. Because the boundary remains distinct, however, it is an example of a rhetorical, rather than an ontological metaleptic sound bridge.

A new phase in the narration occurs, when an unconscious Joel learns through the same sort of information crossover that Patrick has stolen his journal in an attempt to seduce Clementine with information gleaned from it. This *intradiegetic to metadiegetic* ontological transgression marks the transition to a lucid dream state in which Joel realises that his memories are being erased (at the intradiegetic level) and tries desperately to prevent this from happening by attempting to hide Clementine inside deeper memories that had occurred prior to the couple having ever met (at the metadiegetic level). This reformulation of memories involving fragments from both the intradiegetic and metadiegetic levels is an example of ontological metalepsis, since it is a reconstituted amalgam. Stylistically, the unheralded instances of metalepsis of the earlier sections are now increasingly expected through repetition, granting the audience an increased ability to construct the fabula. Such devices include the metaleptic sonic sound bridges described above, as well as an assortment of more conventional audio-visual markers, including a distortion of sound which draws attention to itself as an artefact (Appendix 4: 36, 62, 75, 92, 111, 140 & 213), the incongruous human-to-objects scales such as the huge table Joel hides under (4: 176), or gargantuan sink his mother bathes him in (180), a spotlight on the characters that highlights the staged and reconstructed nature of their presence inside a memory or hallucination (4: 130, 138, 144, 145, 149 & 150), the smooth blending of one location into another (4: 41), and people and objects popping out of existence within the metadiegetic level, explained by a character at the intradiegetic level as yet

another successful or unsuccessful elimination of a targeted memory (4: 171, 187, 189, 192 & 205).

5.4 The Fabula as the Basis for Narrative Coherence

As useful as these terms are in untangling some of the film's most obfuscating moments, on their own, they fall somewhat short of a more detailed analysis. This is because a failure to separate the narrative into the syuzhet and the fabula tends to ignore some of the finer grain. One thing that this separation immediately eliminates, for example, is the potential confusion arising from the repetition of scenes at the start and end of the film, such as Joel waking up in bed on the morning after undergoing the memory erasure procedure. Without this distinction it might easily appear that the scenes are not a repetition at all but are ontologically and existentially distinct, which is not the case. The fabula contains only one such set of scenes, which exists as a direct consequence of events leading up to it. The syuzhet may, after all, present events as many times and in any order as is necessary to achieve a specific effect. But this has no existential effect on the fabula, other than making it more difficult to assemble. If it did, then paradoxes would arise that could only be resolved by generating a second fabula to explain them.

Typically, paradoxes occur mostly in *open* multiform narratives, such as *Donnie Darko*, where existentially competing strands fail to be explained by a single fabula. For much the same reasons, Campora's remark that the waking strand can be said to have a false linearity, while the internal-subjective strands are 'characterised by an inverted causality, [and] circular spatiality (in which space bends back on itself like a

mobius strip)' needs clarification (2009, p. 123). Viewed from the perspective of a coherent fabula, the waking strand is perfectly linear since, by definition, it rearranges events (that may seem aberrant at the level of the syuzhet), so that they obey the causal logic that operates within a normalised spatio-temporal framework. Equally, it is difficult to know precisely what is meant by space bending in upon itself, other than as a figure of speech, since any literal interpretation of the phrase would require that we are able to map these events against a stable spatio-temporal axis, which is not possible given the volatile nature of the subjective strands. It is more likely that these remarks describe the syuzhet, which plays freely with its presentation of event sequences. But as this thesis has argued, the syuzhet is only the first step in experiencing the narrative, which concludes only when the audience has successfully assembled a coherent fabula (or fabulas). As previously stated, any meaningful discussion of fabula construction presupposes a coherent spatio-temporal frame. I again seek to illustrate this by diagrammatically mapping the temporal and spatial relationships that exist between the most important narrative strands. This task is made somewhat easier by allowing for a single pair of axes only because the *status* of distinct ontologies is not in question: the subjective state requires only a time axis since Joel lies still in bed while in this state. Joel's dreams, hallucinations and memory-reconstitution episodes are prompted by a memory erasure procedure, governed by events in the real world. To illustrate this more graphically, I now lay out the syuzhet in schematic form.

Figures 5a to 5d represent the syuzhet's narrative sequencing. The schemas separate the objective (blue) and subjective (red) strands by arranging them into two different orientations along the space and time axes. The syuzhet's sequencing of events,

however, does not agree with a coherent ordering of the narrative demanded by fabula construction. Following from a close analysis of the story and based on the need to establish denotative or referential meaning by leaving out all subjective events, we get: OS(23-33) + OS(63) + OS(72) + OS(74) + OS(80) + OS(84-85) + OS(90) + OS(93) + OS(98) + OS(100) + OS(115) + OS(117-124) + OS(128) + OS(131) + OS(152) + OS(154) + OS(171-175) + OS(177-179) + OS(181) + OS(183) + OS(185) + OS(187) + OS(189) + OS(192) + OS(195) + OS(205) + OS(212) + OS(214-215) + OS(218) + OS(231-250). I note here that the syuzhet presents a duplication of several scenes at the beginning and towards the end of the film, primarily those of Joel waking up in bed the day after the procedure and ‘impulsively’ taking the train to Montauk. OS(1-4) repeated in OS(233-234) + OS(237), for example, needs parsing from the fabula. As before, I have divided the diagram into several sections for reasons of legibility. In describing the strands, I have opted for the more inclusive word, ‘objective’ rather than ‘waking’ strand (abbreviated as ‘OS’). I have also dropped the word ‘internal’ from the ‘internal-subjective strand’, since the subjective level in this film is consistently ‘internal’ to Joel. I have abbreviated the subjective strand as SS. Objective strands indicate movement in time and space. Subjective strands represent movement in time only, since Joel is lying motionless during the memory erasure procedure. The black points indicate some of the most notable transgressions between distinct diegetic levels. ‘V’ stands for ‘visual’, indicating that the transgression is communicated visually; ‘S’ stands for ‘sound’ and indicates that the transgression is mainly conveyed via the soundtrack; ‘ID’ and ‘M’ are short for ‘intradiegetic’, and ‘metadiegetic’ respectively. SM-M(32), for example, indicates a sound bleed from one metadiegetic level to another. It is listed as Appendix 4: 34 in the syuzhet breakdown.

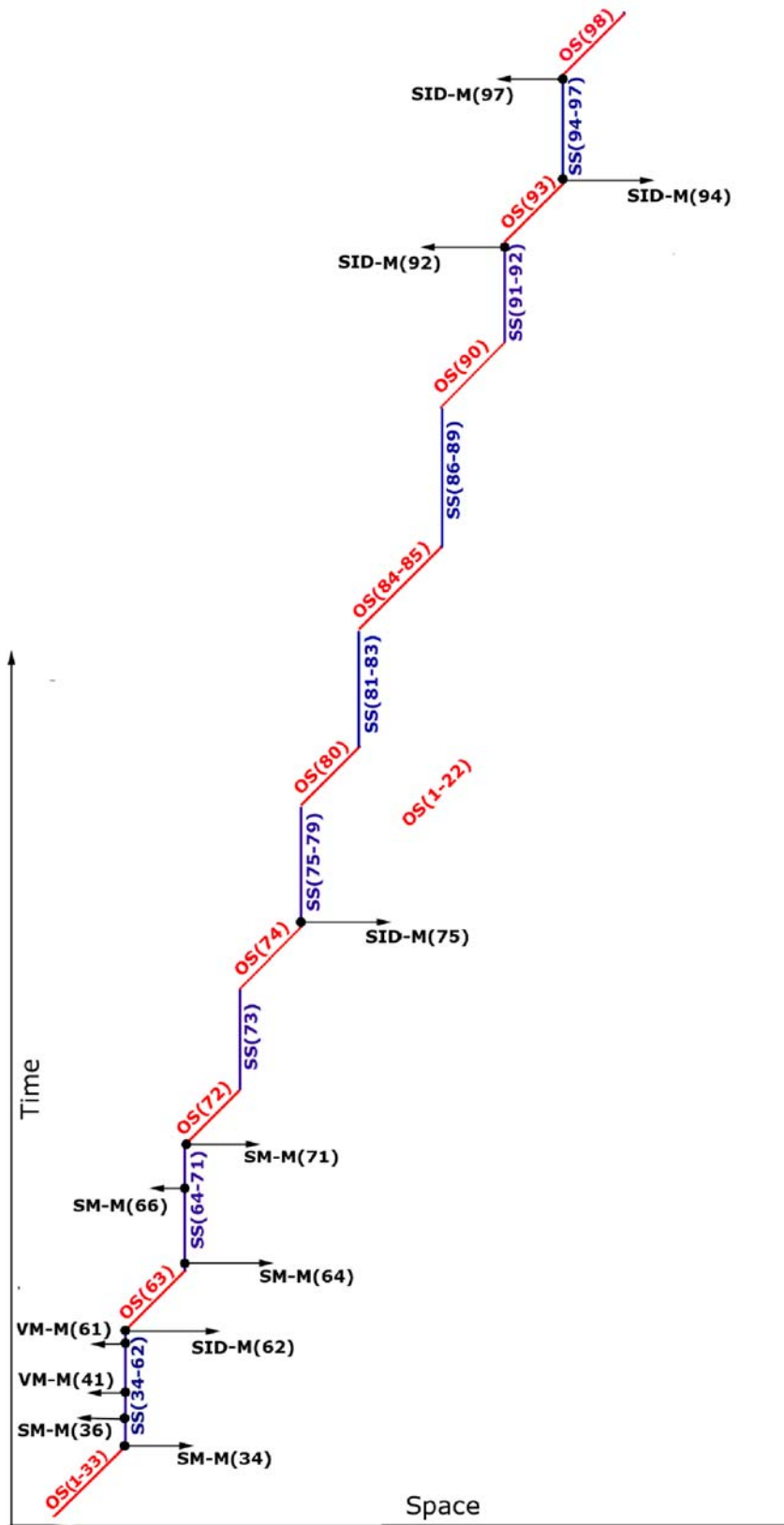


Fig.5a

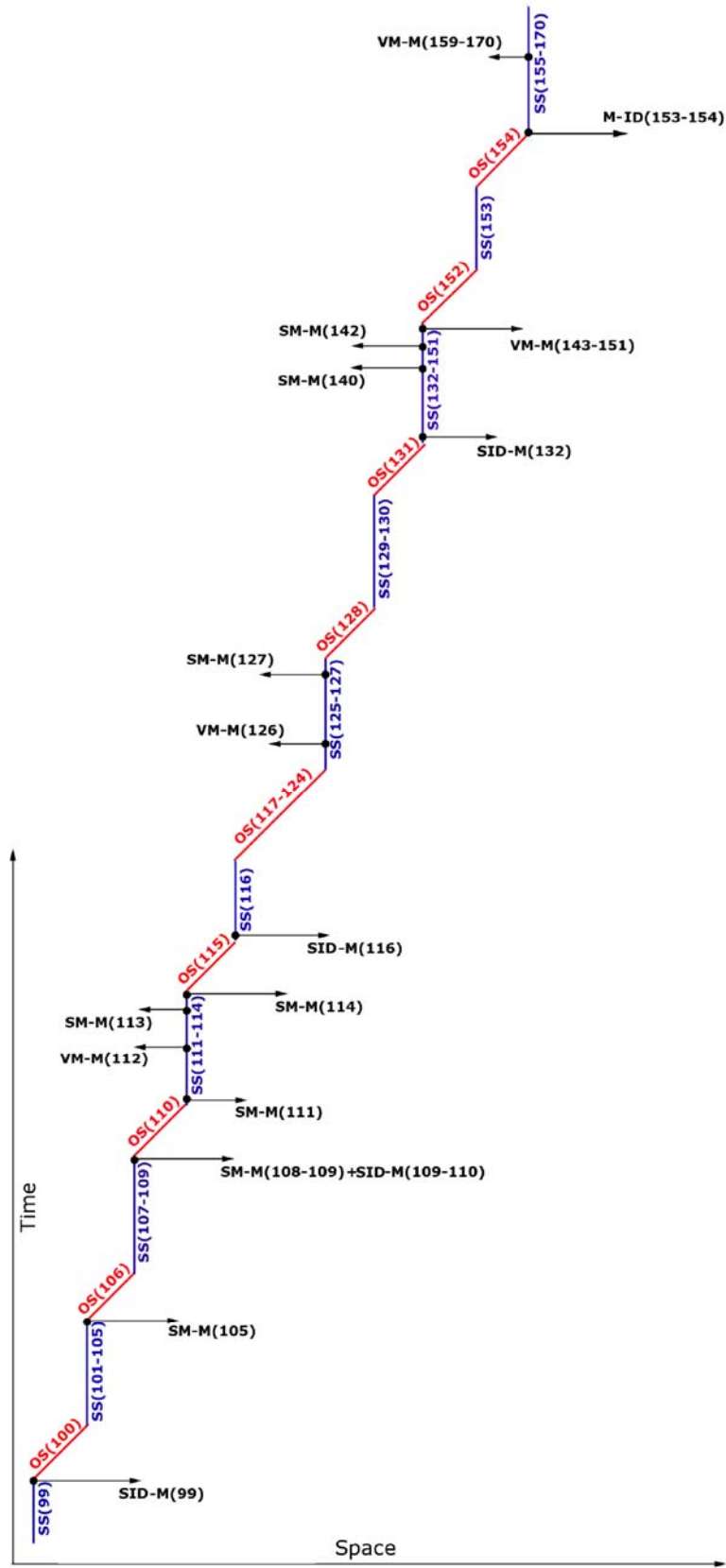


Fig.5b

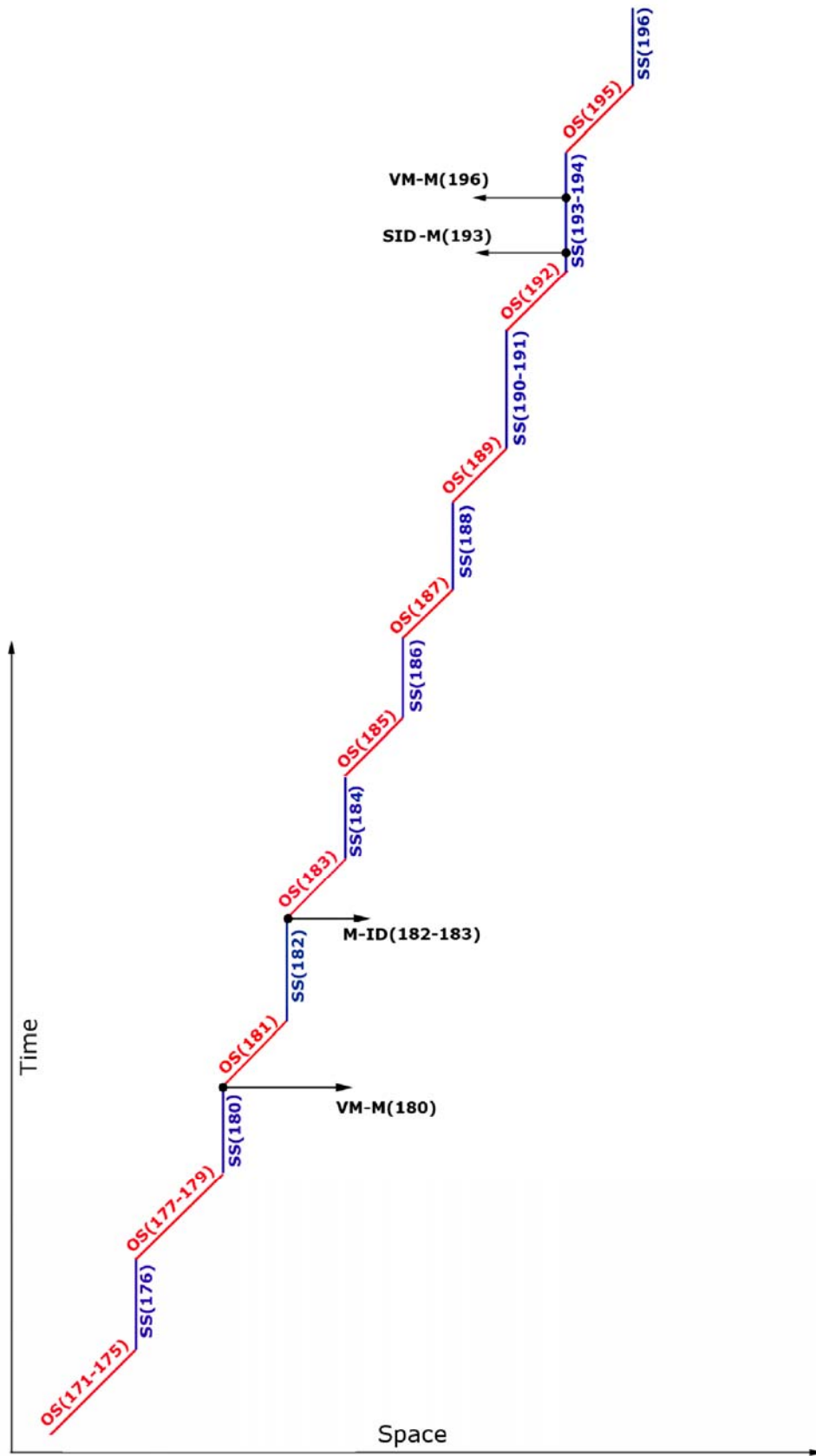


Fig.5c

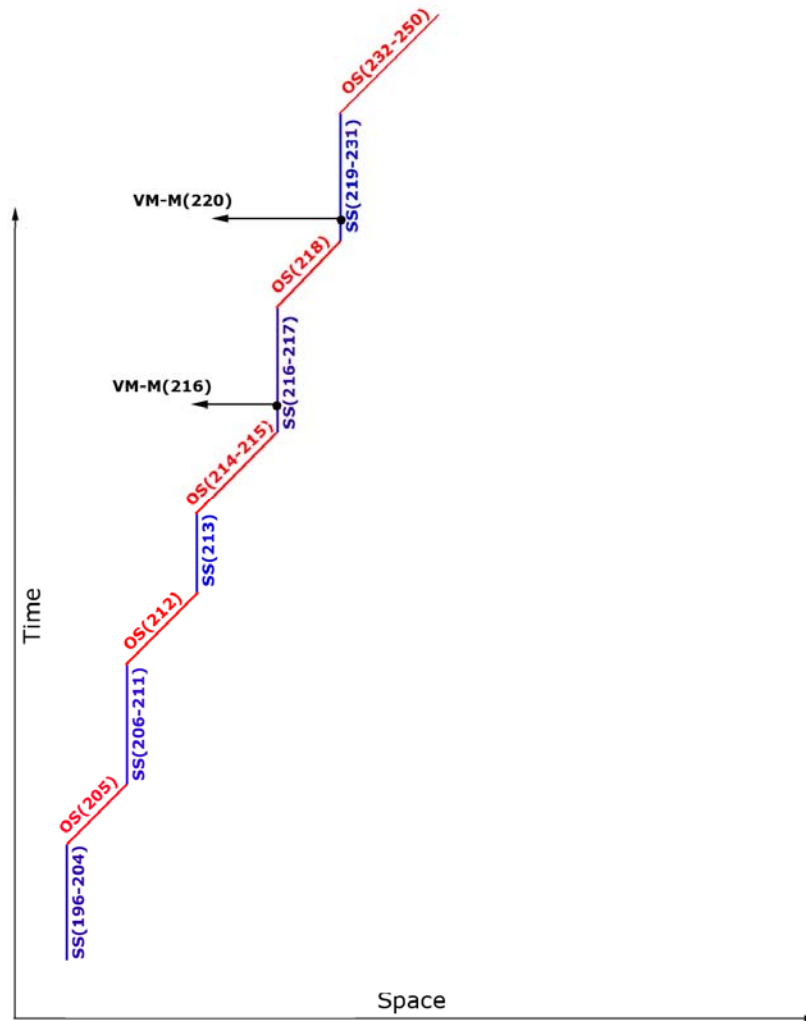


Fig.5d

At one level, Joel is undergoing the procedure in bed in an altered mental state; simultaneously, he is replaying fragments in his mind of an earlier conversation that he had with Frank. This represents a mixing of sound elements belonging to different metadiegetic levels (memory, and an altered mental state). An *intradiegetic to metadiegetic* sound bleed SID-M(92) occurs at 4: 92 in the syuzhet, when Joel incorporates Patrick's admission to Stan about having stolen Clementine's panties (at the intradiegetic level) with his own subjective (metadiegetic) attempts to warn Clementine and Dr. Mierzwiak of this from inside his lucid dream state. Visual mixing of metadiegetic levels occurs at VM-M(180), where Joel actively mixes

memories of being bathed by his mother in the kitchen sink with his memory of Clementine in an attempt to hide her in areas of his mind that have not been mapped by the Lacuna Inc. staff. Rarer is the spilling of the metadiegetic into the diegetic. Joel waking himself momentarily at ID-M(154) and gasping for air as if drowning at M-ID(182-3) are examples of this.

Having established that the film consists of a single fabula with multiple ontologically distinct strands, we return to our standard set of questions:

A. Who is the protagonist?

Joel Barish.

B. Who is/are the antagonist(s)?

The memory erasure procedure. Patrick.

C. What is the conflict?

Memory (reality) vs. Illusion; at the level of drama, Joel must accept that pain is a necessary part of love and fight to preserve his memories of Clementine; attempt to re-establish their relationship following the memory erasure procedure.

D. What is the main plot?

After initially seeking to have Clementine erased from his memory in reaction to her having erased Joel from hers, Joel fights to find a way to keep memories of her alive.

E. What are some of the most important subplots?

Patrick's attempts to use knowledge of Joel's and Clementine's relationship in order to get Clementine to fall in love with him. Mary's attraction to Dr.

Mierzwiak is explained when it is revealed that she had undergone the procedure herself in order to erase her memory of her affair with him.

And on to the final questions:

F. What is the inciting incident?

Joel learns that Clementine has had him erased from her memory.

G. What is the first turning point leading to the end of act one?

Joel decides to undergo the procedure himself.

H. What is the second turning point leading to the end of act two?

Joel runs into Clementine at the railway station.

I. What is the mid-point?

Joel decides to hide Clementine in his mind, in order to prevent her memory from being eliminated.

J. How does the story end?

Joel and Clementine decide to give their relationship another chance, despite their reservations.

Although we were able to answer all of the above questions, it is important to notice that we did so by applying them to the *fabula*, rather than to the *syuzhet* as we would in a canonical film, although this is a trivial distinction since, in traditional narrative, the *syuzhet* is largely in-step with the *fabula*. We also have shown that terms such as *turning point* and *mid-point* are typically tied to the protagonist's decisions and interactions with the diegetic world, rather than to the film's running length.

Although multiform narrative *may* significantly displace the fabula from the syuzhet, asking these questions of the fabula remains the intention.

General Characteristics of Closed Multiform Narrative, per *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

1. A high level of subjectivity, highlighting the role played by time and memory in human consciousness.
2. An initially uncommunicative syuzhet with flaunted and diffuse gaps. The syuzhet becomes more communicative due to a redundant use of audio-visual markers.
3. A preferential spatio-temporal frame which supports a single fabula with multiple ontologically distinct strands
4. A fabula that falls in and out of step with the syuzhet, particularly at the starting and ending sections.
5. Follows a three act structure at the level of the fabula.
6. Cannot be reduced to a single genre.

5.5 Case Study # 5: *Next*

Next (2007), the last case study in our exploration of multiform film enhances our understanding in two important ways. First, the film is a special case of the closed multiform category in that its syuzhet allows for more than one fabula (resulting from more than one spatio-temporal framework) to co-exist in a hierarchy so as to allow for a coherent viewing of multiple realities from a *preferential* vantage point.

Secondly, the film is yet another example of Hollywood's attempt to normalise unconventional modes and ideas that occur most typically in art or independent cinema. With regards to this second point, I have already indicated that Hollywood has a tendency to respond to challenges by assimilating them. It did so when it commandeered the use of sound into its highly developed visual codes, and it did so again when it used television to extend the life of its films. It should come as no surprise, then, to discover that the industry, faced with a variety of threats that we discussed in Chapter 1, is applying the same approach to its most sacrosanct of practises – the canonical mode itself. This, of course, is not a coherent approach motivated by some central body operating within a single conglomerate or studio, but rather a series of separate and furtive experiments by interested parties attempting to predict the next wave of novelty. It involves much second-guessing and many glances over the shoulder. It proceeds through fear, imitation and innovation. Successes are quickly appropriated and used in follow-up projects while failures are relegated to the scrap heap. And somewhere in-between, through repetition and proliferation, and through Hollywood's influence on the world stage, conventions are bred.

5.5.1 Origins

Next is loosely based on the Philip K. Dick short story, *The Golden Man*, which relates the story of a wild golden-skinned mutant in a post-apocalyptic world who is pursued by a special government agency because he represents a threat to the world. Gary Goldman, who, together with Jason Koornick, had initially optioned the short story, wrote a film treatment that they presented to Saturn Films, Nicholas Cage's

production company (Cohen 2004, p. 1). Goldman went on to write the first draft, which preserved some of the elements from the short story, including a strong antiauthoritarian theme. To make it more commercially appealing, Goldman changed the role of the golden-skinned mutant into that of a human social outcast and also introduced a love story element. Saturn Films, however, went even further, extensively rewriting the draft to eliminate aspects carried-over from the short story, before presenting it to Revolution Studios. Revolution Studios hired Lee Tamahori as director and the film went into production with Nicholas Cage in the lead role (Wikipedia, n.d., pp. 3-4). The film was picked up by Paramount for distribution after Sony Pictures dumped it in January 2007. Paramount, which had already achieved reasonable success through similar themes of clairvoyance, time, memory, and alternative realities through *Paycheck* (2003), and *Minority Report* (2002) (via *DreamWorks*), released the movie on 27 April, 2007.

Although it did less business than either *Paycheck* or *Minority Report*, the film earned a worldwide gross of US \$76 million dollars (Box Office Mojo, n.d., p. 1). The reaction of critics, however, was mainly negative. Peter Howell of *thestar.com* disparaged the film by labelling it ‘a colossal waste of time’ (Howell 2007, p. 1). Moira Macdonald of the *Seattle Times* summed it up as ‘Lee Tamahori’s confused sci-fi thriller’ that would ‘annoy audiences’ (MacDonald 2007, p. 1). And Justin Chang of *Variety* described it as a ‘cinematic equivalent of Choose Your Own Adventure novel’, describing its climax as ‘a stunning cheat’ (Chang, 2007 p. 3). What seems obvious from these remarks is that critics who judged the film against a conventional template found it to be muddled and confusing. Only Diana Saenger seems to have seen the film’s obvious structural experimentation as worthy of further

thought. Writing in the *ReviewExpress*, she remarks that ‘*Next* boasts a fresh plot with a tricky twist ending that can be misconstrued if you don’t pay close attention and then pause to think about it’ (Saenger n.d., p. 1), a view that will be echoed in this thesis. Further, the film represents a typical Hollywood practice of interest to this thesis, which is to appropriate non-typical techniques and modes and then immediately set about normalizing them by parading them side by side with established conventions and techniques, namely the star system (Nicholas Cage, Julianne Moore, Jessica Biel), recognisable plots (terrorists threatening to blow up a city), and realistic special effects (explosions and multiple exposures). Bordwell describes the approach in this way: ‘Because of the redundancy built into the Hollywood narrative system, unusual devices could piggyback on a large number of familiar cues. [For example], *Eternal Sunshine*, as Kaufman doubtless realizes, tells of boy meeting girl, boy losing girl, and boy getting girl’ (2006, p. 73). These comments are as applicable to *Next* as much as they are to *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. Before delving deeper into the film’s temporal structure, however, let us lay out a detailed presentation of the syuzhet.

5.5.2 Genre Revisited

I have previously stated that one of the strategies of multiform film is to use multiple genres as fragments to generate smaller units of meaning rather than as overall structuring templates. One result of this is a diminished capacity on the part of audiences, critics, and filmmakers to categorize specific films in the ways allowed by canonical stories. Moira Macdonald of the *Seattle Times*, for example, wrongly labels *Next* as science fiction. In the absence of more solid alternatives, the tendency

is to overload some noticeable aspect of a film by regarding it as emblematic of type. Although *Next* is loosely based on a Philip K. Dick science fiction short story about a clairvoyant mutant, the film version has clearly jettisoned this from its core. In fact, the film is more a love story than it is science fiction since the *sole motivation* of its lead character, Cris Johnson, is to save his love interest, Liz. Likewise, the subplot of terrorists threatening to blow up Los Angeles is simply a device in service of this motivation. Nor is Cris' clairvoyance unique to the science fiction genre.

Fantasy, such as *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001-2003), horror, for example *The Shining* (1980), and drama – films like *The Gift* (2000), often allow for characters that are prescient. While it is true, then, that *Next* does allude to the Romance, Action/Thriller, Sci-Fi and Drama genres, these allusions fail to capture the film within one net; nor is genre celebrated through the systematic use of intertextuality of the sort that we noted in *Donnie Darko*. So what role, if any, does genre play in the film? My suspicion continues to be that genre, in multiform film, often functions as one of many narrative elements within a new sort of macrostructure, rather than as an overall template for the story. In short, *Next* parades genres as enfeebled entities that have imploded into pastiche, operating more as free-floating markers for mood, themes, and ideas than as structural devices for ordering narrative. We shall continue to develop and refine our understanding of this function in our next two case studies.

5.5.3 Appropriation and Normalization

According to the theory we have been developing thus far, we have sought to resolve paradoxes in *Donnie Darko* at the cost of retroactively splitting and arranging the

offending narrative strands into separate fabulas. In this, the syuzhet provided us with little assistance, remaining, by and large, uncommunicative while sustaining diffuse and repressed gaps. We discovered that the unheralded jumps of the syuzhet left us with multiple endings depending upon which fabula we chose to favour. Nor does the primacy effect furnish us with any more assistance, since Donnie survives the jet engine crash at the beginning of the film, only to die from it at the end. *Next* shares with *Donnie Darko* many of the features that define multiform narrative, such as presenting at least one further and distinct existential reality (generating more than one fabula), from which information may leak to another through resonance. But whereas the latter draws much of its power from the uncommunicativeness of its syuzhet, *Next* is at pains to explain itself – except for one important occasion to be mentioned below. Further, in heralding existential shifts through audio and visual markers (occasions in which future visions are directly spliced into the flow such as at Appendix 5: 27, 106, 116, 123, 143 – 149, & 153), the syuzhet also betrays moments of self-consciousness, further drawing attention to pivotal moments. The syuzhet, however, *does* present one diffused and repressed gap of the sort that routinely operates in *Donnie Darko*. This is at 5: 62 when the camera pulls back from a close-up of Cris' eye on the bed indicating a split in the fabula, as we later discover. This results in our experiencing an alternative version of the story. But such uncommunicativeness is the exception of a syuzhet that otherwise carefully foregrounds time shifts, announces unexpected twists to its normal mode, and proceeds to normalize them by sandwiching them in-between conventional elements. Strengthened by redundancy, such devices are stripped of their unfamiliarity and join the canon of recognisable techniques, while simultaneously retaining the scent of novelty. This is having your cake and eating it – Hollywood style.

Of course, the use of specific technical devices such as a change in focus and a spike on the sound track are not the only means through which normalization is facilitated. The idea of distinct worlds somehow intimately bound up with ours is easier to accept when viewed against traditions such as clairvoyance, prophecy and prophetic dreams which, as we noted earlier, have often been used in films spanning different genres. In much the same way, Cris' abilities gain credence through such associations. In relation to *Donnie Darko*, I described a character's vague awareness of other worlds as resonance. In *Next*, however, we require another term that captures the accuracy and intent of a more enhanced ability. To this end, I offer the appellation, *futures-viewing*. The use of the plural in 'futures' preserves the inflection of more than one fabula, which in itself is a reason why we favour this term over 'prolepses' (Genette 1980, pp. 67-79). Although the latter term allows for a wide range of descriptive freedoms, including occasions of imagined, anticipated or mistaken futures, its main function favours the single fabula. Futures-viewing, on the other hand, is a description of existentially distinct alternatives foreseen by a character and is, despite a lack of panache reserved for words of a palpably Greek or Latin origin, more sharply focused on multiform narrative as a distinct category.

5.5.4 Camouflaging Fabula Plurality in Closed Multiform Narrative

I offer one last observation before moving on. By revealing the existence of future worlds through the use of a special ability inherent in a character in the *present*, the syuzhet is able to play down the existence of more than one fabula (and/or fabulet) by camouflaging each as a mere glimpse into the future from the point of view of a

preferential perspective – in effect, presenting it much like a flash-forward in canonical film. Of course in the strict sense, a flash-forward is simply the syuzhet rushing ahead of itself to depict an ontologically stable event that is yet to happen. It does not posit the necessity of multiple spatio-temporal frames at the level of the fabula(s). The overall effect of the aforementioned technique is that we surreptitiously gain familiarity with what is really a complex web of alternative realities from a recognizable frame of reference. But why, then, not refer to a single *fabula*, as we did in *The Matrix*, or in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*? The reason is that the lengthy presentation of *competing realities of equal existential status*, operating through cause and effect within distinct spatio-temporal frames, necessitates that such events constitute separate *fabulas*, since failure to do so would result in paradoxes. Further, I have suggested that a *fabula* may accommodate episodes generally of shorter length and with a different ontology without necessarily requiring a stable and coherent spatio-temporal frame – that is, they have no separate existence in a concrete sense.

We may view Joel's mental state, for example, as one that is characterised by numerous metaleptic transgressions between his subjective and objective reality, but would not posit these subjective states as existentially real. Unlike in *The Matrix*, where a character's subjective experience of the simulated world occurs within a logical and consistent spatio-temporal framework that effectively mimics objective reality²⁰, Joel's subjectivity exists as a distorted catalogue of inner event fragments that cannot be mapped against their own frame – an essential part of constructing a

²⁰ It is important to emphasise, however, that a *fabula* need not be an account of the actual world or place. Fairytales, after all, relate stories about worlds that do not exist in an objective sense. Essentially, however, these worlds are allowable because they obey their own *consistent* temporal and spatial rules, even if such rules are exotic. On this account, Alice's prolonged dream in *Alice in Wonderland* constitutes the *fabula* while the shorter waking states which bookend it, constitute the objective strands.

coherent and independent fabula in multiform film. *Next* presents two narrative streams of roughly similar length (F1 and F2) that satisfy the requirements of coherence and consistency demanded by ‘objective’ reality. Indeed, were it not for the syuzhet’s heralded demotion of fabula 2 to a subset of fabula 1 through the device of futures-viewing at X8, *Next* would constitute an *open* multiform narrative along the lines of *Donnie Darko*. As it stands, the film is a special case of the closed multiform category, in that it presents us with two fabulas in a hierarchy that allows us to experience the second fabula as if it were a lengthy flash-forward, albeit a flash-forward of an alternate reality.

Having talked around the topic of temporal frames, it is time to stipulate more precisely what I mean by this. This is important in establishing the referential meaning-making credentials of this category. For reasons presented earlier, this study refers to F1 and F2 as fabulas, and f1 - f24 as fabulets. This in no way diminishes the distinct existential status of each; it merely acknowledges the primacy of fabulas 1 and 2, due to length, significance, and complexity. In our first stab at constructing a schematic representation of multiform narrative containing more than one fabula, we did not pay much attention to the temporal interrelationships between the fabulas, apart from indicating that they were distinct and, somehow, out of sync with each other. This was partly because there were many more accessible seams to mine, which did not require the immediate erection of complex infrastructure. But a fuller analysis of story structure implies an understanding of narrative partly as a perceptual activity which organises ‘spatial and temporal data into a cause-effect chain of events’ (Branigan 1992, p. 3). Indeed, a coherent spatio-temporal framework is mandatory if one is to extract any meaning from any activity at all. Further, the test

for any model that aspires to the level of theory is that its use extends beyond merely providing an accessible analogy of difficult concepts. Such a model should also be able to make predictions and offer explanations based on its formalism. It should also continue to evolve with each example until it reaches a level of sophistication that underwrites its stability. As we dig deeper, we recognise that we have not said enough about that most complex of relations – time. In seeking to explore the temporal relationships between separate fabulas more closely, we discover that it is not enough merely to draw them as bifurcated lines following some general direction, as we did in *Donnie Darko*, without defining the axes against which their values are to be read. To illustrate how this works, let us once again lay out the narrative segments in diagrammatical form.

Figure 6 shows the most prominent fabula and strand groupings in *Next*. As before, I have chosen an indicative rather than an exhaustive set of examples to avoid unnecessary clutter at no extra cost to our investigations. Occasions when Cris indicates through words or gestures that he has seen, or is seeing, the future have been left out. Instead, I have plotted only those events that are played out palpably by the syuzhet. The diagram (Fig. 6) indicates the point in which the fabula (F1) bifurcates, generating a second major fabula (F2) at X8, although, of course, the schema also depicts the generation of fabulets that spring from both fabulas. We notice right away, a variation in the way that the bifurcated arms have been laid out as compared to *Donnie Darko*. Firstly, they are orientated at right angles to each other. Secondly, each first-order bifurcation results in one of the arms lying consistently along t_1 , and as such, constitutes a continuation of fabula 1 (indicated by the prefix F1). The same holds true for F2, which has one arm running along t_2 and

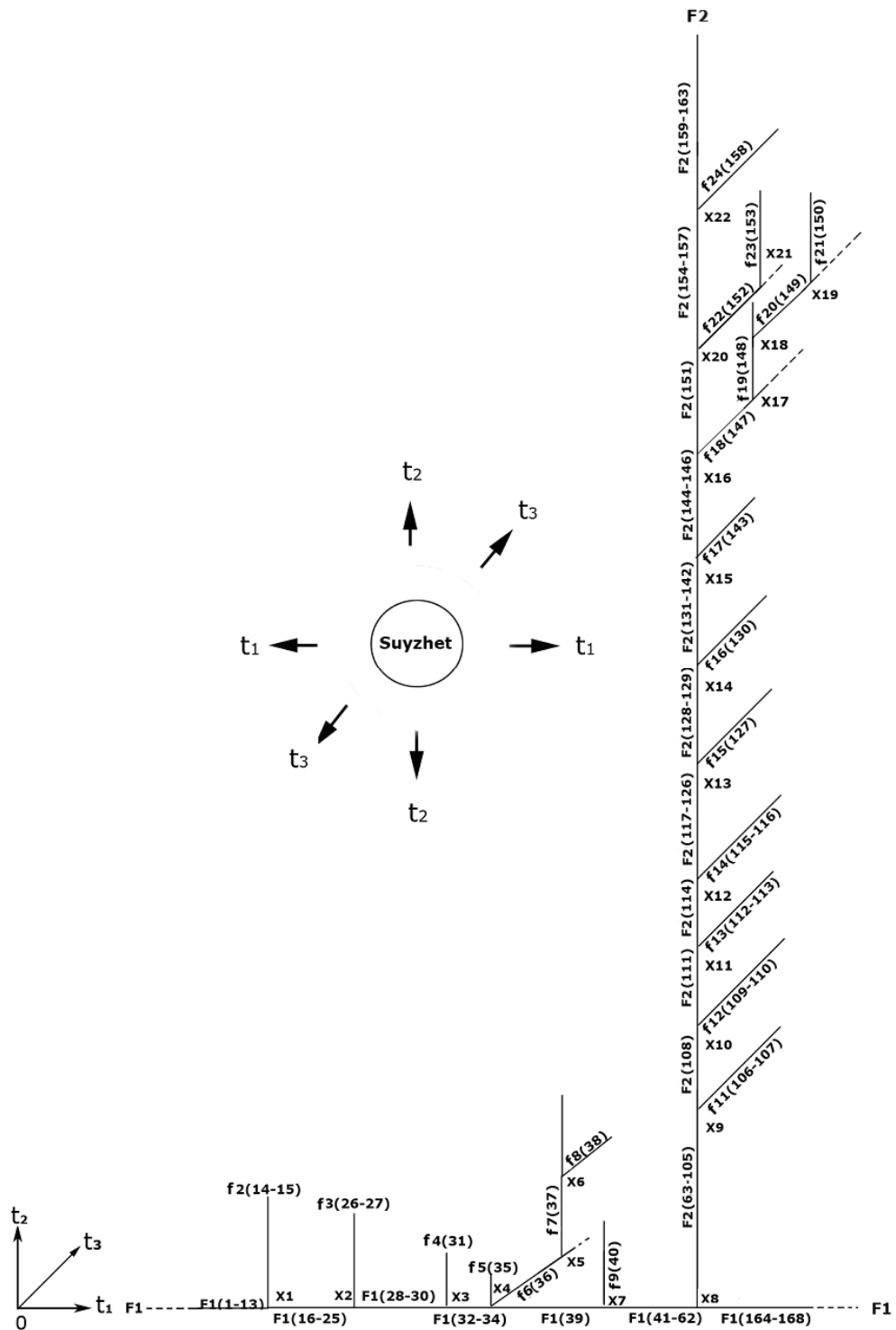
the other along the t_3 axis (f6, f7-f8; f17, f18, f19-f20; f21-f22). Lastly, I suggest that the fabulas exist in a hierarchy: F1 occupies the top spot while those with higher numbers operate below it. My justification is that these offshoots tend to be short-lived, less complex and bifurcate from the stream *as a direct consequence* of events occurring in F1 and F2.

While I do not propose that length and complexity on their own are necessary conditions for defining a fabula, I do suggest that one might view these factors as contributing to preferential differentiation. Preferential fabulas are an important point of difference between *Next* and *Donnie Darko*, since the latter did little to indicate priority among its fabulas. *Next*, however, clearly does so by presenting fabulets 2-24 as sideshows – products of futures-viewing rendered as *risks* to be avoided by the protagonist. This is a clear illustration of the sort of process employed by Hollywood to naturalize aberrant material: parade the unfamiliar in the company of the familiar, employ a redundant use of audio-visual markers, and hope that the audience gets it. Despite my tone, I do not underestimate the importance of narrative coherence. Earlier, I hinted that resonance might assist in this. This has proven to be the case. Through futures-viewing (a variation of resonance), as well as by making all other existentially distinct strands *contingent* upon the actions of the protagonist operating within it – albeit, understood retrospectively²¹, the syuzhet is able to present a preferred fabula that allows an audience to experience all other fragments as ruminations on the original.

²¹ I might mention here that this is not quite the way that canonical film handles its own narrative strands. A subplot, for example, often functions at a secondary level as a foil to the main plot, which usually revolves around a single protagonist. Subplots too have their own beginning, middle, and end, and are variously resolved at the climax of the third act (Seeger 1994, pp. 39-59). This final act provides a definitive answer to the major question posed by the film's inciting incident; namely, will the hero succeed or fail in his chosen quest? *Next* provides no such answer. Nor can subplots generally be regarded as being ontologically distinct from the main plot. It is precisely the existence of competing spatio-temporal frames made cogent through viable theoretical ruminations that supports the notion of multiple fabulas in *Next*.

The schema in Figure 6 thus arranges the various fabulas (F) and fabulets (f) according to their differing temporalities. In *Next*, the syuzhet is communicative, providing a high level of redundancy in its use of audio-visual markers heralding existential transgressions, apart from one major diffused and suppressed gap at X8. F1 depicts events occurring along t_1 in our diagram, namely, F1(1-13) + F1(16-25) + F1(28-30) + F1(32-34) + F1(39) + F1(41-62) + F1(164-168). Bifurcation at X8, (indicated by the now familiar marker of the observer effect rendered as the close-up of an eye), results in F2; namely, F2(63-105) + F2(108) + F2(108) + F2(111) + F2(117-126) + F2(128-129) + F2(131-142) + F2(144-146) + F2(151) + F2(154-157) + F2(159-163). But this fabula also needs to define its orientation relative to a time axis. This cannot be along the same axis (t_1) as F1, since the latter denotes a distinct reality. Let us then draw a second axis at t_2 , running from top to bottom on our graph and a third, t_3 , extending in depth, perpendicular to the screen. Plotting fabulas against such a grid has certain advantages such as providing a basis for futures-viewing. When the Cris of fabula F1 views future events (events occurring in separate timelines), for example, he does so without experiencing a time lapse. He is able to prevent the shooting at the Casino precisely because the time it took for him to see it play out in the future was instantaneously rendered in his present. The only way to allow for this on our diagram is to draw F2 along the t_2 axis, that is, perpendicular to F1, since drawing it diagonally would indicate time passing along t_1 . It follows that events occurring along the t_2 axis will appear as intersecting points without extension along t_1 . In other words, they would present their contents in a superimposed or instantaneous mode as seen by the prescient observer at F1. The

same is true for events occurring along t_3 .²² Each strand is extended in a single time dimension and presents a ‘frozen’ superimposition of values at the intersection with a perpendicularly oriented neighbour.



²² I indicated in the *Donnie Darko* case study that the formalism of bifurcation demands the generation of at least two fabulas at each decision point. For the sake of brevity, however, I have chosen not to detail trivial pathways such as Fig.6: 2 – 24, representing them instead by a broken line.

Fig.6

Extending this further, events occurring along an extended fabulet cluster (e.g. f18-f21) are communicated down the pipeline through the same mechanism. In this way, the prescient observer at F2(144-146) has access to an event such as f21, via f20, f19, and f18, since, as the diagram shows, all futures are omnipresent at intersections along the pipeline. To sum up, information exchange between fabulas and fabulets that lie at right angles to each other may occur at points of intersection but will have to do so instantaneously. Of course, although the syuzhet has no real way of showing frozen time in its presentation of other futures, it *can* point to its operation by returning to a sequence at the same point at which it left it. This formal aspect of our model offers an explanation of how resonance, or its stronger variation, *futures-viewing*, might be understood at the structural, if not dramatic level.

5.5.5 Extracting the Fabulas from the Syuzhet

Let us now see whether, in the light of our recent progress, we have made any headway in answering the sorts of questions we posed in *Donnie Darko*:

A. Who is the protagonist?

Cris Johnson.

B. Who is/are the antagonist(s)?

The Terrorists.

C. What is the main conflict?

Social vs. Personal Responsibility. Cris must pick the right future in order to save Liz and the world.

D. What is the main plot?

Chris must win the love of Liz and preserve their future together by staying one jump ahead of destruction.

E. What are some of the most important subplots?

The terrorists want to blow up Los Angeles. Cris must learn to trust Callie.

So far, so good. But what of the next set of questions?

F. What is the inciting incident?

G. What is the first turning point leading to the end of act one?

H. What is the second turning point leading to the end of act two?

I. What is the mid-point?

J. How does the story end?

We can certainly answer the last question (J) by saying that the ending remains open-ended. Cris will try once again to save Liz and Los Angeles by working with Callie. We can also nominate the inciting incident (F) to be the moment when Callie informs Cris of the terrorists' plot to blow up Los Angeles (Appendix 5: 28). Its link to the obligatory scene would then be the moment in which the lead terrorist is defeated in the current version of the story, or some future confrontation not presented by the syuzhet. But questions G, H, and I must remain unanswered. Although we have established a *hierarchy* of fabulas at the prompting of the syuzhet, and suggested that we treat the second fabula as a lengthy flashback, this still does not allow us to direct the remaining questions to a single primary fabula (F1) in the canonical sense. Again, because some of the questions point to large dramatic units that traditionally gain their meaning through structural interrelations across a single spatio-temporal frame,

applying them to structures and to characters across frames of competing existential status, despite the syzhet's preferences, would make nonsense of referential meaning. Instead of three acts, then, I suggest a two act structure for *Next*, based on the major bifurcation at X8 and the generation of two major fabulas; namely, act I (1–62) + (164+168) and act II (63-163). In the last chapter, I shall present an indicative schema for special case multiform narratives based on this idea. For the moment, however, I merely list some of the most important characteristics of *Next*.

General Characteristics of Closed Multiform Narrative, per *Next*

1. Comprises at least two fabulas in a hierarchy. This allows for a single story in which the second fabula may be experienced as a function of the first – for example, as a flash-forward. In terms of the drama, this encourages additional perspectives on the protagonist and the original premise.
2. A balance of subjectivity and objectivity in depicting character consciousness.
3. After an uncommunicative start containing a diffused and suppressed gap, the syuzhet is strongly communicative, supported by continuity editing and a redundant use of audio-visual markers.
4. May not fit a traditional three act structure.
5. Exhibits a low level of intertextuality, but cannot be reduced to a single genre.

5.6 A Brief Summary of Open and Closed Multiform Narrative

Having concluded our last case study of multiform film, let us sum up the essential differences between the *open* and *closed* multiform categories. The closed category offers an ending whose ontological status is not in doubt at the level of the fabula. Additionally, ontological transgressions are clearly signalled in the syuzhet by technical devices. They are also adequately *explained* by exposition. The open multiform category, by contrast, offers no such certainties. The ontological status and sequence of events presented by the syuzhet are ambiguous, made even more so by a lack of cues and explicatory devices. The syuzhet makes no attempt to resolve paradoxes and inconsistencies in the spatio-temporal frame. This necessitates that audiences draw on extraneous material, heuristics and theories in order to establish referential and explicit meaning. This relentless multifaceted activity typical of multiform film is supported by our current fascination with the personal computer as a communications channel, as a source of knowledge, and as a ubiquitous problem-solving tool. Yet, as should be clear from even this brief survey of contemporary cinema, multiform narrative cannot be the sole expression of our current social, scientific, and cultural tendencies. In seeking a fuller understanding, therefore, I now turn to a different approach simultaneously adopted by Hollywood in its attempt to deal with the very same forces that shape multiform film, namely, *multistrand narrative*.

CHAPTER 6: MULTISTRAND NARRATIVE

6.1 Towards a Definition

While cognisant of polluting the field with more jargon, I have chosen the term *multistrand* to describe the second category of films, rather than a variety of existing labels such as *ensemble* (Murphy 2007, p. 123), *thread structure* (Murphy 2007, p. 202), *network* (Bordwell 2006, p. 99), *multiple plot* (Egan 1997, p. 1), *hyperlink* (Booker 2007, p. 12), *multiple narrative* (Hassler-Forest, p. 1), *miniplot*, *antiplot* (McKee 1997, p. 47), and multi-protagonist (Ascona), partly because I regard these terms as embodying inflections and connotations that are misleading, and partly because I believe it is possible to subsume many of their overlapping characteristics under a single appellation. *Ensemble*, for example, is often associated with a grouping of movie stars or character actors showcasing their talents through multiple but linear story lines (Bordwell 2006, p. 95), and differs from *thread structure* in that the latter refers to interpenetrating stories whose *syuzhet* invites shifts in time frame and character viewpoint (Murphy 2007, p. 202). *Network* and *hyper-link narratives*, on the other hand, respectively imply an intimate link between characters that may either be too strong, or not strong enough, or fail to address films that lack a central plot, such as Robert Altman's *Shortcuts* (1993)²³. *Multiple narratives*, on the other hand, suggests a deeper divide than may actually exist, while *miniplot* and *antiplot* are deemed enfeebled and derivative structures.²⁴ *Multi-protagonist* films, which Ascona defines as utilising 'a multiplicity of characters of similar narrative

²³ J.J. Murphy cites *Shortcuts* as falling outside John Egan's *multiple plot* category since it is comprised of a series of looser interweaving plots (2007, p. 70).

²⁴ J.J. Murphy points out that McKee regards *miniplot* and *antiplot* as lesser structures that are derived from *archplot* (canonical) narrative structure (Murphy 2007, p. 14).

relevance' (p. 2) is perhaps closest to my explication of multistrand narrative. Yet, by including the name 'protagonist' in the definition of a category one perhaps gives too much prominence to a term that is being used in a different way to what was originally intended (since the term typically refers to a single central character in a story). Furthermore, existing labels are sometimes used as subcategories of each other. J.J. Murphy, in discussing the film *Me and You and Everyone We Know* (2005), for example, refers to 'network-narrative' or 'web of life plot', as being 'terms that have been applied to the structure of ensemble film' (2007, p. 120). By contrast, *multistrand* carries no such associations: broadly inclusive yet coherent, it implies a stronger sense of unity within a single structure, than say, *multiple* narratives, while allowing for the sorts of linear and non-linear structural variations in the syuzhet usually associated with *ensemble* and *thread structure* respectively. The term *multistrand*, then, preserves the idea of a single, intricate, complex, but purposeful pattern of links, which, despite ostensible appearances of looseness, is, after all, the result of meticulous and purposeful planning on the part of the writer. Before proceeding with our first case study in this category, then, let us broadly define multistrand narrative by relating it to our existing definitions of canonical and multiform storytelling.

I have described the traditional screenplay as a unified structure containing a linear causally linked chain of events (unfolding within a coherent spatio-temporal frame), intimately clustered around a single goal-orientated protagonist²⁵ who other

²⁵ The Protagonist, or, Hero is the crucial narrative component from which other elements take their lead. In a strong sense, what happens to the Protagonist *is* the story. On this account, multiple protagonists operating in multistrand film, tell their own stories, albeit under a unifying thematic and moral framework of the sort that we shall be discussing later. Several manual writers and researchers have grappled with the problem of multiple protagonists but have not, in my view, done so from the perspective of a changed screenwriting paradigm. Murphy, for example, refers to various sorts of multiple protagonists operating in non-canonical films as problematic, ambivalent, passive, or shifting protagonists (2007, pp. 25-83), but his

characters support or oppose (Bordwell, Field, Seger, et al). While *closed multiform* narrative typically retains the use of the single goal-driven protagonist, and an antagonist who opposes him, as well as canonical conventions such as subplots which support the main plot, and, additionally, provides a liberal sprinkling of audio-visual cues meant to guide audience comprehension, it differs essentially from *canonical narrative* in that, despite generating a single fabula, it nonetheless posits the existence of alternative realities which it presents as *separate ontological strands* (*The Matrix*). *Open* multiform narrative, by contrast, offers multiple realities that result in paradoxes that are virtually impossible to resolve within a single coherent fabula. Additionally, such narratives utilise an uncommunicative and gap-filled *syuzhet*, which dispenses with formal audio-visual cues that ordinarily announce ontological or existential transgressions in the diegesis. This requires that referential or denotative coherence is established as a first step, prior to exploring the implicit and explicit meaning of the work. *Multistrand*, on the other hand, describes a narrative category that contains more than one causal chain of events and by implication, multiple protagonists and antagonists, some of whom bear little, if any, direct relationship to each other. Unlike multiform narrative, which often poses philosophical questions about identity and existence from an *ontologically plural* perspective, however, multistrand cinema tends to examine social and moral issues from a human angle more typical of the Drama genre in canonical cinema.

definitions derive their meaning through too narrow a comparison to traditional character types without also addressing character formation as a function of a narrative's spatio-temporal framework(s). McKee, on the other hand, sets restrictions in allowing for the existence of what he calls 'Plural Protagonists' in that such characters *must* share the same desire and *must* mutually suffer or benefit from such a desire (1997, p. 136). McKee also allows for 'Multiprotagonists' who may indeed pursue different goals, but offers few insights beyond this assertion (pp. 136-137). My own use of 'multiple protagonists' (with a small 'p' as opposed to the capital 'P'), is closest to McKee's 'multiprotagonists', in that it allows for several protagonists to operate within their own strands, but additionally indicates that such protagonists are governed by a single fabula constructed by an overarching framework of themes, symbols and techniques. Where I part company with McKee is in his claim that such structures (miniplot and antiplot) are essentially derivative, and by implication, in some way inferior to the canonical structure (pp. 61-66).

In short, multistrand cinema differs *essentially* from multiform cinema in that the narrative it relates unfolds within a normal world, by which I mean a world devoid of existential or ontological ambiguity. It differs further from the canonical mode, in that multistrand narrative contains more than one chain of events, which, in the absence of causal relations between the chains, results in distinct strands being held together by common themes, symbols, and moral imperatives²⁶. Murphy puts it in this way:

In such a structure, it is often difficult to isolate a main protagonist because the various characters are frequently accorded equal weight and screen time, and they function as protagonists in their own separate lines of action. The various lines of action proceed in parallel directions, which then intersect and crisscross – force each other through overt thematic links. (2007, p. 123)

The difficulty with multistrand cinema is the number of variations and exceptions that we need to take into account to describe it. Dan Hassler-Forest, for example, describes various subcategories of what he terms ‘multiple narrative structures’ (2008, p. 1):

1. *Separated multiple narratives* such as *Tales from the Crypt* (1972), are best seen as short story collections held together by a bookend narration technique.
2. *Integrated double narratives* are structures in which two or more stories exist aside by side without exerting any great influence or combining into one

²⁶ One consequence of attempting to shed light on complex multiform narratives is the need to establish referential, rather than explicit, implicit, or symptomatic meaning. This is because of a general difficulty in accessing the more abstract levels of a narrative without first laying down a coherent fabula. For much the same reason, I retain a strong interest in the structural aspects of multistrand forms, despite their stable existential and ontological status. Complex multistrand narratives such as *Babel*, for example, may yield single and coherent fabulas, but not before extensive efforts are undertaken to unravel the discombobulation of an uncommunicative syuzhet – an effort best approached, in the first instance, through establishing its referential meaning.

narrative (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Short Cuts*). Hassler-Forest identifies parallelism leading to thematic unity rather than a single plot, as the key concept for unifying for all forms of integrated narrative cinema.

3. *Semi-multiple narratives* are stories that contain traits from both traditional and multiple narratives without sharing truly defining features. Examples of these are heist (*The Untouchables*) and the ensemble movies (*Reservoir Dogs*).
4. *Integrated Double Narratives*. Hassler-Forest sees this category as having two separate causal chains of events inter-cut within one film without any of the chains exerting a strong influence upon each other. He identifies parallel editing as the primary means of creating meaning between these chains.
5. *Complex multiple narratives* are narratives with more than four story lines. Although they are not theoretically different from other forms of integrated multiple narratives, the complexity arising from the preponderance of story lines requires that parameters such as time and place be clearly defined, often acting as common areas which unify multiple storylines – such as the political rally in *Nashville*, or, the earthquake in *Short Cuts*.

These sub-categories provide us with a useful entry point into the investigation of multistrand narrative, but the term 'multiple narrative' is problematic, insofar as it implies the presence of more than one fabula. Hassler-Forest muddies the waters by declaring, 'on one level, separated and integrated multiple narrative films are the same: they have more than one causal chain of events that exist alongside each other and that encourage the viewer to construct more than one fabula. On another level, however, in the case of integrated multiple narratives... cues are included within the

film's structure that encourage the viewer to construct meaning from thematic and/or formal parallels between multiple narratives' (p. 6). Apart from not making clear just what these 'levels' are, Hassler-Forest seems to want to have his cake and eat it by using words such as 'integrated' or 'separated' to describe sub-categories of narrative, since the word 'multiple' applied to 'narrative' already commits to separation.

By contrast, this thesis argues that any causally distinct narrative lines that are not mutually exclusive due to logical inconsistencies do indeed constitute a *single narrative with multiple strands*, providing that such strands are unified, at the very least, by a *common thematic, philosophical, and moral spine*, and *endorsed by the syuzhet through technical and stylistic cues*. In short, in the absence of a single causal chain to order events, one may view the thematic and moral spine as being the functioning fabula, since it manages the relationship between the various narrative strands according to a coherent logic²⁷. I shall, therefore, in this sense, be substituting Hassler-Forest's term *multiple narrative* with *multistrand narrative*, which I will regard as a general category. Again, multistrand narrative is distinguished from canonical narrative in that the former is comprised of strands that are, at least in part, united by forces operating at a meta-level rather than causal ones operating at the level of the diegesis. This is not to say, however, that multistrand narrative necessarily and entirely eschews linear causality between strands, as our study of *Syriana* and *Babel* will clearly show. By attending to such nuances, in fact, I will be able to distinguish between variations within this parent category by tracking

²⁷ As noted in Chapter 2, this is in keeping with a postmodern shift in fabula construction which increasingly draws on influences and material *beyond* the immediate confines of the syuzhet, which in many cases, is overwritten by a rampant fabula, despite cognitive tendencies to regard the initial presentation order as meaningful.

the number of strands and appending terms such as ‘simple’ – a term I borrow here from Murphy’s suggestion that multiple-plot films containing two or three main characters may be labelled as ‘simple’ in terms of strand complexity (2007, p. 124) – to ‘multistrand narrative’ to indicate narratives comprising three or fewer protagonists, and ‘complex’, to acknowledge a narrative comprised of four or more strands. Of course, the threshold number of character strands is not set in stone: Bordwell seems to set the number for a narrative moving from the simple to the complex at three (2006, p. 96), while Murphy implies that this number may well be four (2007, p. 124). In any case, although the number of strands is not the only important differential between the sub-categories (use of a common location, shared objects, and time frames are other distinguishing traits), it does provide an easily identifiable marker for organising the sub-categories.

6.2 Refining the ‘Strand’ in Multistrand

In relation to *Donnie Darko*, I defined a strand as a shorter narrative episode or episodes presented by the syuzhet within the context of the overall narrative. I suggested that in multiform film, and at the level of the fabula, such strands may give rise to fabulets – shorter and largely unexplored existential alternatives to the major story. This distinction is fundamental to the multiform category and allows one to differentiate between individual strands based on ontology. These sorts of distinctions, however, do not typically arise in multistrand narrative since the story unfolds within a single ontological frame. It is therefore important to offer additional support for the term, since its use in this thesis continues to be ubiquitous.

Traditionally, one way to distinguish between narrative lines in canonical film – say,

those of the plot and subplot – is to associate one (the plot) with the chief character – the protagonist – and the other (the subplot) with supporting characters who serve to highlight and underpin the protagonist’s drive toward achieving his goal. As we saw in the first case study, these supporting characters perform specific functions within the narrative: side-kick, love interest, mentor, antagonist, and so on, all dedicated to supporting (or opposing) the protagonist. On this account, then, a strand is a series of events relating to a character.

Taking this further, we can say that a major strand is one involving the protagonist, while minor strands involve minor characters. But multistrand film typically presents a number of characters of equal weight that function as protagonists within their own stories with their own supporting cast, although they may share scenes by taking part in each other’s stories (subplots). Further, these criss-crossing protagonists are more fully developed than traditional subplot characters, since their presence in distinct strands grants them ample opportunity for development. Confusion might arise, however, when several protagonists (within their own stories), interact directly with each other and seek to promote individual goals in *shared scenes*. In whose strand does one place this interaction, in such a case? The answer may lie in identifying the protagonist from whose point-of-view the audience experiences the series of scenes or episodes – whose goals and desires drive the narrative forward – and allocating these scene(s) or episode(s) to a strand associated with that character. On this view, chunks of narrative that are funnelled through a specific protagonist’s emotional and practical perspective constitute that protagonist’s scene.

Although there are enough common features to justify the existence of a general multistrand category, some films show sufficient variation to warrant a refinement of the category based on such factors as the number of protagonists, the reliance on casual as opposed to transcendental factors, and the amount of discombobulation of syuzhet sequencing. *Crash*, for example, does not offer a common plot in the traditional sense. Instead, it opts to associate the narrative strands through coincidence and symbolism, as well as through thematic and moral contrasts and parallels. *Crimes and Misdemeanors* likewise develops the relationship between two major strands through a common network of themes, morals, philosophy, and religion, but strengthens cohesiveness through bonds of family, friendship, or mutual acquaintance, finally having its two protagonists meet in a common location. *Syriana*, in addition to the unity afforded by its transcendental spine, provides a common plot that utilises a discernible causality flowing from the palpable need for oil. Importantly, the presence of multiple protagonists, who may appear in each other's strands as supporting characters such as a love interest or a sidekick (Hauge, Vogler, Seger, et al) at the level of subplot, does not negate the notion of a single overarching fabula spun from a mixture of causal and transcendental factors. I shall have more to say on this subject later. For the moment, I merely seek to emphasise the flexible nature of multistrand structures and their various components.

6.3 Case study # 6: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*

Crimes and Misdemeanors is generally regarded as one of Woody Allen's best films. Roger Ebert (2005, p. 2) ranks it on a par with *Annie Hall* (1976), *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1987), and *Match Point* (2005). The film explores the moral, social,

philosophical, and practical dilemmas of its two main characters who seek to come to terms with the consequences of the choices they make. At a more general level, Ebert suggests that the film may be described as Allen's complaint against God for turning a blind eye on evil. Initially, Ebert saw the film as 'a thriller about the dark nights of the soul' (1989, p. 1). But in a later review, he downplays the 'thriller' element. Certainly, the film lacks the essential element of visceral suspense associated with the thriller genre. Ebert's later suggestion that the relationship between the two plotlines have a long established precedent is more in line with the view of this thesis: 'The movie inter-cuts this tragic story with a comedy, [both] also about adultery. The technique is Shakespearean: The crimes of kings are mirrored for comic effect in the foibles of the lower orders' (2005, p. 2). The effect is darkly ironic, presenting a view of the world as a place in which 'the evil are rewarded, the blameless are punished, and the rabbi goes blind' (2005, p. 3).

This view of the film as a Drama, or, more precisely, as a tragicomedy, seems the more accurate description. The two strands eventually come together in the epilogue, in which Judah and Clifford meet at Ben's daughter's wedding reception – Clifford finally to be rejected face-to-face by his would-be lover, Halley and Judah to indulge in a mock confession to Clifford, which affirms that wealth and privilege may indeed shield one from one's own conscience as much as from being arrested for murder by the police. Rita Kempley of the *Washington Post* also draws attention to the duality of the film by describing it as comprising a 'duplex structure' consisting of two plotlines, a 'herniated melodrama with Martin Landau and an amusing love couplet with Allen – [which] intersect in a tenuous kingship. There is also a cinematic glue – old movie scenes that presage developments in 'Crimes' – that binds the monstrous

sins of a crumbling community pillar [Judah] with the follies of a fool in love [Clifford]' (Kempley 1989, p. 1). Further binding the strands together are characters that are related to Judah and Clifford through friendship or family ties: Lester is Ben and Wendy's brother, Wendy is Clifford's wife, while Ben is Judah's patient and has known him since their daughters were children. Bordwell (2006, p. 95) points out that the relationship between the two strands is thematic, rather than causal, and exhibits an 'hourglass symmetry' with one strand being comedic while the other is serious. Indeed, the film utilizes a mixture of elements reminiscent of Elizabethan and Jacobean theater which deems the tragic as an appropriate way of portraying characters of high social standing, while the comedic is seen as an apt manner of depicting persons of a lower social order (Abrams 1971, p. 176). Before examining the strategies suggested by the above comments more closely, we need to list the events as presented by the syuzhet.

6.3.1 Mapping the Strands

The schemas below (Figures 7a to 7g), lay out the two strands in terms of sequence, flashback, and overlap. Broken up into sections for reasons of legibility, they are intended to provide an overview of the general flow at a glance. Hassler-Forest regards *Crimes and Misdemeanors* as an 'integrated double narrative' since it contains 'two separate causal chains of events that are inter-cut in one picture without exerting any notable influence over each other. Given that the narratives are not connected causally, the viewer is encouraged to draw thematic parallels and contrasts' (p. 11).

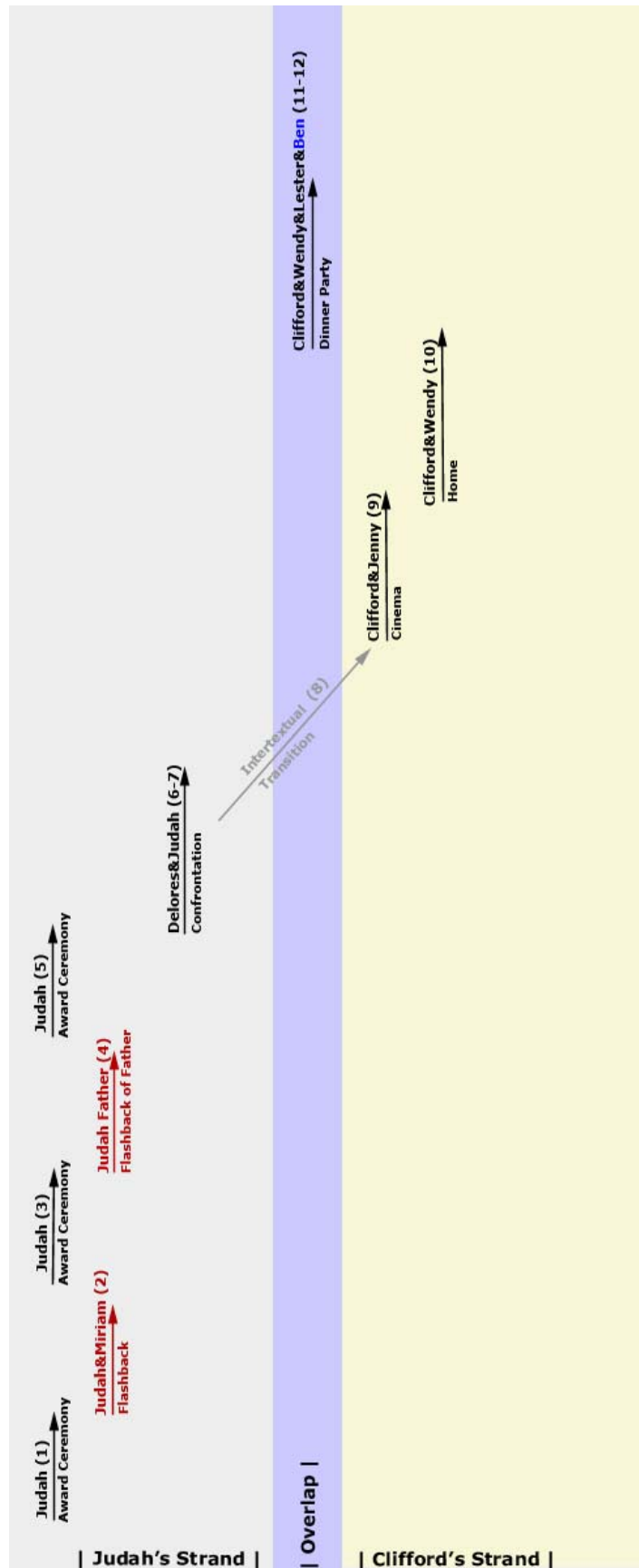


Fig.7a

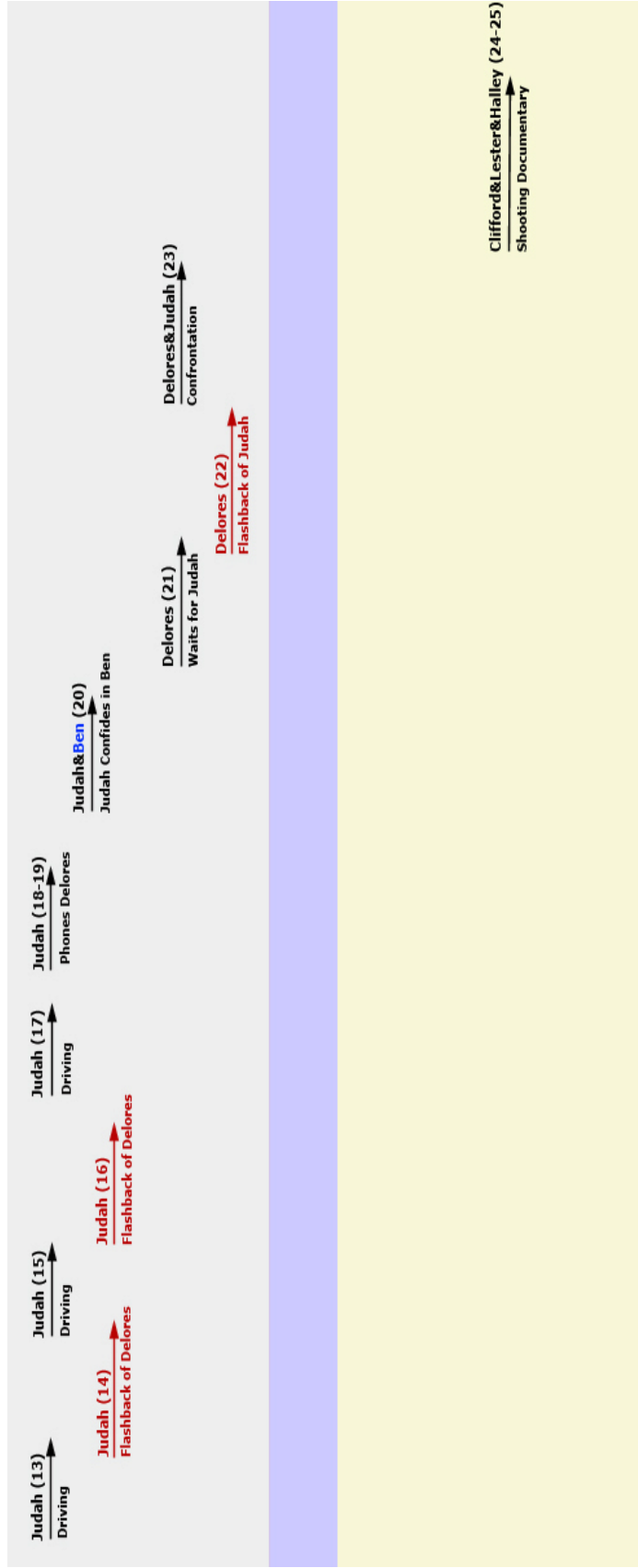


Fig.7b

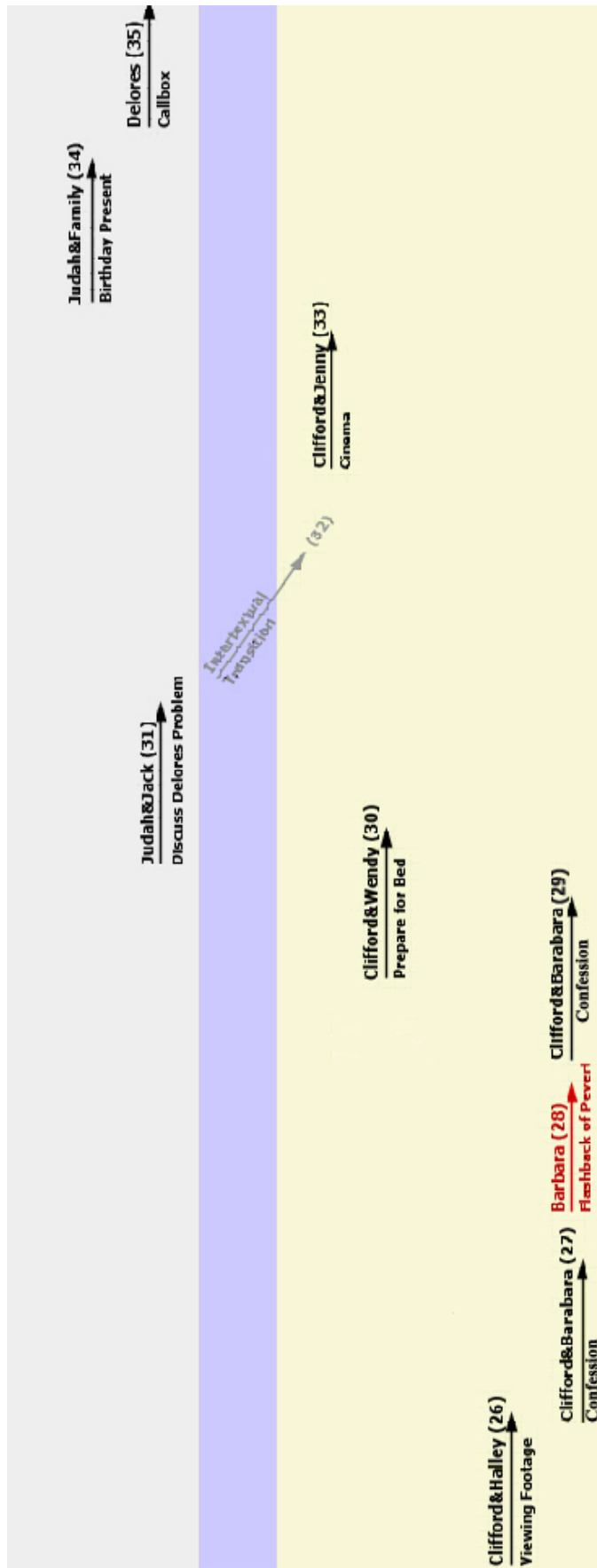


Fig.7c

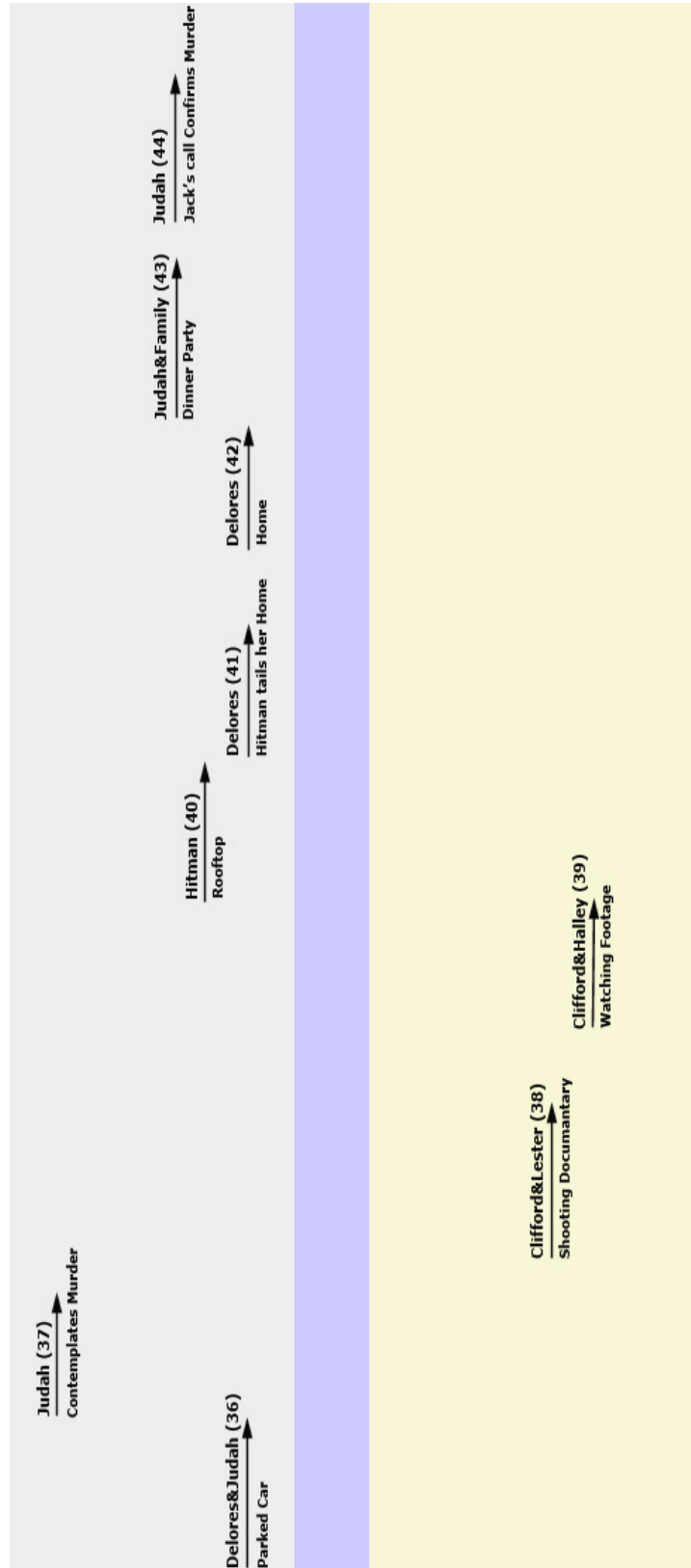


Fig.7d

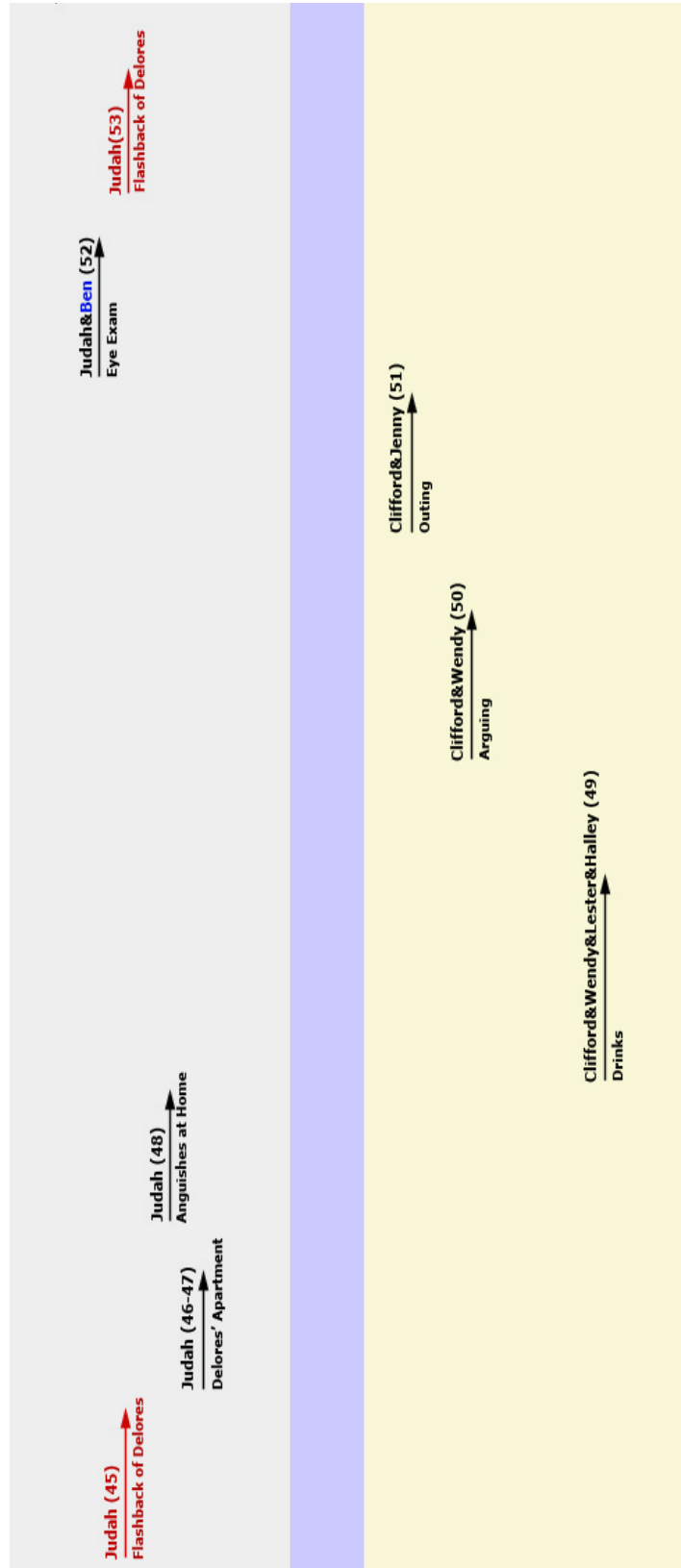


Fig.7e

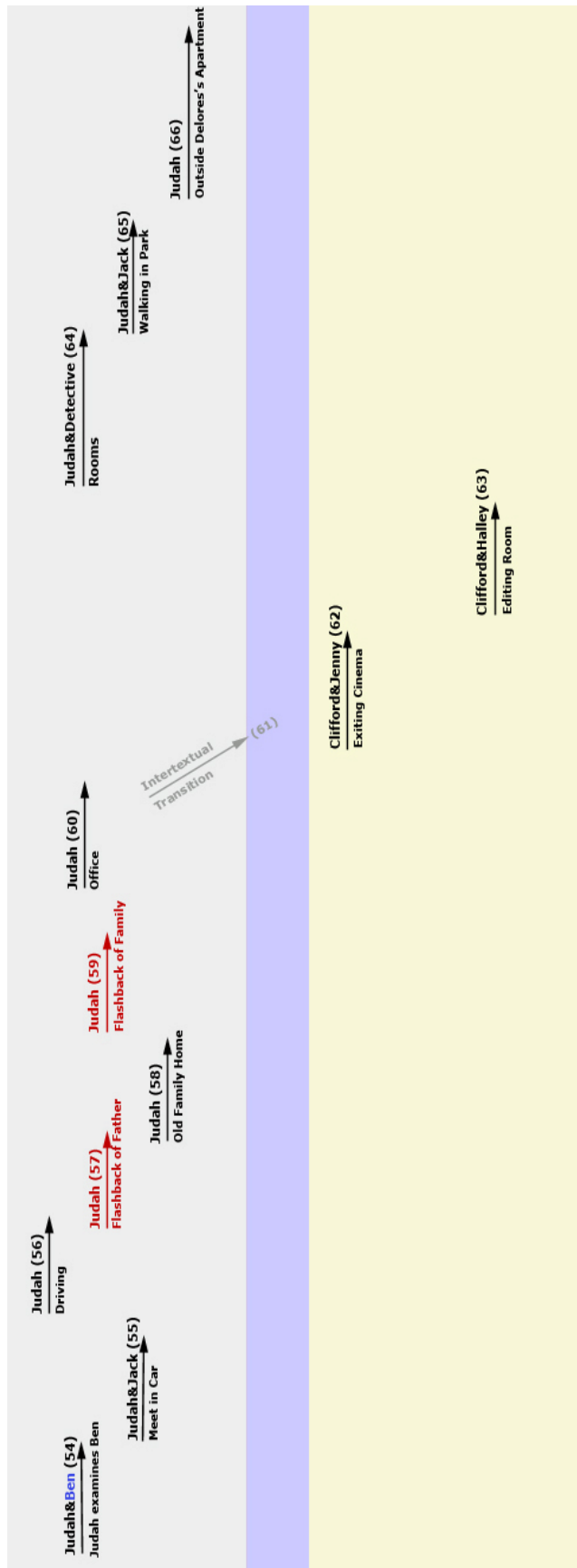


Fig.7f

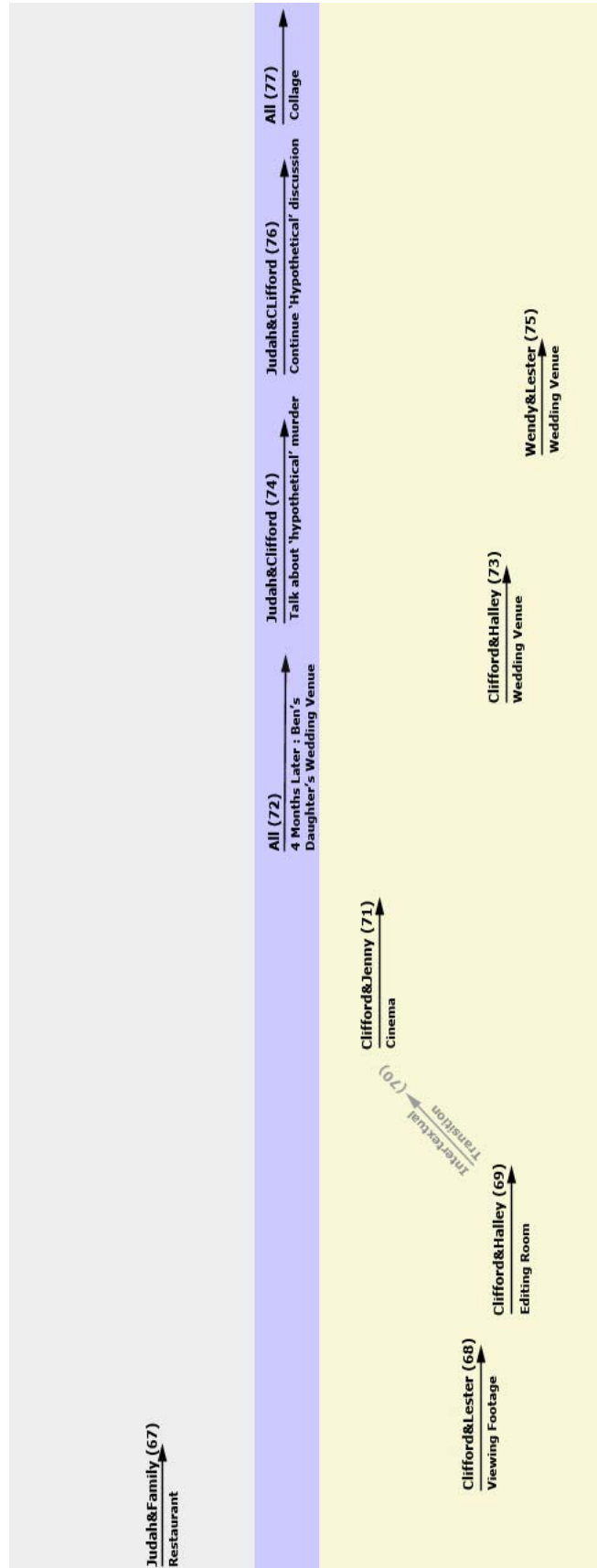


Fig.7g

This thesis mostly agrees with Hassler-Forest's analysis, except for his description of the film as an 'integrated double narrative'. It is my view that such an arrangement does indeed constitute a single narrative consisting of two major strands overseen by a fabula that orders narrative elements according to thematic, moral, and, on occasion, causal imperatives. The latter point is crucial: the strands are indeed connected, as the strand relations depicted in Figures 7a to 7g present them, not in the sense of one perpetually impacting upon the other in a causal way within the diegesis, but at a meta-level that can nevertheless explain why the syuzhet orders events and sequences in the way that it does.

Additionally, seen from the perspective of genre, one may regard the film as a tragicomedy, which variously explores how privilege and self-preservation triumph over love, morality, and God, as seen from differing and alternating perspectives. As has been shown in the previous case study, although this sort of appraisal is more a response to the question, *what is the film about*, rather than, *what is the story*, it nonetheless satisfies the notion of a fabula being the diegetic set that we reconstruct in our minds in order to grasp the logic and purpose inherent in the order and rendition of narrative events. It follows from my earlier definition of the distinction between complex and simple multistrand narratives, that if we regard a particular narrative as being the presentation of events and existents governed by a single and coherent framework, or fabula, then *Crimes and Misdemeanors* may be sub-categorised as a *simple* multistrand narrative, operating within the general multistrand category.

6.3.2 Cues to Formal Unity

As Hassler-Forest correctly points out, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* uses contrasts and parallels to cue audiences into seeking relations between the strands. In the first instance, the narrative comprises two strands of roughly equal length. Judah Rosenthal's strand tells of the events in which the successful ophthalmologist reluctantly decides to have his mistress, Dolores Paley, killed in order to prevent her exposing their affair and his financial misdemeanours to his family and the world. Judah initially experiences pangs of conscience, shown primarily through a series of flashbacks of himself with Dolores, or with his father (Appendix 6: 4, 14, 16, 45, 53, 57, & 59). By the end of the film, however, Judah has not only avoided being arrested by the police, but he has been able to lay his conscience to rest and resume his life guilt-free. This sombre strand is intercut with the more sardonic comic one pertaining to Clifford Stern, an unsuccessful documentary filmmaker whose wife, Wendy, has barred him from sleeping with her. While working on a documentary for Lester, Wendy's brother, an obnoxious but successful TV producer, Clifford falls for Halley Reed, who is also working on the shoot as a production assistant. Initially, she does not discourage Clifford's advances. Lester however, also shows an interest in Halley, winning her in the end.

Not only are the strands of roughly equal length, they also depict, at a thematic level, an indifferent universe, which allows privilege and success to reward and insulate one from the consequences of wrongdoing, while those who lack it, end up poor and alone. Furthermore, the use of a comic-line (Clifford has been betrayed by his would-be lover) which acts to offset a serious one (Judah has betrayed his devoted mistress),

and which is known in the industry as ‘comic relief’, is a further cue helping to create a sense of unity between the strands. Although the film may be regarded as a tragicomedy since, formally, the serious and comic strands reflect the social standing of its two major characters, typical of the form, the overall tone of the film leans towards the Drama genre proper, since even the comic strand shows Clifford’s wise and intellectual hero, Professor Levi, committing suicide, thus sombrely negating all that is positive and coherent in his philosophy. By ‘Drama’, I mean a broad body of films that focus on the serious presentation of realistic characters, settings, life situations, and stories, rather than on special effects, excessive action, or comedy (Dirks n.d, p. 2). McKee additionally identifies social, domestic, political, medical, psychological, and woman’s films as sub-genres operating within the general Drama category (*Story* 1997, p. 82).

An additional point of symmetry is Judah and Clifford’s mutual acquaintance of a common character, Ben (6: 11-12, 20, 52, & 54). The rabbi is Wendy’s brother, as well as Judah’s long time patient and friend, thus linking Judah to Clifford. Although the link is not causal, since it does not lead to the two strands interacting in a way that changes events within the diegesis, it nonetheless enhances the sense of a world peopled by common characters that might one day interact in a more significant way. A far more self-conscious link between the two strands occurs as a set of three inter-textual transitions: Judah and Dolores’ confrontation over their secret affair is reflected in a scene from a movie watched by Clifford and his niece, Jenny, at the local theatre (6: 8); Jack’s suggestion to Judah to have Dolores killed is enacted in a similar fashion in a scene from the movie, again attended by Clifford and Jenny (6: 32); Judah receives a message that a police detective is trying to get in touch with

him. This leads to a cut in which a singer in a movie (once more attended by Clifford and Jenny), sings about ‘murder’ (6: 60). In addition to moral and thematic imperatives, then, these formal devices cue the audience to seek links between the strands at the level of style and aesthetics.

Finally, and yet arguably most concretely, the two major characters who attended but did not encounter each other at the first celebration (6: 11-12), finally meet at Ben’s daughter’s wedding reception and exchange views about the sorts of moral, ethical, and philosophical dilemmas that we have identified as comprising the transcendental spine of the film (6: 74-76). This chance encounter highlights another aspect of multistrand film – that causality is often replaced by random events. This allows for much stronger sense of verisimilitude since it evokes a sense of serendipity and chanciness typical of our contemporary media-drenched experience. Beyond verisimilitude, of course, in talking about the unifying role of formal cues, we omitted to include an examination of the film’s symbolism. This is because, unlike *Crash*, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* does not reserve as crucial a role for symbolism to promote links between the separate strands. Certainly, there are numerous references to eyes as a symbol of moral and spiritual judgement. Judah’s father keeps reminding us that ‘God sees everything’, Judah himself is an ophthalmologist, while Ben who is going blind, has the clearest vision of what constitutes moral, spiritual, and practical insight. Yet the symbolism is mainly restricted to the Judah strand in terms of palpable utterance, although, in a weaker sense, a case can be made that its general connotations about the ability to foresee, avoid, or solve moral, social, and practical problems frames events in Clifford’s world as much as they do in Judah’s.

6.3.3 Macrostructure in Simple Multistrand Narrative

In the previous case study, I continued to ask the sorts of questions inherited from the manual writers whose primary concern is to explain the workings of the canonical screenplay. I suggested that some questions were indeed helpful in allowing us to explore the microstructures that exist between lines of action within multistrand narrative, while others, aimed specifically at events radiating from the actions and reactions of a single protagonist, were not. In seeking a way forward, I fell back to the general description which assumes that a film typically comprises three acts²⁸ which function to set up the diegesis, complicate it, and resolve it – in that order. By recognising earlier that the chief impulse driving multistrand narrative forward is not a causal interaction between a single protagonist in pursuit of a goal vitiated by an antagonistic world, but the contrasts and parallels that arise between strands at the thematic, philosophical, and moral levels, I was able to chunk events into acts. It is worth emphasizing along these lines that this thesis regards the adjustment and rewriting of canonical strategies and techniques as a necessary condition if they are to reflect postmodern shifts in our collective understanding of identity, causality, time, and distance – all essential concepts for fabula construction. Additionally, the adjustment may reflect a shift in the traditional requirement that narrative meaning should be generated by a single protagonist performing unique acts and underpinned by stable values, to one which is shaped by ontological and existential ambiguity.

²⁸ As noted in the analysis of *Avatar*, most manual writers divide a typical film into three acts. Field, in particular, sees act two, which is roughly twice the size of act one or three, as being balanced by a mid-point (Field 2006, pp. 41-60 & 192-209). Some researchers, like Kirstin Thompson and David Bordwell, however, break up the long second act into two separate acts, and therefore regard many films as comprising a four act structure (Bordwell 2006, pp. 35-38).

I continue to apply this strategy in simple multistrand narrative: act one (Set-up) introduces the main characters and their attitudes as highlighted by moral and thematic concerns, which are expressed through practical issues (Fig. 7a: 1-12); act two (Progressive Complications) dramatises the mounting moral, thematic, and practical issues as the stakes increase (Fig. 7b – Fig. 7f: 13-60); act three (Climax & Resolution) establishes whether or not lessons have been learnt and practical outcomes resolved by the major characters (Fig. 7f & Fig. 7g: 61-80). Such a structure begs the question of the location and function of a mid-point. Some academics, such as Kirstin Thompson, see the mid-point as just another turning point that, in effect, heralds a new act. On this basis, a screenplay could be said to ordinarily consist of four rather than three acts. Since a turning point involves a major reversal, which requires goals to be recast by the protagonist(s), these terms may be used interchangeably at a functional level (Bordwell 2006, p. 35). My preference for the use of ‘mid-point’ lies in the added requirement that it should be roughly in the middle of the narrative. With these frames superimposed, then, we can now arrange important events within the macrostructure by answering our usual set of questions:

F. What is the inciting incident?

Judah intercepts a letter from his mistress to his wife in which she tries to blow the lid off their affair. This leads to a confrontation about the affair between himself and his mistress, a confrontation that is replayed in Clifford’s strand through the movie scene which Clifford and his niece are watching. Judah’s incident, in effect, incites Clifford’s introduction to the audience. Judah’s and Clifford’s *obligatory scene* (which, we are reminded, is the scene that shows

the outcome of events flowing from the inciting incident) is one in which Judah and Clifford meet and philosophise over life, morality and the existence of God. Judah has emerged unscathed from his murderous activities, protected by his life of privilege, while Clifford has lost both his wife and his would-be girlfriend to the obnoxious but successful Lester, himself a privileged and wealthy member of society.

G. What is the first turning point cluster leading to the end of act one?

The major characters have been introduced and their goals and desires established. Judah would like his mistress to give up their affair, and quietly, so as not to ruin his perfect life. He tries to end the relationship, but Dolores increases the stakes by threatening, for the first time, to reveal his embezzling activities to the hospital in addition to revealing their affair to Miriam (6: 23). Clifford, whose marriage is failing, finds himself strongly attracted to Halley and admits as much to his sister (6: 27).

H. What is the second turning point cluster leading to the end of act two?

The second act shows Judah and Clifford behaving in ways that raise the stakes for each of them. Judah has Dolores killed through an arrangement made through his brother Jack, and agonises over it for the rest of the act. Clifford falls for Halley and increasingly seeks to spend more time with her. The turning point for both characters occurs when they decide to change the emotional and practical circumstances of their lives: After having himself fired by Lester because he has cut the documentary of the producer in a way that is derogatory and insulting, Clifford asks Halley to marry him, only to learn that she is going away to London for three months (6: 69). Judah, after an argument with his wife and daughter in a restaurant, takes a solitary walk

in the grounds as if finally to clear his mind and heart of the guilt and worry that is weighing him down (6: 67). Indeed, the next time we see him is in the third act at the wedding reception, where he discusses the murder with Clifford as if it were just another fictional story, unreal and entertaining.

I. What is the mid-point?

The mid-point, we are reminded, is the decision which a protagonist, or in the case of simple multistrand narrative, dual protagonists take whether to go forward in a new direction or to continue with the old one, both in a practical and moral sense. Although we noted earlier that the presence of multiple protagonists often voids the notion of a mid-point, a case can be made for the usefulness of this functional entity when applied to simple multistrand narratives, providing that such structural beats occur closely together and preserve the original intention of the mid-point – a life altering choice of whether to go forward or turn back from one's present path. Judah decides to give Jack the go-ahead in having Dolores killed (6: 37). Clifford invites Halley to his editing room ostensibly to watch footage of Professor Levi, but ends up talking about 'love at first sight', warning her against his competitor, Lester, and sharing Champagne and Indian takeaways with her while watching *Singing in the Rain* on his editing desk – in effect choosing to end his marriage with Wendy in order to pursue a new life with Halley (6: 39).

J. How does the story end?

The story ends sombrely, by showing that intellectual acuity and moral integrity do not guarantee a happy and successful life. Professor Levi's insightful observations about love, God and morality, do not prevent him from committing suicide. Nor does Ben's devotion to God prevent him from

losing his sight, at least in the physical sense. Clifford's pursuit of love and integrity in his work, similarly result in failure when confronted by the superficial, but charming Lester. But perhaps the most chilling revelation is the ease with which morality and conscience can be rendered impotent when confronted by the need for self-preservation. By the end of the film, Judah is able to walk back to his old life arm in arm with his wife, free of the consequences of his evil actions. Seen in this light, the film depicts a world in which God and his agencies seem impotent against the power and influence of self-interest and privilege. Instead, God is relegated to the role of a wishful fantasy held by the likes of Clifford, Ben and Judah's father simply because in their view, a life without Him is without purpose and is therefore not worth living.

I conclude this case study by emphasising that the assembly of Judah and Clifford's strands around thematic, moral, and philosophical concerns as seen from a serious and comedic perspective respectively, in conjunction with other unifying techniques and devices, allows for the emergence of a single narrative within a common framework. By extrapolating from this discussion of Crimes and Misdemeanors to a more general set of characteristics, then, we might summarise some of the most important features of the simple multistrand sub-category accordingly in the following list:

General Characteristics of Simple Multistrand Narrative

1. A single fabula positions the narrative strands around common thematic, philosophical and moral questions, offering different perspectives on the original argument or premise.
2. Allows for three act structures, based on protagonists who initiate (beginning), complicate (middle), then reap (end) the consequences of their actions.
3. Allows for ample set-up and character development.
4. Falls within the general category of Drama.
5. Coincidence often replaces causality as a way of driving the diegesis forward.
6. Strands are further united through the use of various strategies and devices, such as inter-textual transitions and parallel editing.
7. Exhibits a strong sense of verisimilitude resulting from non-contrived endings that echo the complexity and openness of contemporary experience.

6.4 Case Study # 7: *Crash*

I have indicated that the most telling difference between multiform and multistrand film is that the latter presents diegetic events as occurring within a normal spatio-temporal framework. In other words, multistrand narrative is less concerned with ontological and existential perspectives than it is with moral, social, economic, and political ones. The syuzhet may indeed tamper with the narrative sequence of time and place (*Babel*, 2006), delay exposition (*Reservoir Dogs*, 1992), or replace linear

causality with coincidence (*Crash*), but it does so for dramatic rather than existential reasons and the fabula always remains coherent.

6.4.1 Complex Multistrand Narrative

To a large extent, multistrand narratives may aptly be described as human dramas. In approving of the film, Roger Ebert describes *Crash* as relating to the ‘interlocking stories of whites, blacks, Latinos, Koreans, Iranians, cops and criminals, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, all defined in one way or another by racism’ (2005, p. 1). *Variety*’s Todd McCarthy, while less enthusiastic, refers to the film as a neatly packaged ‘ensampler [sic] on race relations’ comprising ‘intertwining multiple story strands’ (2004, p. 2). He describes the format as being one that resembles television shows and movie mosaics such as *Short Cuts*, which should come as no surprise, since, as McCarthy reminds us, the co-writer and director of *Crash*, Paul Higgins, has had ample practice at dealing with intertwining multiple story strands through his experience in television (p. 2). What is implicit in the use of language such as ‘interlocking stories’, the list of racial and social groupings, ‘ensampler’, ‘multiple story strands’ and ‘mosaic’, then, is that these critics regard the film as weaving a tapestry around the issue of race as central motif – the very stuff of Drama. However, if we have no difficulty in describing *Crash* as a drama in terms of its presentation of character verisimilitude and its confinement to the exploration of social, political, and cultural issues, we have to look beyond genre in order to appreciate more fully the way that multistrand film orders its narrative. After all, we regard films such as *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), *Ordinary People* (1980), *On Golden Pond* (1981), *Jerry Maguire* (1996),

Titanic (1997), and *Cast Away* (2000), as dramas. No one would argue, however, that these films do not differ substantially from *Magnolia* or *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989), despite sharing a similar sense of verisimilitude in portraying social, political, and cultural issues. This is because the former set adheres to the canonical narrative. This narrative, we are reminded, favours the construction of a single fabula that is largely in step with the syuzhet's portrayal of causally linked events involving the actions of a *single* protagonist struggling to solve a seemingly insurmountable problem.

Multistrand narrative, especially complex multistrand narrative, by contrast, presents us with characters that feature as protagonists in their own strands, who may also appear as supporting characters in the strands of others. Crucially, a more diffused and non-linear causality popularly known as *the butterfly effect*²⁹, or even outright coincidence, often replaces linear causality, while ambiguity replaces closure. These characteristics, as we have repeatedly noted, are more in keeping with the art cinema mode, confirming the notion that multistrand, and indeed, multiform films exhibit the tendency to appropriate, mix, and rehabilitate material and techniques from a wide variety of sources. The effect, especially in 'human dramas' using the 'realist matrix of the characterization and overall narrative structure' (Booker 2007, p. 11), is to induce a feeling of verisimilitude in a contemporary audience perhaps weary of contrived endings. Seen in this light, multistrand film has much in common with what critic Alissa Quart calls 'hyperlink-cinema,' in which multiple narratives intertwine in a single film, allowing (and requiring) viewers to jump about in time within a story and from one story to another much in the way they jump about among

²⁹ The term, *the butterfly effect*, which has given rise to a film of the same name (2004), as well as to a series of inevitable sequels, refers to an aspect of chaos theory which traces the domino effect of action, no matter how small, upon the world.

websites on the Internet' (2007, p. 12). It is interesting to note, however, that although the terminology is new, the approach is not. Booker points out in *Postmodern Hollywood* that 'one could identify Altman as the genre's founding father, with his *Nashville* (1975) as its real founding text' (2007, p. 12).

We should note in passing here that Booker's specific use of the word 'genre' is yet another indication of the shifting and unreliable status of the term. 'Genre' may describe a specific category that seeks to classify films according to their subject matter, such as horror, or science fiction. It may also denote a style, such as comedy, which may combine a wide variety of content and techniques, such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) as Musical/Comedy/Horror. Or, genre may refer to a super-category, which encompasses films of similar structural construction.

Occasionally, the term seems to mix inflections, resulting in a lack of clarity. Booker, for example, refers to hyper-link cinema as a 'new genre' (2007, p. 12) and cites films such as *Pulp Fiction*, *Snatch* (2000), *Bounce* (2000) and *Syriana* as members, despite their vast differences in structure, style, tone, and subject matter. This unsatisfying state of affairs reaffirms the need to clean up our terminology, hence my positing of *multistrand* and *multiform* as categories that describe narrative structural operations at a deeper hierarchical level.

6.4.2 Mapping the Syuzhet

Figures 8a to 8c map the syuzhet's presentation of events in schematic form. The first nine sequences introduce us to the entire cast of important characters and constitute the bulk of act one. The remaining sequences appear under act II and act

III, respectively. Moments of temporal displacement are clearly indicated by a title card (Fig.8a: 1-2), which announces that what we are seeing occurred ‘Yesterday’.

The time tense is indicated in Figure 8a by a grey strip. Another such strip occurs in Figure 8c to indicate that the two scenes flow into each other. The blue text points to the presence of a main character within a scene *belonging* to another prominent character. A scene is regarded as belonging to a specific character when its emotional and functional import directly affects that character more powerfully than it does any other character present. Most of the main characters, in addition to appearing in the scenes of others, are given a sizable number of their own scenes, indicating their importance: Anthony and Peter = 14 (together, or separately); Graham = 11; Farhad and Dorri = 11; Cameron and Christine = 11 (together, or separately); Rick and Jean = 10 (together, or separately); Officer Hansen = 7; Officer Ryan = 6; Daniel = 4; the Korean couple = 4 (together, or separately); Shaniqua = 3 (with Ryan, or separately).

The large number of protagonists situates *Crash* within what Hassler-Forest describes as the *complex multiple narrative* category (2007, p. 17). Although I have elected to use the term *multistrand narrative* for reasons supplied earlier, I have retained the idea of a threshold placed on the number of characters. *Complex* multistrand narratives, then, are those narratives that utilize four or more major characters in the diegesis (Hassler-Forest 2007, p. 17). An immediate consequence is that a character is introduced through a snapshot of defining features, rather than through the gradual development typical of canonical narrative (Murphy 2007, p. 124).

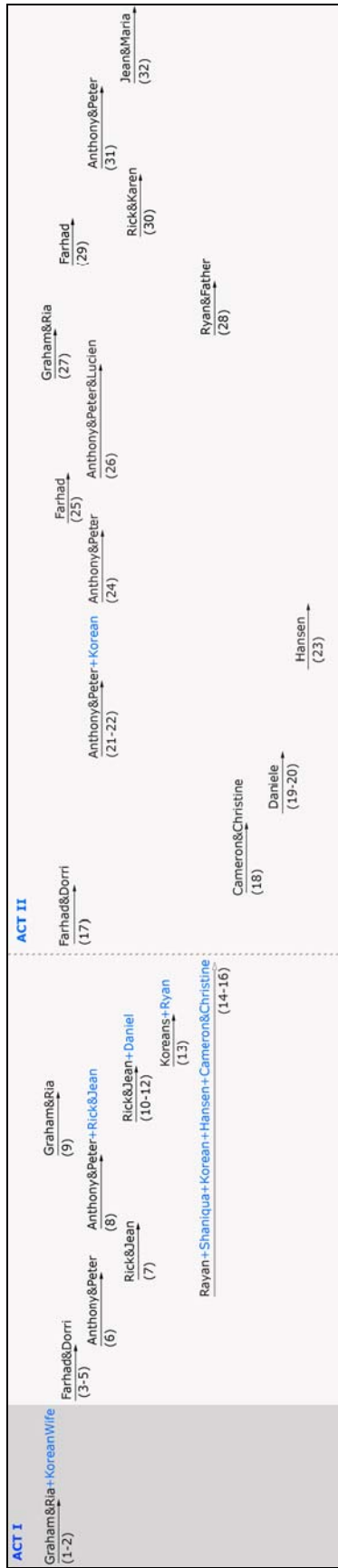


Fig.8a

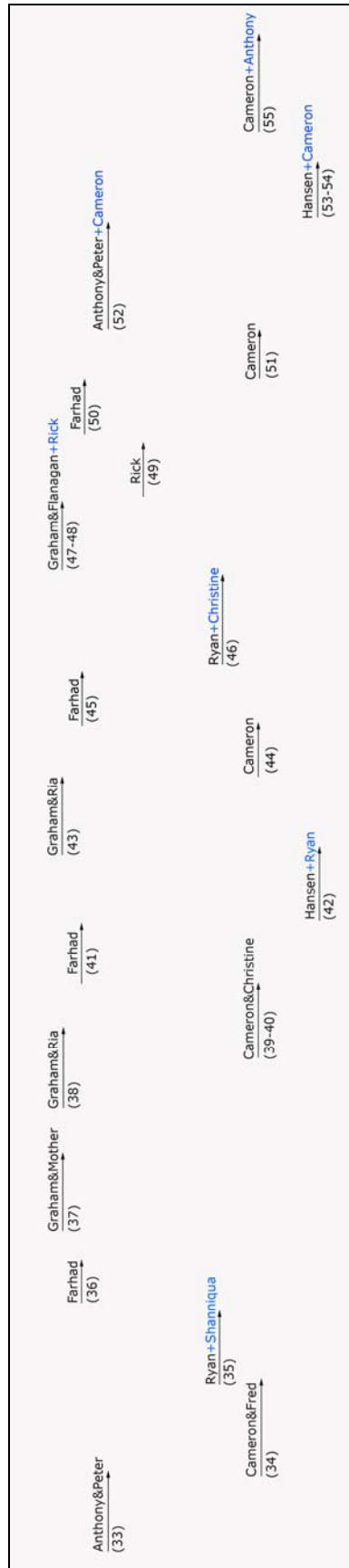


Fig.8b

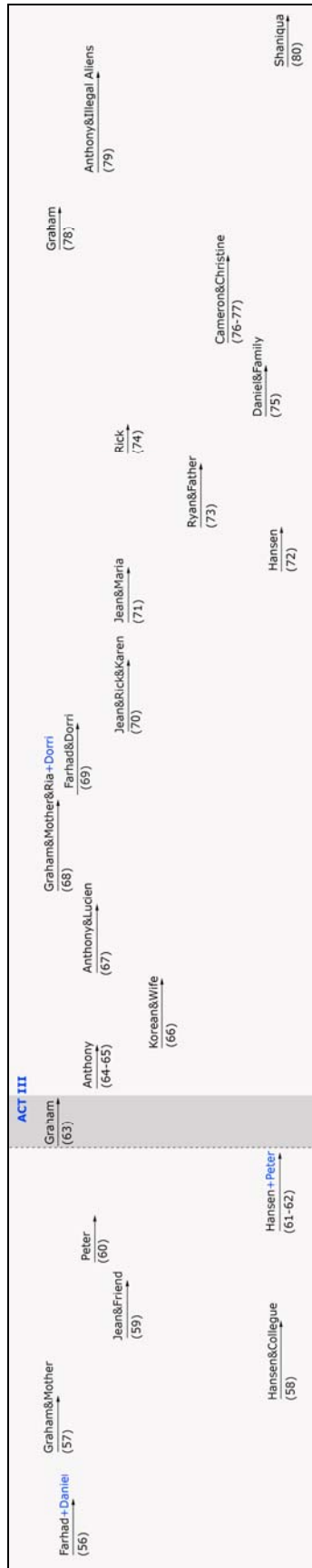


Fig.8c

Jean, for example, is quickly shown to be governed by her fear of different races when she draws closer to her husband upon seeing two black men (Anthony and Peter) walking towards them in the street. This trait is emphasised by her demand that her husband have the locks changed, yet again because a Mexican locksmith (Daniel) has installed them. Where a character does undergo change, it is through the negation of a defining characteristic: Hansen who has requested to be transferred to another car because of his current partner's racist tendencies, for example, discovers that he himself is given to racial typecasting when he mistakes Peter's actions as threatening and shoots him. By way of contrast, Ryan, the racist, risks his life to save a woman of colour that he had molested earlier, revealing his deeper humanity. Similarly, Anthony, himself a racist and car thief, negates his attitude by freeing a group of illegal aliens who he could have sold for profit. Such incidents are attempts on the part of the writer to guard against accusations of racial stereotyping, and ultimately help to add density to character representation.

6.4.3 The Fabula as a Thematic and Moral Frame

I have already indicated that multistrand film is chiefly concerned with depicting human drama within a normal spatio-temporal framework. Certainly, the sorts of temporal and spatial paradoxes that force a splitting of the fabula in an *open* multiform narrative, such as *Donnie Darko*, do not operate here. I have also suggested that the existence of multiple protagonists occupying their own separate strands do not necessarily imply multiple fabulas. If, in the absence of a single chain of linear causality, we draw on the notion of the fabula as a mechanism that explains the purpose and logic of diegetic events, we discover that our ability to comprehend

multistrand film as a single entity is well supported by the operations of a strong thematic and moral spine. In this sense, multistrand film bears some resemblance to parable, which can be defined as ‘a short narrative presented so as to stress the implicit but detailed analogy between its component parts and a thesis or lesson that the narrator is trying to bring home to us’ (Abrams 1971, p. 6), and which, as such, therefore structures its story according to moral and spiritual imperatives. Indeed, as Ebert asserts, in *Crash*, ‘Haggis is telling parables, in which the characters learn the lessons they have earned by their behavior’ (p. 3). It can therefore be argued that when we ask what *Crash* is *about*, we are asking about the type of tissue that connects characters and events, which, in multistrand film is comprised of social, thematic, and moral fibre. Our answer might therefore be: *Crash* dramatises racial prejudice, cultural misunderstanding, and the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of its characters as causes of conflict among people of differing race and nationality, aggravated by the alienating effect of the urban environment. According to this view, then, multistrand film advocates the need for a return to the spiritual and moral awareness that was such a central concern of parable.

Aiding the task of creating cohesion between the strands is the use of symbol in the film. The most obvious is the car as an emblem of entrapment and separation, of a life encased in metal and glass. Such is the suffocating insulation that cars impose on people that the only way to feel anything at all is to crash into each other. It is no accident that the title of the film is *Crash*. Indeed, the *syuzhet* kicks off with a car crash involving Graham, Ria and the Korean wife. The car motif permeates the story: Anthony and Peter hijack Rick and Jean’s black Lincoln Navigator; Cameron and Christine are stopped while driving their own black Navigator by Ryan and Hansen

who themselves are driving a police vehicle; Anthony and Peter accidentally knock down the Korean man as he is getting into his van; Anthony attempts to hijack Cameron's Lincoln; the illegal immigrants cower inside the van; and Peter is shot inside Hansen's car. Perhaps most tellingly, it is in the vicinity of Hansen's burning car that Cameron finally decides to return to his wife. Another important symbol is the Crucifix. In his commentary on the *Crash* DVD, Higgins points out that the film crew went to considerable trouble to find locations that featured symbols of the Crucifix, such as the telephone pole visible through the back window of Shaniqua's office, echoed throughout the film in the specific framing of traffic lines and shop signs. Such symbolism is an ironic reminder of the spiritual and moral values that are being trampled underfoot.

Other unifying features can be found in the chance encounters which occur between the Los Angeles city dwellers (Appendix 7: 1-2, 8, 10-12, 13, 14-16, 21-22, 35, 42, 46, 47-48, 52, 53-54, 55, 56, 61-62 & 68), linking them through a common network of themes, morals, and character traits – racial prejudice, fear and expediency, but also love and sacrifice as seen through Ryan's, Daniel's, and Graham's actions towards their own families and towards others. Technical devices also significantly contribute to the sense of unity: characters which cross each other's paths *within a shared shot*, such as the Korean man walking past Officer Ryan who is on the phone to Shaniqua at the diner, or Daniel's white panel van being on the same road as Anthony and Peter's stolen Lincoln, or Dorri walking past Detective Graham and his mother at the mortuary, underscores that people are indeed connected, although not always through causal links. Underpinning this notion is the use of parallel editing. If crosscutting emphasises that events occurring within separate strands follow each

other in sequential time, thereby linking them directly, parallel editing encourages a more abstract comparison based on a wide variety of formal and informal similarities or discrepancies (Hassler-Forest 2007, p.18). Examples of this are the occasions in which we cut from one character opening or closing a door in one scene, to another character repeating or completing the action in the next at a different location, or, when a sound carries from one scene to another, bridging it (7: 5/6, 20/21 & 27/28).

Although the technique primarily serves the formal level, it nonetheless points to the more transcendent relationships between characters. Indeed, because complex multistrand narratives often substitute coincidence for causality, and linear development for a more diffused rendition of consequences, the audience is, in any event, less focused on event causality in the traditional sense, than it is in discerning how the respect or disrespect of moral and thematic issues structures a character's life, and by implication, the narrative itself. As Bordwell points out, and as this thesis has been arguing throughout, the popularisation of scientific principles stemming from Chaos Theory (including the phenomenon popularly known as the *butterfly effect*, discussed earlier), with its vital emphasis on the unforeseen consequences flowing from seemingly minute and unconnected events, may have played an important role in the growing popularity of such narratives in popular cultural forms (2006, p.100).

6.4.4 Strand-to-Strand Relationships and Macrostructure

The complex multistrand category, then, freely mixes causal and transcendental – that is, moral, philosophical, thematic, and stylistic – links. Anthony and Peter, for

example, causally impact upon Rick and Jean's lives when they hijack their car at gunpoint. Hansen terminates Peter's story when he shoots and kills him, but does not directly interact with Farhad's, Graham's, or Daniel's strands. Graham's strand intertwines with Peter and Anthony's, Ryan's with Hansen's, as well as with Cameron and Christine's. Ryan interacts with Shaniqua, Farhad with Daniel, and Daniel with Jean and Rick. Other strands, however, are kept causally separate. Farhad and Dorri have little to do with Rick and Jean. Nor, do Farhad, Dorri, or Rick and Jean directly interact with each other or Christine and Cameron. Likewise, Daniel's strand remains causally separate from Anthony and Peter's, Ryan and Hansen's, Rick and Jean's, the Korean's, and Cameron and Christine's. Despite the existence of causally separate strands, however, it is the view of this thesis that complex multistrand film allows for the emergence of a single fabula through a variety of mechanisms which serve to explain and link events presented by the syuzhet through moral and thematic imperatives. This satisfies the primary requirement of a fabula as being the logic that we mentally impose on a narrative in order to make sense of it.

One of the methods used in previous case studies to pry deeper into narrative operations was to ask questions which sought to identify and position the protagonist, the antagonist, the inciting incident, the turning and mid-point in the story. Might we not ask the same set of questions of multistrand film? The short answer is no, since the presence of *multiple* protagonists, antagonists, conflicts, plots *as* subplots and vice versa, makes these questions inappropriate to multistrand narrative, in an unmodified form. At best, we could attempt to apply them to each individual protagonist's strand. But this would not serve us in relating them to an *overarching*

structure which is an essential part of ordering diegetic events within a single narrative. But what if we asked a different question, namely, what is *Crash* about? In attempting an answer here, we might describe the film at the level of *metastory* – an aggregation of the action guided by the thematic, moral, and philosophical effervescence of the tale. This is different from: What is the *story* of *Crash*? This question has no short answer since it is aimed less at a distillation of moral and thematic essence allowed by the former question, than the recounting of the numerous diegetic events demanded by the latter.

We might say that the film is about a group of Los Angeles city dwellers from various walks of life, struggling under the urban shadow of racial prejudice and a moral and spiritual bankruptcy, who inadvertently affect each other's lives through a series of chance encounters, accidents and misdemeanours. Some grow from these encounters, while others do not. By recognising that an important part of what structures and binds the narrative strands together in multistrand film is the contrasts and parallels that arise between the characters' moral and ethical propensities, as much as their goals, we can chunk events into acts: act one (Set-up), establishes character attitudes as highlighted by moral and thematic concerns, which crystallise around practical issues (Fig.8a: 1-16); act two (Progressive Complications) enacts the moral, thematic and practical issues through character vicissitudes (Fig.8a & 8b: 17-62); act three (Climax & Resolution) establishes whether or not moral lessons have been learnt and practical outcomes resolved by the major characters (Fig.8c: 63-80). We can now situate the various segments within the overall narrative flow by answering the remaining set of questions:

F. What is the inciting incident?

The first car crash as an indication that people have become so estranged from each other, encased as they are in the glass and steel of modern living, that they need to smash into each other in order to feel anything at all. This sets the ball rolling at a generic level as the central motif of the film.

G. What is the first turning point cluster³⁰ leading to the end of act one?

The major characters have been introduced and the central concern has been established. Jean and Rick, who have just been hijacked by Anthony and Peter, have their house locks changed by Daniel, a Mexican locksmith. Jean tells Rick that she wants the locks changed yet again because the locksmith, Daniel, is a Mexican. Daniel hears this. Hansen reacts to Ryan's racially motivated molestation of Christine by requesting a transfer. Ryan requests that his father is given a second medical opinion, but is ignored by Shaniqua.

H. What is the second turning point cluster leading to the end of act two?

Characters are tested again, with higher stakes. Graham allows himself to be blackmailed into helping to frame another detective in order to save his brother from going to jail. Daniel worries about his family's safety. Farhad gives in to his frustration by tracking down Daniel, who he uses as a scapegoat for his troubles. Anthony justifies his and Peter's criminal ways by blaming them on the white man. Rick perpetuates racial problems by engaging in dishonest social engineering. He seeks to combat the fact that he was held up by black men by seeking to pin a medal on a black man and promotes the framing of a white detective for shooting a black one. Christine vents her frustration of racial injustice on her husband, while Cameron

³⁰ I have added the word 'cluster' to indicate that the turning point is not a single incident but a cluster of similar incidents turning on related moral and/or thematic considerations.

continues to tow the white line, growing increasingly embittered and humiliated.

I. What is the mid-point?

No *single* mid-point is discernible. This is partly because the fragmentary nature of complex multistrand narrative, in effect, forces us to direct this and other structural questions at the fabula rather than the syuzhet. Further, we have shown that in complex multistrand narrative, the fabula is pared down to a moral and thematic level. Although the fabula is able to order chunks of narrative into acts based on thematic and moral considerations, it varies in its ability to answer structural questions that are more specifically related to the single protagonist of canonical film. This, however, is less a damaging omission than an irrelevant one, since multistrand film allows for a wide variety of other structural correlations in addition to those mentioned above, to act as infrastructure, such as parallel editing, symbols, and motifs.

J. How does the story end?

Narrative events have attempted to deliver a moral and ethical lesson to each of the characters. Some have learnt from such lessons; others have not. Kim, the Korean wife, expresses regret to her husband for swearing at the 'poor woman' at the scene of her accident. Anthony has put racial prejudice and personal greed above his own concerns, at least for the moment, setting the van full of illegal aliens free in Chinatown and giving them forty dollars to buy food. Cameron, in returning to Christine, has learnt to place forgiveness above self-reproach and humiliation. Farhad has acknowledged that a higher power guides his life and given up his gun. Jean has realised that a servant may be more deserving of her friendship than her phoney rich friends. But

Hansen and Graham have discovered just how susceptible they are to racial prejudice, self-deception and dishonesty. Graham's mother remains unaware of Graham's true love and concern for her. Rick seems not to have learnt anything at all as he stares apprehensively out of his window into the darkness. The Korean man urges his wife from his hospital bed to cash in the cheque, which is a payment for his participation in illegal human trafficking. And Shaniqua, in the last sequence of the film, displays the very same racial prejudice that she accused Ryan of showing towards her, when she refuses to talk to the other party in her car accident unless he speaks 'American'. Although *Crash* bears some similarity to parable, as noted earlier, it does not claim that character behaviour necessarily leads to reward or punishment in a material sense; yet one is left with a strong impression that the characters' actions have left an indelible their mark on them, for good or ill. And that is indeed in the nature of parable.

These answers show that by directing our attention to the moral and thematic spine of *Crash*, we are able to generate a framework that allows us to structure narrative events in a way that retains some similarity to the manual writers' work on canonical film. I shall continue to refine and apply this approach in the remaining case studies. Below, then, is a summary of some of the important features of the *complex* multistrand category thus far.

General Characteristics of Complex Multistrand Narrative

1. Multiple protagonists (four or more) whose strands may interact directly and transcendently to allow for the emergence of different perspectives of the premise or argument.
2. Character-centred diegesis.
3. A single fabula which structures the syuzhet according to causal, as well as moral and thematic imperatives supported by parallel editing and the use of symbolism.
4. May allow for a highly communicative syuzhet, which deploys a high level of redundancy in portraying character, events and locations within a coherent timeframe.
5. A longer set-up, which in effect comprises the bulk of act one.
6. Characters traits reduced to a few, or to a single attribute; individual character strands revolve around a central incident in their lives. Such incidents are linked across strands through a common moral and thematic frame and assisted by stylistic and technical devices. The recounting of a single major incident for each character comprises the bulk of act two.
7. Coincidence often replaces causality. This results in open or unresolved endings, which make up the bulk of act three.
8. Increased verisimilitude, typical of the Drama genre.

6.5 Case Study # 8: *Syriana*

Syriana is another film in the complex multistrand category that successfully uses its form to generate meaning. In referring to multiple-proragonist film, Ascona suggests that *Syriana* presents, through its structure, ‘the precariousness and futility of human agency in a world of multiple and unpredictable connections’ (2008, p. 124).

Similarly, Ebert describes it as ‘a great film’ (2005, p. 4), primarily because it succeeds in convincingly projecting the confusing and ultimately unpredictable complexities resulting from the pervasive idea that our oil supply is running out and that we will therefore do anything to get what is left of it. Referring to it as a ‘hyperlink movie’ (p. 4), he suggests that in such narratives, the motives of each character often have to be reinterpreted after the introduction of another. This implies that causality radiates from multiple points across the narrative web, affecting individual strands in real but non-linear ways, which are impossible to predict before the fact – in short, a causality based on the *butterfly effect* that we have identified as one of the characteristics of multistrand and multiform films. Kenneth Turan of the *Los Angeles Times* likewise praises *Syriana*, describing it as writer-director’s Stephen Gaghan’s ‘fearless and ambitious piece of work, made with equal parts passion and calculation, an unapologetically major studio release with compelling real-world relevance, a film that takes numerous risks and thrives on them all’ (2005, p. 1). He further points out that the director adjusts the studio storytelling norms, treating major stars as supporting players, ‘the better to grapple with...the planet’s dwindling supply of oil’ (p. 1). Quoting Gaghan, Turan writes that ‘*Syriana*’ is a real term used by think-tanks to describe a hypothetical reshaping of the Middle East, used here in the more metaphorical sense of recasting nation-states in one’s own

image (p. 1). Like Ebert, he finds that by keeping us one step behind events, in effect, eliminating the kind of exposition we are used to, Gaghan succeeds in endowing the narrative with a feeling of verisimilitude, drawing us into the confused and obfuscating subjectivity of the characters who seek to make sense of the bewildering and pervasive influences of the butterfly effect. This increased sense of subjectivity, as Field has pointed out, is one of the chief markers of recent efforts to portray the complexity of contemporary experience in commercial film. In the section following the presentation and mapping of the syuzhet, we will examine the implications from these and other comments for multistrand narrative.

6.5.1 Mapping the Syuzhet

Figures 9a to 9e map the various strands in diagrammatical form. The top row represents scenes surrounding the Connex-Killen merger and related issues. The bottom row is chiefly concerned with events revolving around Robert Barnes, the C.I.A., and the assassination plot. The middle gray area indicates overlapping (mixed) interests. Names written in red indicate a direct interaction between protagonists. Generally, the relative placement of a sequence within a row is a useful indication of the strength of a proximal influence from an adjacent row. Sequences in the middle row, which centre upon Bryan Woodman's *family* life (Appendix 8: 10-13), for example, lie closer to the top row (merger) than to the bottom (assassination). Bryan's professional interaction with Prince Nasir, however, is placed in the middle to indicate a more balanced pull from the merger and assassination flows. It is important to point out, however, that these configurations are more approximations of general tendencies within the narrative structure than

invariant patterns. Nonetheless, they are a useful visual indication of the narrative's overall shape.

If an important part of what constitutes a protagonist is that he be a character through whose goals and ambitions we experience the narrative, then we may regard *Syriana* as featuring five protagonists, each operating within his own strand – Robert Barnes, Bryan Woodman, Bennett Holiday, Prince Nasir and Wasim Khan – all of whom are involved directly or indirectly in the struggle to control the world's dwindling oil supply and the livelihood, wealth, and power that it affords. As with *Crash*, the number of protagonists places *Syriana* within the *complex multistrand* category.

We are reminded that whereas canonical and simple multistrand narratives entrust their single, dual, or triple protagonists with the task of driving the story forward, complex multistrand narrative distributes this function amongst an even higher number of protagonists with concomitant complications for inter-strand relationships and story progression. Yet it is important to emphasise that despite a myriad of points-of-view, subplots, sub-themes, and supporting characters linked to each protagonist, the aggregate result, in terms of story, is the same as in canonical film – a single tale united by a chief theme; in this instance, the ubiquitous effect of the world's insatiable thirst for oil – reflected through various direct, indirect, and accidental actions undertaken by the characters.

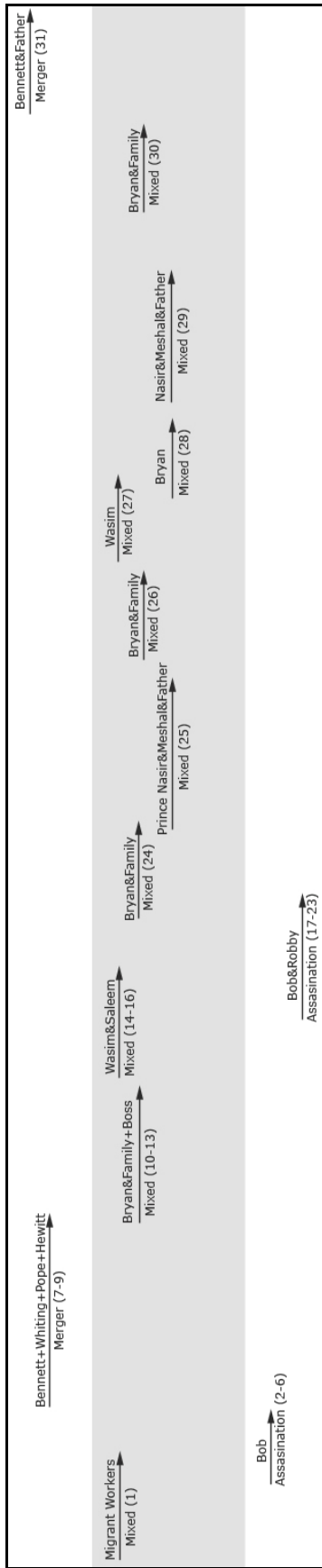


Fig. 9a



Fig. 9b

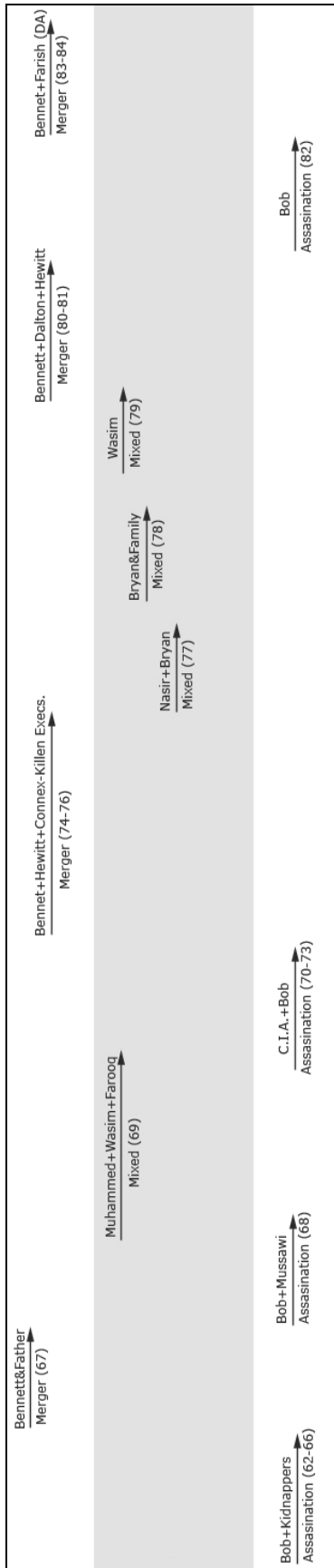


Fig.9c

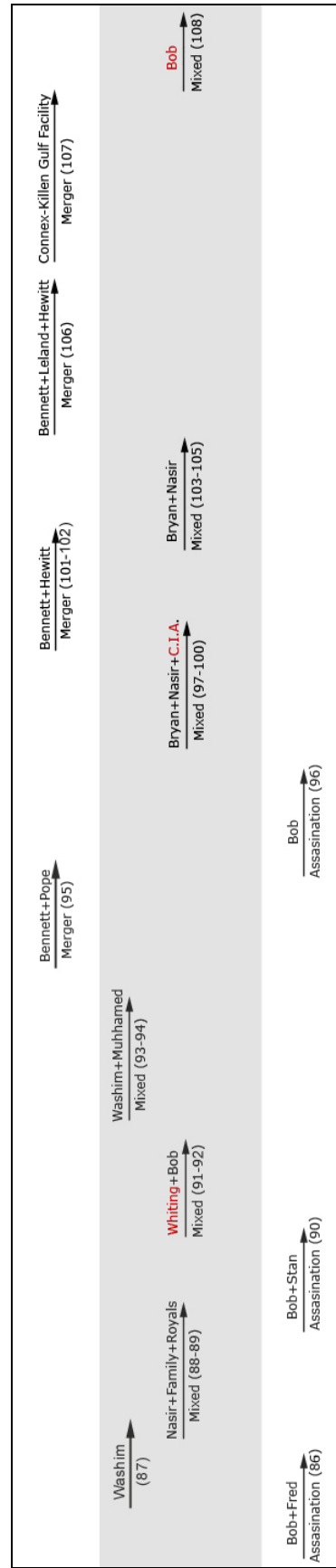


Fig.9d

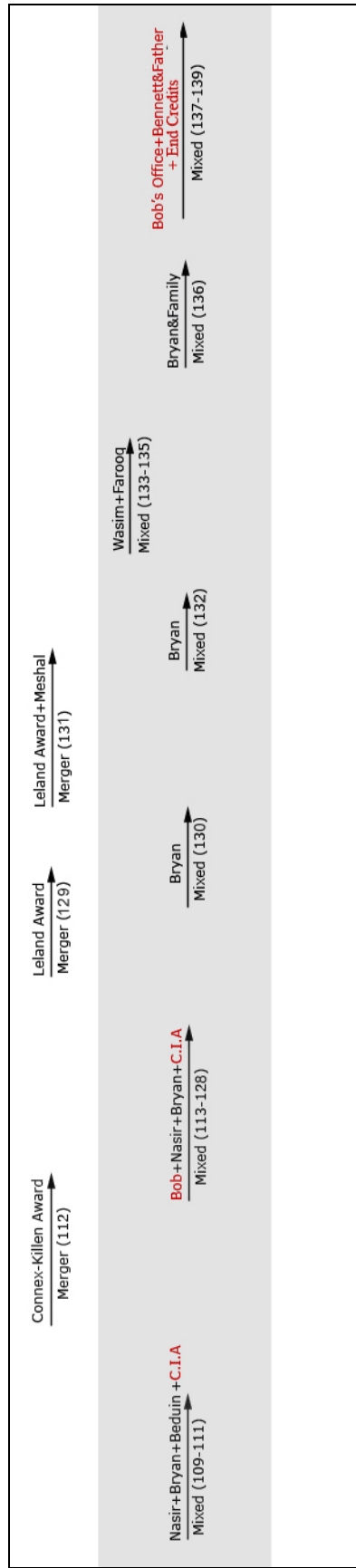


Fig 9e

Looking a little deeper, we discern that each strand operates within one of three groupings: i. Bennett Holiday's strand reveals the conflicts and machinations arising from the Connex-Killen merger; ii. Robert Barnes' strand narrates the clandestine and Machiavellian efforts of big business and secret government hit squads used to protect U.S.A. interests; iii. the last grouping conveys a mixture of interests and conflicts from the perspectives of Wasim, Bryan Woodman, and Prince Nasir. The overall result of this intricate weaving is a narrative of bewildering complexity, made even more so by an elliptical syuzhet. Whereas *Crimes and Misdemeanors* achieves unity between its two strands primarily through a common moral and thematic spine and is supported by formal devices, *Syriana*, like *Crash*, additionally weaves complex links by employing a mixture of direct and indirect causality, as well as pure coincidence³¹. An example of this looser form of cause and effect can be seen in the effect that the sale of oil interests by the Emir to the Chinese has on the Wasim family (8: 15). It may be argued that had Wasim not lost his job due to this sale, he would not have been susceptible to being recruited by Muhammad as a suicide bomber (8: 69). Similarly, had Bryan Woodman not been urged by his boss to accept the invitation to take his family to Marbella for the Emir's party, his son would not have been electrocuted and died in the swimming pool (8: 30); nor would Bryan and his firm have received an offer to become Prince Nasir's economics advisor (8: 49); indeed, had the Bedouin herders not crossed Prince Nasir's car convoy, Bryan would

³¹ An important clue to the distinction between simple coincidence, diffused causality and direct causality lies in the culpability to be apportioned to the initiating human action. If, for example, one is walking on the pavement and is hit by a driver whose car has developed sudden mechanical problems, this is bad luck (coincidence). If, on the other hand, the driver loses control of his vehicle because of his inebriated state, this is diffused causality – since, despite a lack of intent to hit the pedestrian, the driver is still culpable by being drunk. If however, the drunken driver *intentionally* runs over the pedestrian on the pavement, this is an example of direct causality initiated by intentional action. Indeed, the law recognizes the first as accidental, the second as manslaughter, and the third as murder and apportions punishment accordingly.

not have swapped vehicles with Nasir's wife and children (8: 110) and been killed in the air strike.

Part of the depth and complexity of the narrative is in deciding the degree of causality to attribute to events within and between the strands – in other words, what degree of blame to apportion to each character for the consequences of his actions. Clearly, Julie blames Bryan for their son's death, an emotion aggravated by Prince Nasir's offer to Bryan's firm, which Bryan gladly accepts, of a lucrative contract. Although it would be absurd to suggest that Bryan is directly responsible for his son's death, he clearly allows himself to benefit from the accident, thus partaking of some culpability, albeit after the fact. As we have noted in previous case studies such as *Crash*, this sort of diffusion of motives, accidents and causes is a feature of multistrand film and serves to enhance the sense of verisimilitude. One consequence of driving the narrative primarily through the butterfly effect, however, is that it tends to detract somewhat from the moral and practical responsibility flowing from a character's actions. If the consequences of an act are obfuscated and diffused rather than *specifically targeted*, blame is blunted, although not eradicated, as would be the case of a purely accidental action. *Crash* used this successfully to create empathy for its characters, some of whom failed to anticipate the devastating consequences of their actions upon others. *Syriana*, however, offers little such empathy. The C.I.A. unit intentionally orders a hit on Prince Nasir because big U.S.A. government and business interests favour the more pliable Prince Meshal (8: 45); Barnes' death is an additional boon to them. Holiday, Leland, and Whiting willingly sacrifice Sydney Hewitt in order to protect the Connex-Killen merger from further scrutiny (8: 106). Bryan Woodman's failing marriage is a direct consequence of his decision to pursue

his business interests in the Emirate rather than return home with his wife and son following the death of Max (8: 78). These sorts of considerations, which constitute intentional action driven by a single concrete imperative – the acquisition and control of oil, together with the strong thematic and moral spine typical of multistrand film, then, offer a tighter bond between threads than would transcendental links alone. Furthermore, the presence of this sort of linear causality typical of traditional narrative, operating *alongside* the non-linear and diffused type, suggests that it is not accurate to characterise *Syriana* solely as a ‘hyperlink’ movie as Ebert suggests, since the notion of a hyperlink does not acknowledge the range of direct and intentional causal relations at work in the film.

6.5.2 Strand Binding

The intersection between timeframe, locality, or characters may be regarded as signalling the presence of linear causality. Causally linked events are more easily remembered by an audience than events portrayed as random or not related by cause-effect links (Grodal 2003, p. 133), especially where the audience is often taxed by the large number of characters in the multistrand world. *Syriana* is no exception. Certainly, cross-strand character interaction occurs at regular intervals. As I have already indicated, the middle gray area in the series of diagrams represents the broadest area of mixed interests and interactions, although not limited to it – Robert (Bob) Barnes’ strand for example, which mainly falls outside the gray area, *directly* interpenetrates all but Wasim’s strand in terms of face-to-face interaction, although Barnes’ supply of electronic explosives fuses, which end up in the hands of Muhammad, and which allow Wasim’s and Farooq’s suicide bombing to occur,

speaks of the potency of indirect interaction. Certainly, Barnes' strand interacts with Bennett Holiday's via Whiting at the diner (8: 92), Prince Nasir and Bryan's in the lift (61), in secretly following the Prince and his entourage (8: 62 & 66) and while trying to warn him about the assassination (8: 113; 115-117; 120; 122-124; 126 & 128). Bryan's strand, by contrast, is inexorably intertwined with Prince Nasir's. The end result of these sorts of direct interactions, are strands that are tightly bound together in a single narrative.

We have already examined the way that multistrand narrative, in the absence of direct causal links, binds its separate strands together through parallel editing, which allows for associations based on formal and transcendental factors, in the analyses of *Crash* and *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. Wasim's voice, recorded on the videotape in which he instructs how his body is to be buried, for example, floats over scenes in which Barnes' office is being cleared of his personal possessions, as well as Bennett Holiday leading his father inside his house, linking the various strands together through the suggestion that these men, and by implication, all of us, are victims of the same clandestine and insidious powers (8: 137-138). Perhaps the most damning and sardonic use of parallel editing, however, is the cutting between the scene depicting the death and devastation of the air strike on Prince Nasir's convoy and the tumultuous applause granted to Leland at the Oilman of the Year award dinner (8: 129 & 131). Other formal links created by parallel editing include the comparison of the adverse effects of one's occupation upon family ties implied by cutting from the Barnes/Robby scene (8: 23) to Bryan arriving in Marbella with his family (8: 24), as well as the cut from the C.I.A.-induced explosion (127) to the explosion inspired by Islamic fundamentalist propaganda (8: 133-134).

It follows from earlier comments that in addition to parallel editing, *Syriana* also employs cross-cutting in support of direct causal linkage between and within the separate strands. Crosscutting, unlike parallel editing, as we have noted elsewhere, promotes direct causality between characters and events by establishing concurrent temporal and spatial relations between them. These sorts of interactions occur most frequently between protagonists within the mixed group, as indicated by the middle gray strip in diagrams 9a and 9b. Direct cutting between Bryan's and Prince Nasir's strands are examples of this, since these strands are most closely bound by direct interaction (8: 24; 28; 42; 48-49; 59-61; 97-100; 103 & 105; 109-110 & 113-129). Other examples include exchanges between Barnes, Prince Nasir, and Bryan (8: 113-129), Barnes and Whiting (8: 92), and Prince Meshal and Whiting (8: 45). Where there is no direct interaction between protagonists, as in the case of Wasim, membership of the mixed category is justified though the palpable impact that flows from adjacent strands. Prince Nasir's decision to sell some of the Emirate's oil interest to the Chinese, for example, results in the Khan family losing their jobs at the refinery, while one of the firing triggers that Barnes supplies to Arash is used in Wasim's suicide bombing of the oil tanker, resulting in his and Farooq's death.

Adding to the commonality across strands is *Syriana*'s ubiquitous and potentially cloying use of oil as pervasive imagery. Indeed, oil is so salient to the narrative that its symbolic function may seem in danger of being heavy-handed. It is a tribute to writer/director Stephen Gaghan's deft touch that he not only succeeds in extracting maximum potency from the symbol, but that he does so in a remarkably unobtrusive way. Oil not only forms the actual goal which drives the various protagonists

forward, but its connotation of being the lifeblood of the entire planet is inescapable. Its absence signifies impoverishment and loss (8: 15). Oil, like blood, is capable of being spilt, resulting in death (8: 127 & 134). International television reports compare the proposed Connex-Killen company to the world's 23rd largest economy, larger than Pakistan or Denmark, employing thirty-seven thousand workers from 160 countries around the world, emphasising its global reach (8: 10). The end result of this masterful and deft use of symbolism is to enhance the viscosity between the separate strands.

6.5.3 Narration by Implication, Verisimilitude by Omission

In emphasising the importance of promoting cohesion and unity in a story, manual writers such as Robert McKee spell out a number of narrative techniques and formal devices that are useful in creating familial transitions between consecutive scenes – such as the commonality or contrast between words, sounds, actions, objects, ideas, or quality of light (McKee 1997, pp. 301-302). This agrees well with the line taken by this thesis, specifically with regard to parallel editing that in conjunction with causal links, seeks formal and textural comparisons between the strands in order to enhance unity. Certainly, as has already been pointed out, *Syriana* employs a liberal range of such techniques – the use of sound bridges to link separate strands (8: 10; 31 & 138), or the ubiquitous references to oil as a common symbol. And yet, perhaps the most compelling technique used to help drive the narrative forward across all the strands, is one that paradoxically achieves its effect through absence – a narrative by omission. The first clue that the audience will have to work harder than usual to keep up with the narrative is the lack of exposition available during the set-up stage in

which we are introduced to each character within his own setting *in media res*, and often in a different country, before being whisked away to the next. Scenes are left unfinished, forcing us to connect the dots.

During this process, we are left to build up a fabula from a bewildering amount of hints gleaned from brief or incomplete scenes, lines of dialogue and character action. Both *Babel* and *Syriana*, for example, often withhold crucial exposition either wilfully – the question of why Chieko lies to the policeman about her mother’s death in *Babel*, as we shall see in the next section – or by skimming over scenes before the audience can find its footing – the early scenes in *Syriana* in which Dean Whiting sketches in the background to the state department’s investigation of his company, or Bob’s role as an assassin and victim of rogue elements within the C.I.A. The effect of such an uncommunicative syuzhet, as Kenneth Turan observes, is to endow the narrative with a feeling of verisimilitude by having us experience the bewildering complexity of far-flung events through the subjective perspective of the characters themselves, as they try to piece bits of the puzzle together.

Notwithstanding the diversity of protagonists and their particular strands, the story does allow for an act based structure: act one (Set-up) introduces the main characters, their goals and attitudes, as highlighted by moral, thematic, and practical concerns (Fig.9a & Fig.9b: 1- 47); act two (Progressive Complications) dramatises the mounting moral and practical complications as the stakes increase (Fig.9b, Fig.9c & Fig. 9d: 48-92); act three (Climax and Resolution) establishes whether or not lessons have been learnt, practical goals achieved, and conflicts resolved by the protagonists

(Fig.9d & Fig.9e: 93-139). We can therefore, once again, arrange important events within the macrostructure by answering our usual set of questions:

F. What is the inciting incident?

Dean Whiting asks Bennett Holiday to help ensure that the Connex-Killen merger goes through by finding out about any impropriety that has occurred before the Attorney General does, so that incriminating evidence can be buried or defended against (8: 7). This, in effect, directly and indirectly kicks off a series of events that comprise the bulk of the narrative. The obligatory scene, which, we are reminded, is directly linked to the inciting incident, brings the protagonist and antagonist together (or in the case of multistrand narrative – representatives of opposing forces) in one final clash. By this definition, the obligatory scene is the one in which Robert Barnes tries to warn Prince Nasir about his impending assassination and is killed by the clandestine C.I.A. airstrike (8: 127). The confrontation between Barnes and his C.I.A. employers, who are protecting American oil interests in the gulf, thus tying them into the Connex-Killen strand, is made more chilling in that it occurs in a disembodied way – through a remote drone controlled from halfway across the world by the ubiquitous and clandestine American war machine.

G. What is the first turning point leading to the end of act one?

Robert Barnes is summoned to C.I.A. headquarters and instructed to arrange a hit on Prince Nasir, who has been labelled as a ‘bad guy’ because of his lack of co-operation with American oil interests (8: 46). This effectively brings most of the various strands closer together, while at the same time

satisfying the primary function of a turning point, which is to effect a major change in direction in the story. Henceforth, events are influenced by attempts to undermine and kill Prince Nasir.

H. What is the second turning point leading to the end of act two?

Robert Barnes decides to fight back against Whiting and the C.I.A. and signals his intent by breaking into Whiting's house where he leaves a note to force a meeting. At a nearby diner, Barnes warns Whiting that he will be killed should anything happen to him or his family, in effect declaring war on American oil interests and their C.I.A. backers (8: 92).

I. What is the mid-point?

If the mid-point is that stage in a story in which character goals seem to be reaching fruition before taking a turn for the worse, then the scene in which Robert Barnes crosses paths with Prince Nasir and Bryan Woodman in the lift, after Nasir has declared to the media that he intends to introduce far reaching social reforms in the Emirate, may be taken as that juncture (8: 61). Certainly, beyond this point, things change direction. Barnes is kidnapped by Mussawi's men (8: 66), Mohammed shows Wasim and Farooq the bomb that is to be used later in their suicide bombing (8: 69), Bennett finds the incriminating evidence that he has been looking for (8: 74), and Nasir is denied access to his father who is busy negotiating a secret deal with the Americans which involves handing the reins of power to his younger brother, Prince Meshal (8: 77).

J. How does the story end?

American power and oil interests prevail over Prince Nasir's attempts to reform his country. Robert Barnes is unsuccessful in warning the Prince

against his impending assassination attempt, losing his own life in the process. Bryan Woodman's pursuit of professional success costs him his son and possibly his marriage. Indeed, the ruthless pursuit of hard-line ambitions and corrupt causes, represented by the C.I.A., the powerful oil interest groupings and the Islamic fundamentalists who manipulate the gullible and impoverished Wasim and Farooq into performing the suicide bombing of the gulf storage tanker, seem the only winners.

The characteristics extracted from this case study reflect some of the general tendencies of the complex multistrand subcategory originally seen in our study of *Crash*, with the major exception of an uncommunicative syuzhet. This inclusion thus broadens the complex multistrand category to allow for either a communicative or uncommunicative syuzhet.

Expanded General Characteristics of Complex Multistrand Narrative

- a. Multiple protagonists (four or more) whose strands may interact directly and transcendently to allow for the emergence of different perspectives of the premise or argument.
- b. Character-centred diegesis.
- c. A single fabula which structures the syuzhet according to causal, as well as moral and thematic imperatives, supported by parallel editing and the use of symbolism.

- d. A frenetic and elliptical syuzhet, which forces a bewildering sense of movement.
- e. Little or no set-up – the audience gets to know the protagonists on the fly.
- f. Characters traits reduced to a few, or to a single attribute; individual character strands revolve around a central incident in their lives. Such incidents are linked across strands through a common moral and thematic frame and assisted by stylistic and technical devices.
- g. Coincidence and causality co-exist. Generates open or unresolved strand endings.
- h. Increased verisimilitude, typical of the Drama genre.

6.6 Case Study # 9: *Babel*

Ascona describes *Babel* as marshalling the theory of the butterfly effect to the service of its narrative. He points out that the film highlights how small errors, *ad hoc* decisions, and bad judgment can snowball, creating unintended and unforeseeable events – such as the gift of a rifle by a Japanese hunter to his Moroccan guide, nearly leading to the death of two American children, and to the deportation of their Mexican nanny (2008, p. 141-2). Roger Ebert rates *Babel* as the most powerful of writer-director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu's trilogy of films, ahead of *Amores Perros* (2000) and *21 Grams* (2003), all of which demonstrate that 'action is connected or influenced in invisible ways' (Ebert 2007, p. 2). Although the film's structure deviates from the canonical paradigm in significant ways, its use of A-list actors such as Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchet give it more than a passing resemblance to

the traditional studio movie in terms of production values. An international co-production among companies in Mexico, France, and the United States, it received a full release on November 10, 2006, and was nominated for seven Academy Awards, winning the Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture in the drama category. Ebert observes that the individual narratives within the trilogy underscore Inarritu's mastery of the form, offering us 'human insight rather than obligatory tragedy' (p. 2) and are examples of what have sometimes been referred to as 'hyperlink films'. As the title would suggest, *Babel* is to a large extent about the miscommunication that occurs between people as a result of a clash in language, culture, age, and personal circumstances. It is to the film's credit that all of the characters are portrayed sympathetically and their errors of judgment are seen mostly as genuine mistakes, rather than as intentional actions stemming from ideological prejudice. The result is a master narrative of deep compassion, and therefore, one that aspires to an all-embracing universality. Picking up on this sense of pervasiveness, Todd McCarthy describes the film as an 'ambitious epic of anxiety that tries to put its finger on an array of woes afflicting humanity in the early 21st century (2006, p. 1). Along with *Amores Perros* (2000) and *21 Grams* (2003), he points out that *Babel* uses 'multiple intercut story strands' to tell a 'gripping' tale with 'philosophical aspirations' (p. 1). Because *Babel* tells a story that stretches across three continents, McCarthy declared the film's international marketing prospects as 'promising' (p. 1). Indeed, by August 2010, *Babel*, which had cost \$25 million to make, had grossed \$135,330,182 worldwide, according to boxofficemojo.com (p. 2).

What is even more noteworthy from the point of view of this thesis, however, is the ease with which these critics accepted the entry of multistrand film into the

mainstream without raising as much as an eyebrow at its unconventional form, with the notable exception of David Denby. Writing in *The New Yorker*, Denby observes that *Babel* is composed of three stories held together by a slender thread with a dark and calamitous mood that is hardly typical of an American movie's view of life.

Referring to *Amores Perros*, *21 Grams* and *Babel*, he goes on to say that the films:

Jump backwards and forward in a scrambling of time frames that can leave the viewer experiencing reactions before actions, denouements before climaxes, disillusion before ecstasy, and many other upsetting reversals and discombobulations. (Denby 2005, p. 1)

Although Denby gets the number of strands wrong – there are four, not three, flowing from four protagonists – he does correctly point to an interesting tendency of some postmodern films to discombobulate the temporal structure of their narrative. We noted this most strongly in multiform films such as *Donnie Darko* and *Next*. But as *Babel* demonstrates, this is not necessarily restricted to the former category, although the sort of discombobulating that occurs here operates *solely at the level of the syuzhet* and does not disrupt the ontological framework of the narrative. Nonetheless, the tendency of some multistrand films to portray an added sense of disorientation and subjectivity by scrambling the multiple strands at the temporal level is worth noting as a point of differentiation within the multistrand category.

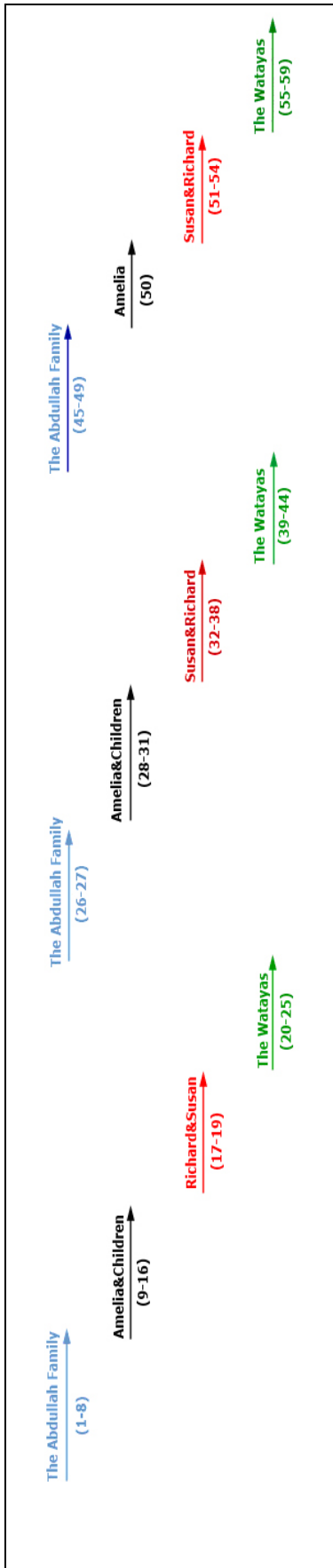


Fig.10a

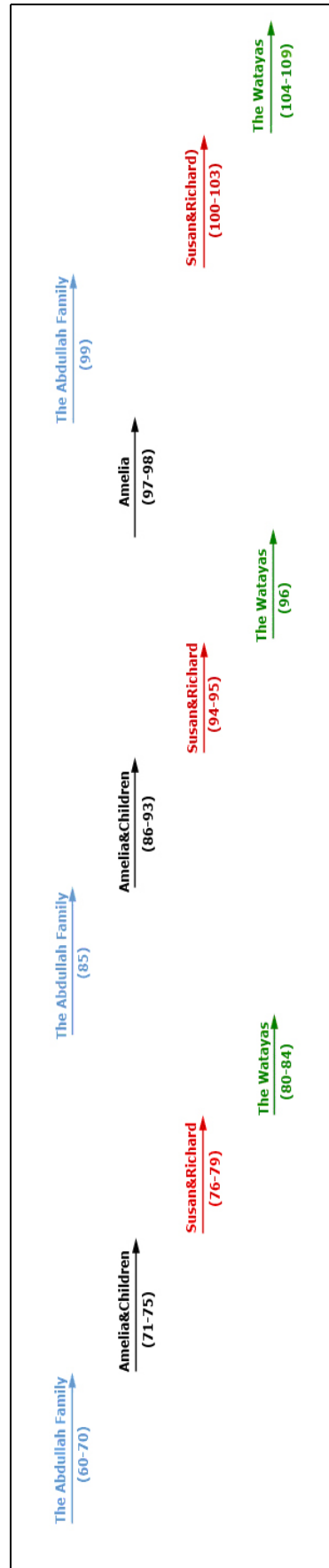


Fig10b

6.6.1 Mapping the Syuzhet

Figures 10a and 10b map the macrostructure into five groups of cascading sequences comprising four strands each. As always, events within each sequence have been numbered in a way that groups them according to time, place, character, and/or governing idea (Appendix 9). This provides us with a way to locate and match specific elements to remarks and assertions made throughout the case study. It also allows us to discern the narrative's major structural patterns at a glance.

Babel, like *Syriana*, shares many of the characteristics that this thesis has identified as crucial markers of multistrand films, such as multiple protagonists who may or may not appear as secondary or minor characters in each other's strands, a strong sense of verisimilitude, as well as transcendental correlations between the strands, drawing on coincidence, theme, philosophy, and morality, all of which are supported by technical devices such as parallel editing. Often, the syuzhet avoids further complications beyond the sheer number of strands by establishing a pattern of continuity when moving from strand to strand. In *Crash* and *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, for example, the protagonists are introduced in turn, and their stands are intertwined in a predictable manner based on a progression of events that are linked by coincidental and transcendental factors. The editing, as has been previously shown, often emphasises such factors by cutting on similar actions in a way that promotes a sense of linkage and shared momentum. Additionally, by avoiding predictable and contrived endings, *Babel's* strands promote a sense of verisimilitude typical of the Drama genre. Even a tragicomedy such as *Crimes and Misdemeanors* ends sombrely, in that a protagonist is either not punished for committing murder, or

loses the girl to a superficial but financially successful competitor. Such endings, more typical of tragedy than comedy, hark back to Denby's comments of a dark and calamitous mood that is hardly typical of mainstream cinema.

Babel goes further than any of the previous case studies in the multistrand category because it purposely discombobulates the syuzhet's temporal order in a way that intensifies heuristic activity by having the audience scramble to reorder events in order to establish coherence. Although it shares this trait with some multiform films, especially within the *open* multiform subcategory, it is important to note that the temporal jumble exists solely at the level of the syuzhet and presents no threat to the construction of a single coherent fabula. The set-up build-up begins conventionally by establishing the circumstances that culminate in events that most closely influence at least three of the four strands: two young Moroccan boys foolishly fire at an oncoming bus to test the range of a rifle that once belonged to a Japanese hunter, seriously injuring an American tourist. This unleashes a series of events that culminates in the injured woman's children being taken across the border by their nanny who is determined not to miss her son's wedding and has nowhere else to leave them. But the syuzhet does not present events in this order, choosing instead to discombobulate the temporal order by a series of announced flashbacks. Sequences Appendix 9: 1-16, for example, follow a normal order, until 9: 17, where we cut to an unheralded flashback of Susan and Richard holidaying in Morocco, prior to the accident, and deduce that something tragic has happened in their recent past, which is causing pain and conflict between them. The effect of this unannounced and disorientating leap is to force us to hypothesise more intensely in an attempt to make sense of the narrative.

Indeed, the syuzhet ensures that Susan and Richard's strand often slips in and out of synchronisation with regard to the others and is the chief cause of the discombobulated temporal order in the overall narrative. When Amelia receives a call from Richard (9: 10), for example, Susan is already in hospital after having being shot. Yet when we eventually meet Susan and Richard in person (9: 17), it will be through another unannounced flashback in which Susan has not yet been shot. Meanwhile in Amelia's strand (9: 13), we learn that Richard has not been able to arrange for Rachael to take care of the kids so that Amelia can go to her son's wedding. And all of this is prior to the syuzhet's presentation of the shooting from Richard and Susan's point of view. The result, described by Field as one of the markers of the screenwriting revolution (2006, pp. 130-131), is to increase the sense of subjectivity by drawing the audience into the mental state of characters who are experiencing the disorientating effects of traumatic events. Having laid out the three main strands (9: 1-19), sequence 9: 20 introduces Chieko and Yasujiro Wataya. This strand, in which Chieko's emotional and sexual insecurities echo those found in the Abdullah strand where Ahmed competes with his younger brother for his father's attention and Yussef masturbates while spying on his naked sister, is perhaps the most distant from the other three in terms of immediate and intimate linkage. Nonetheless, the rifle, which originally belonged to Chieko's father, is pivotal to all four strands since its removal would alter the narrative substantially.

6.6.2 Enhancing Fabula Unity and Coherence

To counterbalance the discombobulated time frame, the syuzhet employs a number of unifying techniques and devices. The first is to give strands of roughly equal weight a predictable order by arranging them in repeating cascades, as Figures 10a and 10b clearly show: the Abdulla family strand is followed by Amelia's, Richard and Susan's, and the Wataya's in a cascade that is repeated four times. The pattern is broken only in the last cascade where we cut to Amelia's story instead of Abdullah's. This break in symmetry underscores the sense of disruption caused by the massive and sudden changes to people's lives: a border policeman announces that Amelia is to be deported from America after fifteen years of living there, effectively ending the life she has made there, while the Abdulla family is shattered by the death of Ahmed, again at the hands of the police. Secondly, the use of parallel editing further enhances the sense of linkage. The transition between the Abdullah family and Amelia strands (9: 9), for example, is of children running away – Ahmed and Yussef from the spot where they have shot at the bus, and Mike and Debbie from their nanny, Amelia, in a game of hide-and-seek. Although non-causal in a linear sense, the association gives rise to the idea that all children are related across cultural barriers by the games that they play. The differences between them lie in the practical and economic circumstances that force some, but not others, to perform adult tasks, such as having to shoot jackals to prevent them from decimating their herd. It suggests how a childish game, in the absence of adult supervision, can lead to tragedy.

Another example of a matching, or parallel transition occurs at 9: 32, where we cut from blood squirting out of a headless chicken at the wedding celebrations, to

Susan's blood-covered shirt, as she lies wounded on the floor in Morocco. The images of blood symbolically link Susan to her children and suggest the peril that surrounds them. Further linkages occur as a result of a direct injection of diegetic material into the Chieko strand at 9: 43 and 9: 109 in the form of television reports about the shooting in Morocco. In the Wataya's apartment, photographs of Yasujiro's hunting expedition hang on a wall. One of the pictures shows Hassan, his Moroccan guide, and Yasujiro, rifle in hand, squatting over a dead buffalo (9: 83). Third, the difficulties associated with sexual adolescence explored in the Chieko and Yussef strands, as well as the more general theme of linguistic and cultural miscommunication suggested by the title as a biblical trope of confusion and division, serve to unify the strands at the thematic and symbolic levels. Fourth, and most concretely, the rifle, which features in all four strands, shows how even well-intentioned or seemingly trivial actions (such as Yasujiro's giving of the rifle to his guide Hassan as a gift) may permeate the lives of strangers across the world. Known colloquially as the *butterfly effect*, this aspect of Chaos Theory is the embodiment of an increasingly diffuse contemporary experience which has been amplified by digital media such as cell phones and the Internet. Finally, the sombre and non-condescending tone inherent in all four strands binds them in a common sheath of verisimilitude, typical of traditional Drama.

6.6.3 Macrostructure

Act one (set-up), then, introduces most of the main characters, establishes their location, social standing, attitudes, and actions, and draws attention to the casual and thematic links between them through various unifying strategies. The Watayas are the exception. Although Hassan mentions the Japanese hunter who gave him the

rifle, the Watayas are directly introduced only at the commencement of act two. After this introduction, act two proceeds by enacting the mounting practical and transcendental complications across all of the strands as the stakes increase (9: 20-75). Act three brings matters to a climax then endeavours to clarify them by attempting to establish whether or not practical problems have been resolved, and lessons learnt, by the major characters (9: 76-109). *Babel* utilises a mixture of factors to bind the multistrand narrative together. In addition to the usual transcendental links mentioned earlier, the presence of the rifle represents a diffused causality within the diegesis. Although I have indicated that this causality is diffused, it nonetheless directly influences all major events within the four strands. As before, answering our usual set of questions allows us to identify and order events within an overall structure:

F. What is the inciting incident?

The Abdullah family acquire the rifle in exchange for money and a goat.

G. What is the first turning point leading to the end of act one?

Yussef shoots and hits the tourist bus.

H. What is the second turning point leading to the end of act two?

Pursued by the police, Santiago abandons Amelia and the children in the desert at night and promises to come back for them.

I. What is the mid-point?

Amelia decides to take the children with her across the border to her son's wedding.

J. How does the story end?

The shooting incident seems to have drawn Susan and Richard closer together, although this attitude has not been extended to Amelia, whose

deportation back to Mexico they fail to oppose. Alongside other factors, misfortune, specifically death in the family, is a common thread that helps bind and drive the strands. Amelia has lost her way of life in America, while the Abdullahs, like the Watayas and the Joneses, have lost a family member. The overall effect is an ending coloured by a dark and sombre tone with little sense of redemption, except perhaps in the embrace of one's remaining family.

The list below continues the summary of general features that situate the film within the *complex* multistrand sub-category.

Expanded General Characteristics of Complex Multistrand Narratives

1. A single fabula arranges multiple strands featuring multiple protagonists (promoting differing perspectives of the premise). Binds the strands according to a mixture of influences, some direct, some diffuse, radiating out from the presence of a common object, place, or event, and some transcendental, arising out of the thematic, moral, philosophical, and stylistic parallels and contrasts.
2. Dispenses with a discernible set-up and exposition.
3. Character density conveyed through inter-personal relationships.
4. Falls within the general category of Drama in that all of the strands explore the far-reaching consequences of unintended actions from a serious perspective.

5. Promotes a sense of unity between the strands through the use of various stylistic and technical devices, such as parallel editing, and match cutting.
6. May employ temporal and spatial discombobulation through breaks in narrative sequence, as well as through a lack of exposition and signalling devices, to give rise to an uncommunicative syuzhet, which nonetheless reduces to a coherent fabula due to a normal spatio-temporal frame.
7. Displays a strong sense of verisimilitude, typical of the Drama genre, and stemming in part from its non-contrived strand endings that echo the chanciness of human existence, while simultaneously highlighting the interconnectedness of all things.

6.7 Fade Out

This concludes the last case study in the multistrand category. Before presenting a summation of broadly reoccurring features, it is worth noting that the sheer number of differences, similarities, and exceptions between the films examined in this section has demanded the use of a label that is broad and flexible enough to capture specific deviations without losing cohesion. In his paper on ‘Multiple Narrative Structures’ (p. 6), Hassler-Forest echoes this need for greater flexibility in categorizing films that contain multiple stories. In the beginning of this chapter I mentioned a number of reasons for avoiding the use of existing terms such as hyperlink, network, multiple plot, and ensemble films, offering instead the term *multistrand* and its subcategories of *simple* and *complex* as appellations that best accommodate variation. This remains my contention.

CHAPTER 7: INDICATIVE SCHEMAS FOR MULTIFORM AND MULTISTRAND NARRATIVE

7.1 The Open Multiform Narrative Schema

This final chapter distils the findings of the thesis into a set of indicative schemas that may prove helpful in the writing of multiform and multistrand screenplays. I point out that these schemas are mere snapshots of the sorts of operations that underpin the narratives in question, rather than detailed methodologies, since the scale of such an undertaking places it beyond the scope of this thesis. Yet it is in the nature of pattern that once assembled, it generates itself beyond its initial imprint, guided by characteristics inherent in its structure. This thesis does indeed uncover many such characteristics, which may prove helpful in guiding writers working with the form. More detailed renditions of the schemas, however, remain the task of future work. We will remember from our work on the case studies that the open multiform subcategory exhibits the following *general* characteristics:

1. A high level of subjectivity, highlighting the role of time and memory in character consciousness.
2. An uncommunicative syuzhet with flaunted and permanent gaps, lacking the markers and exposition that herald and explain existential and ontological shifts in the spatio-temporal frame(s); chiefly out of step with the fabula(s).
3. Strong paradoxes, resolved through the creation of multiple spatio-temporal frames resulting in multiple fabulas.

4. Promotes the formation of distinct but familiar fabulas as episodes or sequels involving the ‘same’ or similar characters and locations. At a dramatic level, these fabulas create different perspectives on the original premise.
5. Exhibits a high level of intertextuality. Cannot be reduced to a single genre.
6. Takes the form of an open, free flowing narrative not easily arranged into a conventional three act structure.

The first point relates to point-of-view and is an *effect* created by the syuzhet’s portrayal of the story. The fifth point highlights a feature within the diegesis with little structural influence, since genre is not used here as a narrative template in the canonical sense. In terms of our structural imperative, then, points 2, 3, 4, and 6 are more useful. The first difference to notice between this sort of formal representation and that of the manual writers is that the former does not follow the convention of chunking the narrative into three acts. I contend that in the absence of a crafted and purposeful three act narrative structure, the audience positions itself with regards to the timing of the story by ‘setting its clock’ according to the running time of a film. Because the narrative does not achieve closure in the *traditional sense*, it is depicted by a network of straight lines bifurcated at right angles to each other, some of which are fitted with arrows at either end to convey the sense of the pre-going and ongoing nature of the diegesis beyond the running time of the film.

Of course, the most striking difference between this approach and that of the manual writers is that the former refers to an arrangement at the level of the fabula(s) rather than at the level of the syuzhet. This is because ontologically complex films such as those found in the *open* multiform category necessitate an initial understanding of the

diegetic world's spatio-temporal frame(s), before any attempt can be made to deal with the syuzhet's specific rendition of the story. That said, no narrative is possible without changes in direction to the diegetic flow at the level of the syuzhet, since that would result in stasis in the story and boredom in the audience. In canonical film, these changes tend to be reversals, deflections, or blockages to the goals and desires of the protagonist, resulting in new perspectives, solutions, and directions. The manual writers refer to these changes as *turning points* that herald the start of a new act. Open multiform narrative, however, which tends to lack an ontologically stable protagonist operating within a single coherent frame, spins such turning points around the pivot of a paradox. Not only do paradoxes sustain audience interest by increasing puzzle-solving activity to one reminiscent of video games – another indication of the cross fertilization that is taking place between the two media (Rouse III 2005, p. 353), but they also lead to new and unexpected twists in the narrative, some of which are replayed with different consequences and inflections. Paradoxes, then, act as nexus points that force us to order and differentiate our understanding of the syuzhet by invoking multiple spatio-temporal frames in which to place ontologically conflicting events. They force the creation of related but distinct fabulas that fulfil part of the function of an act, which is to enhance interest by embodying a new direction in the story.

The diagram below, drawn from the *Donnie Darko* case study, then, is *indicative* of fabula structures of equal or ambivalent status in open multiform narrative with paradoxes marking structural changes (bifurcation) to the number and orientation of the fabulas and fabulets (f2 & f4), as demanded by the spatio-temporal framework(s). As a point of clarification of the term, 'fabulet,' I refer to the typical examples found

in those short digressions into alternative realities in *Next* – such as when the Nicholas Cage character peers briefly into the future in his attempt to determine which path allows him to reach the terrorist without being shot. An example of a closed off fabulet is one in which the Hero dies (f2). An open-ended fabulet is one where the Hero survives, but plays no ongoing explicatory or paradox-busting role within the wider fabula/fabulet network, rendering the fabulet existentially alive but indeterminate (f4) – perhaps the seed of some future sequel. Importantly, fabulets, unlike fabulas, may be eliminated from the network without altering the flow in any significant way. In this sense, fabulets are *satellite* events in the diegesis, rather than *kernels* that cannot be eliminated without changing essential aspects of the diegesis (Chatman 1978, pp. 53-56).

The schema (Fig.11) is pitched at the level of the fabula rather than the syuzhet because I contend that establishing the coherence of the spatio-temporal explicit temporal framework of a story (essential in establishing *referential* meaning) is a necessary prior step to attempting a specific rendition of the syuzhet which, after all, may already draw on the variety of established techniques and devices documented by the manual writers. Additionally, establishing and substantiating the overarching logic of the story through fabula construction provides the opportunity for rehearsing the writing of the well-crafted syuzhet. It does not attempt to set the number of fabulas and fabulets, nor does it suggest a likely placement of a specific number of paradoxes within the structure. This is a purposeful omission since it has been a task of this thesis to suggest that the shape and structure of multiform narrative is an attempt to reflect, at the aesthetic level, the ontologically ambivalent nature of contemporary existence.

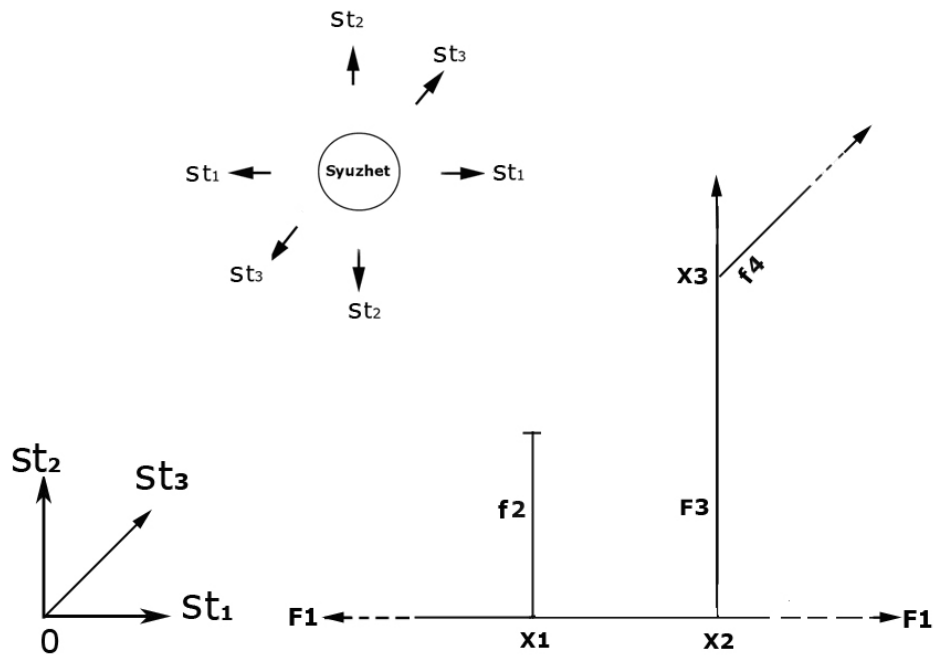


Fig.11

In Figure 11, the abbreviation ‘st’ refers to ‘spatio-temporal’. The diagram depicts 3 such frames, but does not set this as a limit. The film *Inception*, for example, allows for four levels: three dream-within-a-dream states, and one waking state. A fabula (F) continues along a straight line until it encounters a paradox (X1, X2, X3). At this point the fabula splits, creating alternative frames in which to place conflicting events. Smaller, partially explored offshoots (fabulets) necessitated by diegetic events (f2 & f4) may be left dangling or closed off without obfuscating the coherence of the overall network. Where bifurcation gives rise to a lengthy and substantial series of events (X2), as in *Next* or *Donnie Darko*, the result is two or more versions of the story (fabulas). Substantial fabulas may be taken as open-ended if they are abandoned by the syuzhet but are not pinched off (that is, for example, if that version of the universe does not end). In rendering a specific version of the story, the writer

may move the syuzhet to any portion laid out by the network of fabulas and fabulets (across existential frames) in order to tell a specific version of the story.

Drawing from the list of *general* characteristics quoted at the beginning of this section, we may summarise the schema's broadest *structural* strategies in this way:

1. A macrostructure which represents multiple perspectives of the overall that is meant to reflect the ontologically ambivalent and multifarious aspects of contemporary society.
2. Is less rigid in its placement, number and sequence of specific micro events such as turning points and acts within the macrostructure.
3. Pursues verisimilitude by inserting the audience inside the subjective perspective of the characters, particularly the protagonist.
4. Does not signal nor explain existential or ontological shifts.

7.2 The Closed Multiform Narrative Schema

In re-listing the category's general characteristics prior to laying down an indicative schema, we immediately notice a close similarity between it and the canonical form.

1. A single plot centred on the Protagonist's goal, supported by subplots.
2. A balance between subjectivity and objectivity in the presentation of character consciousness.

3. After an uncommunicative start containing a diffused and suppressed gap, the syuzhet is strongly communicative, supported by continuity editing and a redundant use of audio-visual markers.
4. A preferential spatio-temporal frame allowing for a single fabula with multiple ontologically distinct strands situates the film within the closed multiform category.
5. A fabula that is largely in step with the syuzhet.
6. Follows a three act structure.
7. Allows for a looser conventional role for genre.

Of the seven characteristics, perhaps only the inclusion of initially unheralded ontological gap(s) (point 3) and the move away from a *stricter* conventional role of genre (point 7), indicate any variation at the structural level between the closed multiform and the canonical schemas, since the subcategory's multiple spatio-temporal frames are sufficiently explained, positioned, and heralded within either a coherent and preferential spatio-temporal frame (*The Matrix* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*) or, a hierarchical one (*Next*). What this means in practical terms is that the writer is largely able to present a syuzhet that develops and resolves the Protagonist's character arc, goals, and desires within a stable single or *preferential* frame despite the character(s) crossing various ontological borders. What differentiates *closed multiform* films from their *canonical* brethren, then, is the preoccupation with exploring the presence of at least one further ontological reality, an awareness of a multiplicity of selves, a move away from genre as a single overarching template for structuring a story, and an intent to offer the structural

fluidity of the text as a way of expressing the volatility and ambivalence of contemporary existence.

It is worth noting that as exotic subject matter and techniques such as ontological crossings and bifurcating plotlines become commonplace, their non-conventional nature may indeed become the norm, resulting in the implosion of the closed multiform/canonical divide. This thesis, however, has referred to a number of factors that suggest that this is not yet the case, pointing to the continued need for redundancy in the number of markers that explain the ontological boundary crossings that occur in films such as *Avatar*, while, at the same time, suggesting that similarities between the two categories allow the screenwriter to tap into a wealth of canonical techniques already explicated by the manual writers. The canonical schema, drawn from the case study on *Avatar* (Fig.1), we are reminded, looked like this:

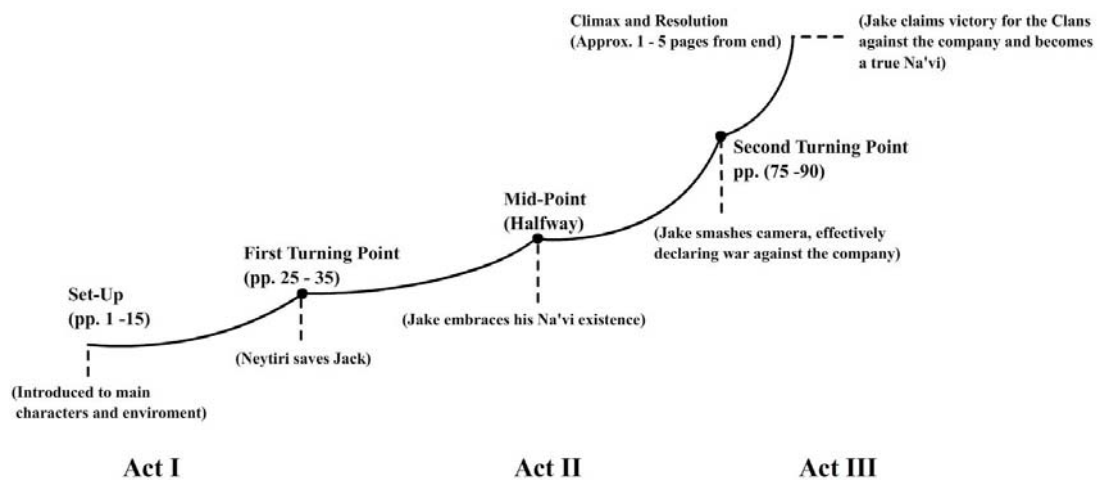


Fig.1

The indicative schema below (Fig.12a), aggregated from the closed multiform case studies (*The Matrix* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*), reflects the basic compatibility between the two forms.

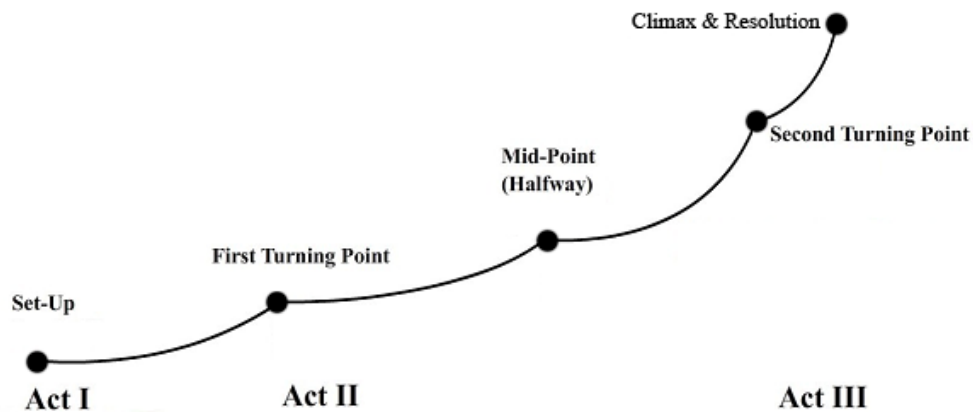


Fig.12a

A minor difference between the two schemas is revealed in Figure 12a, which dispenses with the placement of components at designated pages. This indicates the flexibility of the closed multiform *microstructure* within the overall macrostructure. The list below summarises the chief structural characteristics of the schema:

1. A macrostructure that strongly resembles that of canonical narrative in that it has a beginning, middle and end. Relegates its suggestion of ontological ambivalence to its subject matter rather than its form.
2. Is more rigid than the open category in its placement, number and sequence of specific structures such as turning points and acts within the macrostructure.

3. Pursues verisimilitude by placing the audience in the subjective perspective of the characters, particularly the protagonist.
4. Signals ontological or existential shifts.

7.2.1 Closed Multiform Narrative – A Special Case

Before moving on to multistrand schemas, a word about special case closed multiform narratives such as *Next*. Again, a reminder of the film's general features:

1. Comprises at least two fabulas in a hierarchy. This allows for a single story in which the second fabula may be experienced as a function of the first, such as a flash-forward. In terms of the drama, this encourages additional perspectives on the protagonist and the original premise.
2. A balance of subjectivity and objectivity in depicting character consciousness.
3. After an uncommunicative start containing a diffused and suppressed gap, the syuzhet is strongly communicative, supported by continuity editing and a redundant use of audio-visual markers.
4. May not fit a traditional three act structure.
5. Exhibits a low level of intertextuality, but cannot be reduced to a single genre.

Despite the presence of two fabulas (point 1), a two act structure (point 4), and the unconventional role of genre (point 5), it is possible to view such a case as an example of *closed* rather than *open* multiform narrative providing that we accept that

a preferential fabula, which subsumes the secondary one, is a sufficient condition in allowing the experience of a single story. In the case of *Next*, this requires that we treat occurrences within an alternative existential spatio-temporal frame as a flash forward. The reward is that we can then tap into a wealth of techniques and devices developed by the manual writers, with one further qualification. It may not be possible to posit a three act structure based on the goals and outcomes of the protagonist juxtaposed against the notion of a beginning, middle, and end within a single spatio-temporal frame.

As *Next* shows, however, *it is* possible to chunk the narrative into two acts, not in the sense that a major turn in the Protagonist's fortunes dictates the playing out of the consequences within a new section (act), but in the sense that a change in the spatio-temporal frame turns the overarching story by generating a secondary fabula. This not only satisfies the audiences' craving for new and unexpected twists, but allows the protagonist to achieve the goal in a new version of the story – akin to resetting a computer game session. The special case category, then, freely mixes features from both the closed and open subcategories. It provides a testing ground for experimentation to the narrative form at the macro and micro levels that provides a fertile ground for innovation. Figure 12b is indicative of the overall shape of such a macrostructure.

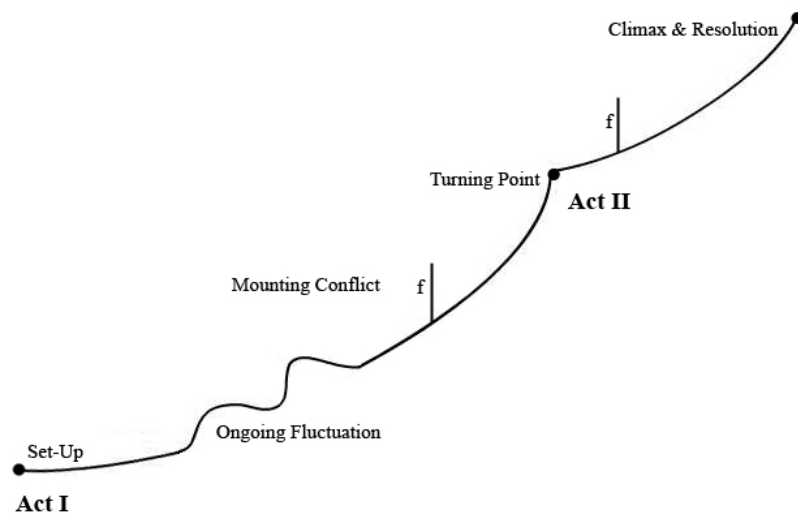


Fig.12b

Although the start of act two has been situated two thirds of the way into the story, this need not be so. The placement of the turning point depends on how soon the writer deems it necessary to turn the direction of the story in a major way. The longer he holds off, the more prudent it is to sustain audience interest by introducing small morsels of ambivalence in the spatio-temporal frame through satellite events such as fabulets (f), or to do so by fashioning small narrative fluctuations, typically at the level of the subplot. I include these structures here, although only indicatively and it is in no way intended to set their number and relative placement in any programmatic fashion.

7.3 Simple Multistrand Narrative

Once more, I reproduce the list of general features from the relevant case study:

1. A single fabula positions the narrative strands around common thematic, philosophical and moral questions, offering different perspectives on the original argument or premise.
2. May allow for a three act structure based on protagonists who initiate (beginning), complicate (middle), then reap (end) the consequences of their actions.
3. Allows for an ample set-up and character development.
4. Falls within the general category of Drama.
5. Coincidence often replaces causality as a way of driving the diegesis forward.
6. Strands are further united through the use of various strategies and devices, such as inter-textual transitions and parallel editing.
7. A strong sense of verisimilitude resulting from non-contrived endings that echo the complexity and openness of contemporary experience.

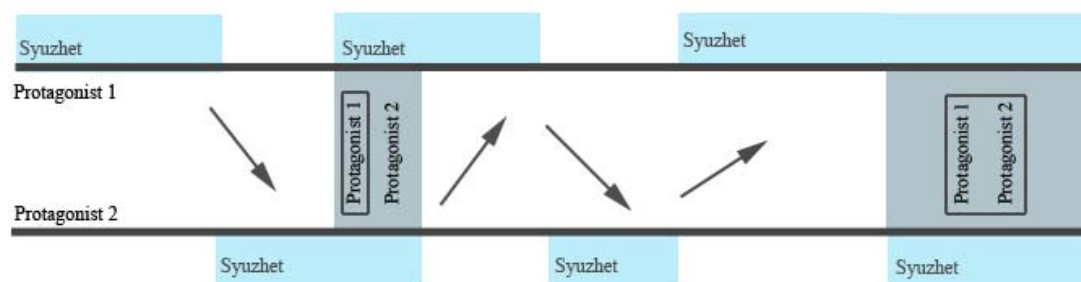


Fig.13

This schema (Fig.13) is indicative of some of the category's most important features – more than one protagonist³² and a syuzhet that follows their exploits as they spin

³² Although this schema contains only two protagonists, I have indicated earlier that the simple multistrand narratives may hold up to three, before spilling over into the complex multistrand subcategory. I have

their tale, often cutting between the strands in a manner that illustrates the contrasts and parallels in style, theme, morals, or coincidence. The syuzhet may or may not afford the protagonists equal time, often employing a cascading or generally predictable pattern when cutting from one to another as an aid to cohesion. The *proximity* and *correlation* through comparing or contrasting the turning point in one strand with the turning point in another, allows us to arrange narrative events across both strands into shared acts, driven by a fabula that arranges the overall narrative flow according to transcendental imperatives. In *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, for example, both Judah and Clifford make important decisions within minutes of each other that turn their individual strands in new directions, heralding the end of act one and the start of act two: Judah decides to end his affair with Dolores, while Clifford begins to pursue Halley as a potential lover.

In our schema, the solid black lines between the blue blocks indicate periods of a non-represented strand, while the syuzhet showcases another. The grey areas indicate overlaps in which protagonists occupy the same location, but may or may not meet in person: in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, both Clifford and Judah attend a dinner at the beginning of the film, but do not meet face-to-face. Drawing a box outline around a protagonist indicates that a shared scene, or scene sequence, is experienced through that particular protagonist's perspective, elevating him to a position of dominance³³. Sometimes a scene is shared equally. At the end of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, Judah and Clifford do finally meet and exchange words at Ben's daughter's wedding reception, in a scene that sums up the entire film. Our schema indicates this by

omitted a third protagonist in this schema, since his presence or absence would not alter the indicative pattern in any essential way.

³³ I retain the use of the word 'protagonist' even when the character yields temporary dominance to another in a scene, since the audience is aware that this character is, or has been, a protagonist in his own strand.

placing *both* protagonists within a single box. In terms of subplots, it is interesting to note that not only is it possible for *minor characters* to take up the role of supporting a protagonist within his own strand (as in canonical stories), but that the protagonists themselves may undertake supporting roles in each other's strands. In *Crash*, for example, Farhad's and Jean's treatment of Daniel is part of the subplot that explores the fear and prejudice from their perspectives³⁴. This sort of formal flexibility adds to the sense of verisimilitude associated with multistrand narrative by reminding one of the multiple roles and identities that one may be forced to adopt in one's life. Below is a brief summary of the subcategory's structural approach:

1. A fluid macrostructure meant to reflect the ambivalent, multifarious and serendipitous nature of contemporary Western society.
2. Is varied in its placement, number and sequence of specific structures such as turning points and acts within the macrostructure.
3. Binds the various strands by exploring the story premise from the perspectives of different protagonists whose lives invite comparison through coincidence, theme, moral and philosophical imperatives, as well as through stylistic devices.
4. May refrain from signalling changes in the syuzhet's temporal and spatial sequencing of events within an otherwise normal ontological/existential frame.
5. Avoids facile endings.

³⁴ Although this example comes from a complex multistrand narrative, it remains true for the simple multistrand category too.

7.4 Complex Multistrand Narrative

Complex multistrand narrative, by contrast, not only appends additional strands to its structure, but may also discombobulate the temporal and spatial order of events, albeit solely at the level of the syuzhet. Here again, we are reminded of the important characteristics of this subcategory:

1. A single fabula arranges multiple strands featuring multiple protagonists (promoting differing perspectives of the premise). Binds the strands according to a mixture of influences, some direct, some diffuse, radiating out from the presence of a common object, place, or event, and some transcendental, arising out of the thematic, moral, philosophical and stylistic parallels and contrasts.
2. Dispenses with a discernible set-up and exposition.
3. Character density conveyed through inter-personal relationships.
4. Falls within the general category of Drama in that all of the strands explore the far-reaching consequences of unintended actions from a serious perspective.
5. Promotes a sense of unity between the strands through the use of various stylistic and technical devices, such as parallel editing and match cutting.
6. May employ temporal and spatial discombobulation through breaks in narrative sequence, as well as through a lack of exposition and signalling devices, to give rise to an uncommunicative syuzhet, which nonetheless reduces to a coherent fabula due to an existentially normal spatio-temporal frame.

7. Displays a strong sense of verisimilitude, typical of the Drama genre, and stemming, in part, from its non-contrived strand endings that echo the chanciness of human existence, while simultaneously highlighting the interconnectedness of all things.

This subcategory contains narratives that consist of four or more individual strands. Although I do not set the upper limit on the number of strands, I point out that as the number of narrative strands increases, so does the burden on an audience's ability to track and order multifarious characters and events. Narratives with more than ten strands, for example, may require that the screenwriter employ different narrative strategies, perhaps in new categories, than the ones explored in this thesis. In his analysis of *City of Hope*, Hassler-Forest declares that the film's twenty-five strands create a tapestry in which the 'narratives are impossible to separate. [...] We know they [the characters] are connected because we see them in the same frame without a cut' (p. 21). Curiously, Hassler-Forest offers no explanation why he includes this film within his 'multiple narrative category' alongside a film such as *Shortcuts*, with its ten separate strands. It is my contention that such a large number of strands will always require special treatment, and ought perhaps to be dealt with in a separate category. Since such narratives are rare in Hollywood, I do not embark upon this here.

Figure 14 (below) presents an indicative snapshot of the complex multistrand category's structural approach.

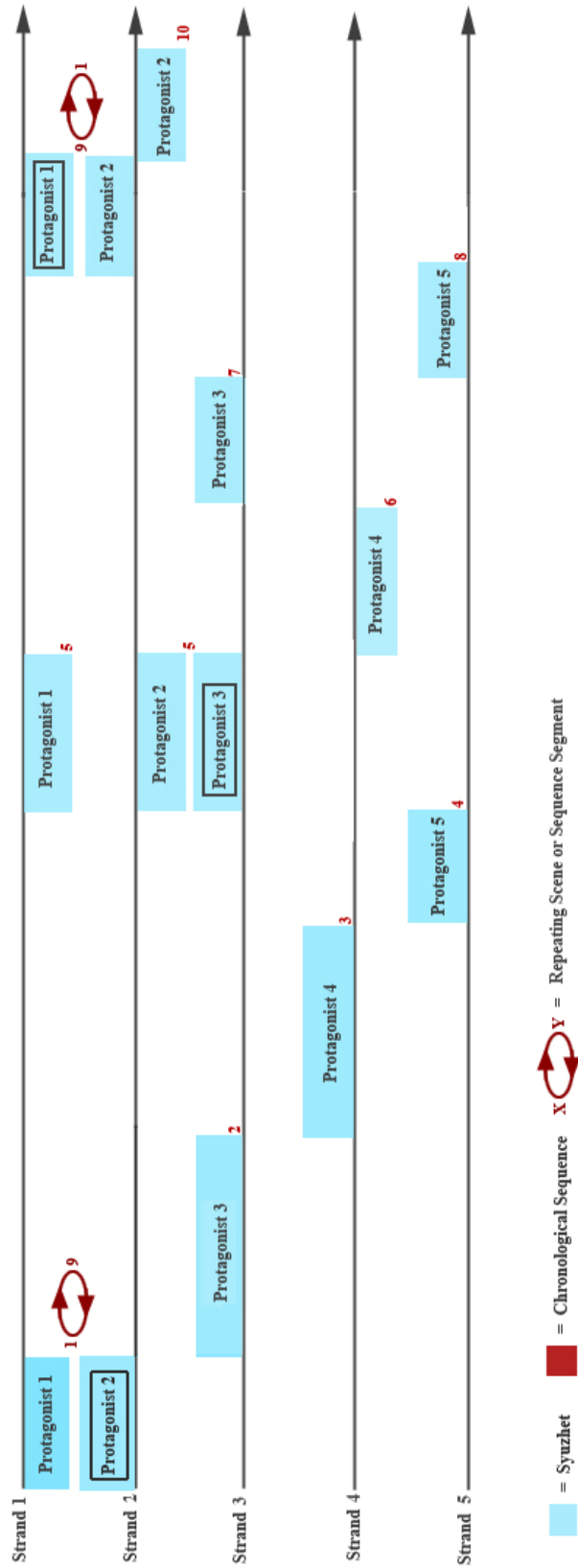


Fig.14

As with the previous schemas, this diagram does not attempt an exhaustive listing and tracking of narrative elements; instead, it focuses on some of the most important flows that differentiate it from canonical, multiform, and simple multistrand narratives and presents this pattern as indicative of the whole. It is my contention that a familiarity with such flows allows the screenwriter to combine canonical wisdom (at the level of character and scenes) with a new understanding of macrostructures, which, through their very shape encode the social, cultural, moral, and philosophical concerns of contemporary Western society, to produce fresh and relevant narratives. Importantly, then, the complex multistrand subcategory presents four or more strands driven by four or more protagonists. As in simple multistrand narrative, this category binds the strands through the sorts of techniques and devices that we have examined in our previous case studies – parallel editing and the contrasts and parallels in theme, philosophy, symbol, moral choice, location, and general situation. Such parallels and contrasts allow the narrative to explore the overall premise or argument from multiple perspectives in a deeper and fuller way than traditional narrative allows.

Complex multistrand narratives, however, go further than their counterparts in that they may occasionally allow for a discombobulation of the narrative sequence at the level of the syuzhet, in a way that disorients its audience, mimicking the *subjective* experience of the characters themselves, as they seek to understand the complexity of events that surround them – a subjectivity that Syd Field has identified as central to the screenwriting revolution. In *Babel*, for example, we learn from Amelia’s perspective that Richard’s wife, Susan, is in hospital in Morocco after being shot, and that this has delayed the Joneses’ return. Amelia, who is eager to

attend her son's wedding across the border in Mexico, is instructed over the phone that she is to stay with the children until other arrangements can be made. The *syuzhet*, then jumps back to reveal the events that have led up to the shooting, as seen from the perspective of the Joneses and other protagonists, before replaying the earlier phone conversation between Amelia and Richard towards the end of the film, but this time from Richard Jones' point of view.

Our schema indicates this type of discombobulation in two ways: firstly, the red rotating arrows and scene numbers in our schema indicate a reoccurring scene, and secondly, that the preferential perspective of this repeating scene has changed. Additionally, the schema differentiates between two or more protagonists – one whose point of view dominates the scene (indicated by a box outline), and another who may cohabit the scene *in a supporting* role. In *Crash*, for example, Farhad shares the stage with Daniel at his shop. The scene, however, is experienced through Farhad's perspective. Later, the men once again appear in a scene. Farhad's gun misfires and Daniel's young daughter survives. Here, the perspective is clearly Daniel's.

Below, then, is the final list of broad structural strategies:

1. A fluid macrostructure meant to reflect the ambivalent, multifarious and serendipitous nature of contemporary society.
2. Variation in the placement, number and sequence of specific structural components such as turning points and acts within the macrostructure.

3. Binds the various strands by exploring the premise, or argument, from different perspectives by offering us protagonists whose lives invite comparison through coincidence, theme, moral and philosophical imperatives and stylistic devices.
4. May refrain from signalling changes in the syuzhet's temporal and spatial sequencing of events within an otherwise normal ontological/existential frame.
5. Avoids facile endings.

7.5 Conclusion

This concludes the final task of this chapter, and this thesis in general, which has been to suggest that a range of factors, and in particular, the rise of digital media, seen against a postmodern context, has fostered a sense of *ontological confusion* within the collective mind with regard to notions of time, space, identity and agency, due, in part, to the habitual and widespread transgression of the virtual/real world boundary. Aesthetically, this has expressed itself in the way that we construct the fabula from a syuzhet that seeks to embody changes to the common ethos through shifts in its own structure. Hollywood's response is not all that surprising. This is an industry which, after all, is no stranger to adaptation, innovation and a continual search for novelty. Having absorbed the challenges of sound, television, and the collapse of the studio system as a monolithic entity in the early to middle part of the last century, and having itself experimented with art modes in the past, it is once more fighting back by offering more complex narratives as a response to the ever-rising popularity of computer games, online-based practices, and growing

sophistication of its audiences. While acknowledging other influences on the industry, such as embracing newer types of digital production equipment, as well as the buying-up of game companies, theme parks, and online services by conglomerates which have an equal stake in film, television, and the wider entertainment industries, this thesis has concentrated on how the shape or form of film narrative itself is being updated to reflect the changes to the wider social fabric itself which, in turn, feed back into the stories we tell.

One way that Hollywood is specifically reflecting these changes is by embracing new narrative patterns that I have described as *multistrand* and *multiform* structures. These patterns, as I have often indicated in this thesis, do not only mimic the freedoms and variety of new digital media such as video games and internet forms; they reflect the ontological ambiguity and obfuscating multiplicity of modern life. By following this trend, Hollywood is adding relevance and verisimilitude to its already brimming reservoir of glamour, sexiness, and nostalgia. In terms of the actual structures themselves, I have identified four *main* subcategories – two within each class: *open* or *closed* multiform, and *simple* or *complex* multistrand narrative. With regards to multiform narrative, I have also allowed for a special case scenario in which two or more fabulas may co-exist, exhibiting characteristics from both subcategories, with a leaning towards either one. In the case of *Next*, this leaning is towards the closed multiform subcategory, since the syuzhet clearly allows for a preferential (hierarchical) fabula, aided by a redundant use of markers and explicatory devices. I regard the special case scenario as a kind of nursery for multiform films, where new and unexpected games may be played and reassembled.

With regards to the multiform category *in general*, I have placed particular emphasis on the need to establish/construct the referential or denotative meaning of a text prior to seeking to decode its more abstract levels – hence my focus on spatio-temporal coherence of the diegetic world(s). My treatment of the *multistrand* narrative, by contrast, has been somewhat different, since it is ontologically less complex and operates within a normal spatio-temporal environment, while still managing to reflect the obfuscating convolutions of contemporary society. This complexity is typically conveyed through the deployment of multiple protagonists operating in multiple strands, and occasionally, through the discombobulation of the syuzhet’s event sequencing. Here, I have concentrated on how characters, themes, symbols and technical devices, such as parallel editing, help to create and sustain meaning across strands, primarily through parallels and contrasts.

At the level of drama, *strands*, much like different existential frames in the open multiform category, and plot and subplot in canonical film, allow for the emergence of different perspectives on the overall argument. In differentiating between the two subcategories in the multistrand class, I have suggested a limit of three strands for *simple* and four or more for *complex* narratives. Additionally, while continuing to maintain the importance of referential meaning of the text, I draw attention to the connotative levels of this category of film – its implicit, explicit, and on occasion, its symptomatic, or repressed meaning. But perhaps most radically, I have suggested that multistrand narrative generates a single fabula, or *metastory*, despite the diversity in characters, locations and goals. In doing so, I have ventured that the use of transcendental elements such as theme, mood, formal structural patterns, as well as a strong presence of motifs and symbols, may collectively and legitimately

function as ordering and meaning-making mechanisms guiding the fabula to make sense of an ostensibly diverse syuzhet.

Finally, whilst I am hopeful that I have gone some way in demystifying some of the more covert narrative strategies emerging from contemporary Hollywood screenwriting by expressing them as an effervescence of the postmodern ethos, and have rendered them as indicative schemas to guide the writer, I note that the study of narrative form can, of course, never be complete, since our stories and culture evolve even as we do. I offer the work contained in these pages, therefore, not as the end of a journey, but as the first steps towards establishing and testing new screenwriting methodologies that may, in due course, equal the coverage, detail, and utility of their canonical rivals.

APPENDIX 1 – AVATAR: SYUZHET BREAKDOWN

1. A flying point-of-view shot over an exotic forest. A voice-over relates that these images are part of a dream. / **2.** Close-up on an eye opening. We see a man, Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) waking up inside a cryo-chamber. We learn from the voice-over that he has been in cryo-stasis for six years. The chamber door slides open to reveal that it is one of many inside a giant spaceship. Floating in zero gravity, the crew informs the man that they have arrived at their destination. / **3.** In a series of flashbacks, aided by voice-over, we learn that Jake has replaced his identical twin brother, a scientist who was murdered a week prior to shipping out. / **4.** A series of shots reveals the spaceship hovering over a moon circling a planet. The voice-over informs us that this is Pandora. / **5.** A flashback shows Jake being informed of the opportunity to step into his brother's shoes. Because they shared the same genome, Jake can take over the role and avoid the company's substantial investment in his brother from going to waste. This amounts to a fresh start for Jake with good pay to boot. A button is pushed and his brother's coffin is incinerated. This is cremation without ceremony. / **6.** A smaller ship cuts across the misty Pandora sky. / **7.** Inside, the men – a group of marines – are asked to put their oxygen masks on and strap in as the ship prepares to land on the surface of the moon. / **8.** The spacecraft lands at Pandora's base and the marines exit. / **9.** As he exits in a wheel chair, we notice for the first time that Jake is crippled from the waist down. His voice-over informs us that his condition is reversible but the cost is prohibitive. We also learn that the marines are there on behalf of the Company, implying that it needs protection from the local inhabitants. / **10.** Just then a huge truck thunders by with arrows sticking out of its wheels. / **11.** At a briefing Colonel Miles Quaritch (Stephen Lang) informs the

marines that Pandora is a dangerous place peopled by a variety of deadly creatures, not least of all the *Na'vi*, the tall tough humanoid inhabitants of Pandora who favour bows and arrows tipped in a deadly neurotoxin that kills within one minute. The only way to stay alive is to obey the rules. / **12.** Jake meets Norm Spellman (Joel Moore) who shows him through the lab. We learn that specially grown Avatars – humanoid creatures assembled from a mixture of human and Na'vi DNA – allow 'Avatar Drivers' to mix with the local Na'vi communities. Jake is introduced to his avatar, a large slumbering creature floating in a tank. Jake remarks that it looks like his brother. Norm reminds him that the creature is now Jake's avatar. / **13.** Jake begins documenting his experiences on camera, explaining that each avatar is matched to a specific human's nervous system and since the avatar was partly constituted from his brother's DNA, it and Jake are perfectly matched. / **14.** In the lab, the door of a link unit opens to reveal Dr. Grace Augustine (Sigourney Weaver) emerging from her Avatar Drive. / **15.** Jake is introduced to her, but she seems dismissive of him, declaring that he has not had enough training to step into his brother's shoes. / **16.** Grace confronts Parker Selfridge (Giovanni Ribisi) in the control tower and they argue about a general lack of progress. He accuses Grace's program of failing to placate the Na'vi despite the Company building schools and teaching them English. Grace counters that this tends to happen when the Company uses machine guns as the primary tool of enforcement. Parker reminds her that the only reason the Company is here is to mine the precious *unobtanium* only available on Pandora. Grace is supposed to be finding a diplomatic solution to the problems with the indigenous population, not arguing with him. / **17.** We cut to a shot in which the avatars are being prepared to fuse with their human drivers. / **18.** Grace points Norm and Jake to their link units. She is dismayed to hear that this is to be Jake's first

‘drive’. Refusing help, Jake struggles into his link unit. Grace closes the door over him and instructs her team to initiate the link. She announces that she is going in herself. / **19**. We close in on Jake’s face inside the link unit, and then rip through a birth-canal-like tunnel. / **20**. The next cut is to a blurry shot of the lab surroundings from avatar Jake’s point-of-view. Scientists in masks lean over his field of view flashing a torch, and declare that Jake’s retinal reflexes are good. / **21**. We cut to a shot of Jake’s avatar staring up at us. He smiles as he flexes his fingers. The scientists welcome Jake to his new body. Next to him, avatar Norm is testing his muscle control. Avatar Jake is thrilled to be able to wriggle ‘his’ toes, something he has not been able to do since his accident. Excited by his newly found freedom, he disobeys instructions to take it easy and gets to his feet, virtually trashing the lab with uncontrolled movement of arms, legs, and tail. / **22**. He rushes out of the lab into the courtyard where other avatars are playing basketball. He is pursued by lab technicians and avatar Norm. Refusing to stop, avatar Jake begins running, luxuriating in his restored ability to use his legs. / **23**. We cut to a shot of the human Jake in his link unit, as his eyes dart under closed lids, as if in REM sleep. / **24**. His avatar skids to a halt, breathing in the Pandoran air and feeling the soil beneath his bare toes in a celebration of the senses. Avatar Grace appears and throws him a red fruit. Avatar Jake bites into it, grinning joyfully at the taste. / **25**. Avatar Grace empties the avatar living quarters of humans and closes the large wooden doors behind them. She switches off the lights and she and the rest, including avatar Jake, settle in to sleep for the night. He closes his eyes. / **26**. He immediately reopens them (in a close-up) inside his link unit back at the lab. He struggles back into his wheelchair. / **27**. One of the chopper pilots, Trudy Chacon (Michelle Rodriguez) shows Jake around the hanger and tells him that he will man one of the guns in the

next flight. / **28.** Jake wanders into the gym where Colonel Quaritch is working out. Quaritch tells Jake that his marine training combined with an avatar body makes him very useful. He asks Jake to learn all that he can about the Na'vi while part of the scientific team, but report everything to him. In return, he will see to it that Jake gets the operation to restore the use of his legs when he gets back home. Jake agrees. / **29.** Jake enters his link unit. Grace tells him to keep his mouth shut and follow Norm's lead. / **30.** The helicopter flies over the magnificent Pandoran landscapes, skimming over waterfalls and rivers. The chopper lands and Jake, Norm, and Grace, as avatars, jump out, followed by the marines. / **31.** They walk through the dank rain forest in the cyan gloom. Avatars Grace and Norm take readings of the interacting root systems as Jake wanders off, encountering an enchanting variety of flora and fauna, the most impressive being shoulder-high spiral plants that suck down into a tube when he tries to touch them. / **32.** Suddenly, a ferocious looking creature, resembling a six-legged rhinoceros but twice as large, its massive head-bone projections giving it a distinct hammerhead shark appearance, confronts avatar Jake. Avatar Grace rushes to his side and commands him to stand his ground. He does so, growing overconfident at his seeming success as the creature retreats. He fails to see that directly behind him, a *thanator*, a six-limbed black panther-like predator from hell, is poised to pounce on him. Avatar Grace shouts that he should run. The *thanator*, all claws and glistening jaws, crashes after him. Avatar Jake finally manages to escape by jumping into a thundering cataract and swimming to shore. / **33.** Back on land and having lost his weapon, he fashions a spear out of a broken branch and snakes through the forest cautiously as a pair of golden eyes watch from the trees high above. / **34.** This is Neytiri, a striking young Na'vi woman. She is about to let off an arrow at the unsuspecting Jake but hesitates as a floating *woodsprite*, resembling a dandelion

seed, but much larger, settles on the arrow's tip. Puzzled, she lowers her bow. / **35**. From the chopper, avatars Grace and Norm peer down into the forest as they sweep low over the canopy. Trudy announces that she has to turn back before nightfall. Jake will just have to wait until morning to be rescued. She points the chopper back towards the base. / **36**. Avatar Jake fashions a torch out his T-shirt and forest materials and manages to light it. He dashes through the foliage, sweeping the torch in wide arcs to ward off an assortment of lurking predators, but at last, he is encircled by *viperwolves*, six-limbed creatures resembling hyenas. / **37**. After a brief fierce struggle, it seems that the viperwolves are about to rip avatar Jake to shreds when Neytiri's arrows and knife sends them scurrying away. Tracking the wounded viperwolves, she whispers some words over them and ends their misery by cutting their throats. He tries to thank her but she responds angrily, blaming him for their death. She retorts that she has saved him because he has a strong and courageous heart, despite being inexperienced, like a child. He tries to follow her but she pushes him away. / **38**. Suddenly, the wood sprites return and settle on him. Taking this as a sign of his true worth, she decides to take him back to her clan with her. / **39**. As they move through the forest, avatar Jake is toppled by a bolo. Several Na'vi riders surround him, amongst them Tsu'tey, the lead rider who describes him as a demon. Neytiri intervenes on his behalf, declaring that there has been a sign and that his fate is now a matter for the *Tsahik*, the tribe's Shaman. / **40**. We notice for the first time that the riders and steeds are linked to each other via *queues* – tendril-like neural-links with which they can connect and disconnect at will, allowing for an intimate bond driven by shared thoughts and emotions. / **41**. Avatar Jake is hauled to Neytiri's village, which is sheltered inside a gargantuan tree with a trunk several times larger than the largest Sequoia, and supported by massive mangrove-like structures.

Eytukan, the clan leader, and Neytiri's father, appears and demands to know why Neytiri has brought the 'alien dreamwalker' here. She tells him that a sign from *Eywa*, the Na'vi's highest Deity, prevented her from killing him. Mo'at, the clan's matriarch arrives and proceeds to examine avatar Jake. She draws blood with a long thorn and tastes it. Learning that he is the first dreamwalker warrior they have ever encountered, they decide that they will keep him alive to learn more from him, much like he wants to learn more about them. Neytiri is to be his teacher. / **42**. After a communal meal around the campfire, Neytiri leads him to woven hammocks suspended at the sleeping level of the giant tree. They each settle in for the night. Avatar Jake closes his eyes. / **43**. A white light envelops the screen. Grace is gently slapping the sleeping Jake inside his link unit, trying to wake him up. At the mess hall, they exchange comments about recent events. / **44**. Jake reports to Quaritch and Selfridge. He learns that the village is sitting on top of a rich deposit of unobtanium. Jake has three months to persuade the Na'vi to move out before being forced to do so by the military. / **45**. With not a moment to waste, Grace gives Jake a crash course in clan matters even while he prepares to link back to his avatar through his link unit. / **46**. Back in, avatar Jake receives his first lesson from Neytiri on riding a *direhorse*, a six-legged steed. She shows him how to link with the animal using his queues – the neural link which allows the Na'vi to communicate with all living things through the power of thought. The animal bolts and avatar Jake falls into the mud, much to the amusement of passing mounted warriors. / **47**. At the Operations Centre, Jake informs Quaritch, Selfridge and a few engineers and officers about his progress at Hometree. / **48**. Grace informs Jake that she will not allow Quaritch and Selfridge a free hand in micro-managing Na'vi/human relations. She announces that she, Jake and Norm will set up a base in Site 26 in the Hallelujah Mountains. Norm is thrilled

at the thought of spending time in the legendary Floating Mountains of Pandora. / **49**. A Samson chopper skims the rainforest, climbing into the mist-covered mountains. Norm and Grace's unconscious avatars are in the chopper's back compartment. Jake takes in the awe-inspiring magnificence of the enormous floating islands of rock as they appear from behind the mist and clouds. / **50**. At Site 26, Grace shows Jake to his link unit. / **51**. Back on the Hometree and in avatar form, Jake learns first hand about the challenges of flying the huge mountain *banshee*, a large dragon-like creature with a ten-meter wingspan. Neytiri connects to her banshee through her queue. She tells avatar Jake that once a banshee has made the link with its rider, the creature will ride with only one hunter for its entire life. It is therefore imperative that when selecting a banshee, both the rider and banshee choose each other. Neytiri proceeds to demonstrate the rudiments of flight through example. / **52**. At Site 26, Jake reluctantly documents the day's events in front of a video camera. His voice floats over a series of scenes showing Neytiri teaching him language and hunting skills. They blend with a shot of Norm likewise attempting to teach him the subtleties of the language. / **53**. Jake struggles back to his link unit. / **54**. Avatar Jake leaps, swings and runs along the forest canopy, keeping up with Neytiri. His voice-over underscores the fact that he is improving day by day. / **55**. A series of shots continues to reveal the range of his education: tracking, learning about the inner life of animals – the spirit of the planet. / **56**. Back in the lab, Grace questions his description of events, but Jake proudly defends his report. Clearly, he is beginning to identify with his life as an avatar. / **57**. Neytiri demonstrates how to soften one's fall when leaping from the canopy by using the giant leaves beneath. Avatar Jake's attempt is less successful. He crashes through the branches and onto the ground. He struggles to his feet. / **58**. Jake sits up in his link unit wearily, indicating an increasing blurring

between his twin forms of existence. / **59.** His voice-over continues as we see Grace in avatar form, surrounded by children from the village – the first time she has visited since the school was closed down. / **60.** At the Site 26 station, Grace prevents an overeager Jake from climbing back into his link unit and places some food in front of him. / **61.** Avatar Jake and Neytiri continue to explore the wonders of the forest and its creatures. / **62.** Grace gently guides the sleeping Jake to his bed at Site 26. / **63.** As Neytiri fine-tunes avatar Jake’s bow and arrow technique, an intimate look passes between them. She steps back, surprised by it. Jake’s voice-over floats over a series of shots, showing Neytiri drinking water from large purple leaves, then enacts a simple burial ceremony. We learn through his continuing voice-over of the Na’vi belief that a shared energy connects all living things. The energy is only borrowed and must be returned in death. / **64.** Under Neytiri’s gaze, avatar Jake makes his first kill, speaking words of respect over the dead creature. Neytiri announces that he is finally ready. / **65.** Avatar Jake, Neytiri and a group of other young riders led by Tsu’tey dismount and climb up a chain of floating boulders, held up by vines, tree roots, and the unobtainium ore inside the rock. Using the vines, avatar Jake and the rest of the group make the difficult ascent to the Mons Veritatis, a huge mass of rock which houses the banshee rookery. / **66.** Neytiri rides in on her Banshee. Tsu’tey announces that avatar Jake is to be the first outsider to choose and be chosen by a banshee. As avatar Jake approaches a group of banshees, Neytiri tells him to choose from his heart. Using a lasso, he throws the rope around the creature and manages to mount it, but is immediately thrown off. He mounts it again and manages to make the bond with his queue. Both he and the Banshee launch off the cliff. The flight is rough and uneven at first, but gradually settles into a smooth glide. / **67.** Neytiri mounts her own banshee and joins avatar Jake as they swoop over the glorious Pandoran

landscape, joined in time by Tsu'tey and the other young riders. / **68.** Back at Site 26, Grace expresses the desire to get a sample from the Tree of Souls, the Na'vi's most sacred place. / **69.** Avatar Jake and Neytiri are hunting with their banshees when suddenly a Leonopteryx, a creature similar to a banshee, only several times bigger, attacks them from above. They manage to evade it by flying lower into the thicker part of the forest where the larger creature cannot follow. Avatar Jake and Neytiri laugh joyfully at their triumph. / **70.** That night by the light of the camp fires at Hometree, Neytiri shows him the bones of a great Leonopteryx. She tells him that her grandfather was one of the few to ride such a creature. The event brought the warring clans together at a time of great sorrow, and the story has become legend. / **71.** Jake wakes inside his link unit. His voice-over informs us that his experiences with the Na'vi now feel like the true world, while his life in his human body feels like the dream. He continues his record-keeping in front of the video camera, expressing disbelief that three months have already elapsed. He confesses that he can hardly remember his old life, or indeed, who he truly is anymore. / **72.** Colonel Quaritch approaches him in the empty mess hall, complaining that Jake no longer files reports – not that it matters. Jake's information on the Tree of Souls has given Quaritch all that he needs to get rid of the Na'vi. He tells Jake that his mission is over and he is no longer required to go back in as an avatar. As reward for his work, Jake is to get his legs back. He can leave for earth that very evening. Jake persuades Quaritch to let him rejoin the Na'vi one more time in order to take part in a ceremony that will confirm his status as a Na'vi man. He can then negotiate the terms of their relocation as one of them. Quaritch unenthusiastically grants Jake permission to do so. / **73.** Neytiri paints avatar Jake's face and body in preparation for *uniltaron* – the Dream Hunt ceremony. In a final gesture of acceptance, the clan lays hands on him,

forming a network of connections that echoes the interconnected networks that exist between all living things in Pandora. / **74.** He and Neytiri frolic amongst the spectral radiance of a special part of the forest. It is a scene of enchanting beauty. Avatar Jake connects his queue to the Tree of Voices, listening to the sounds of the ancestors who live inside Eywa. Neytiri tells him that he can now choose himself a woman. He and Neytiri kiss for the first time, choosing each other and making love in this enchanted place. Neytiri declares that they are now mated for life. / **75.** With sunlight breaking through the forest canopy, Neytiri awakens to the intrusive sound of machines felling trees. Desperately, she tries to wake her slumbering mate, but fails to do so. / **76.** At Site 26, Grace is insisting that Jake eat something before reestablishing the link with his avatar. / **77.** Desperate, Neytiri tries to drag him out of harm's way. / **78.** Grace prevents Jake from establishing the link, threatening to force-feed him. / **79.** Neytiri attempts to drag him away from the path of the giant tractor and falling trees. / **80.** At Site 26, Jake hurriedly bolts down his food, so that he can reestablish his link with his avatar. / **81.** In the forest, Neytiri's struggle to save avatar Jake continues. / **82.** Jake finishes eating and lies back in his link unit. / **83.** Meanwhile, Neytiri is losing the struggle to drag him out of harm's way. / **84.** In his link unit, Jake closes his eyes. The link initiates. / **85.** Through his point-of-view, we see Neytiri come into focus over him, urging him to wake up. He does so, jumping to his feet and calling out for the machine to stop. / **86.** Through a remote video link, Selfridge instructs that the machine should keep rolling. / **87.** Avatar Jake leaps up onto the gigantic tractor, smashing the camera. He grabs Neytiri and pulls her away from danger. / **88.** From the distance, Tsu'tey and his fellow riders, who are wearing war paint, observe the onslaught of the machines. / **89.** In the command center, Quaritch, Selfridge and his crew recognize avatar Jake from a close-up captured before he smashed the cameras.

Quaritch indicates that he will fly to the site in person. / **90.** Eytukan announces that Tsu'tey will lead the war party against the humans. Avatar Grace tries unsuccessfully to intervene. Avatar Jake and Neytiri announce to the gathering that they are mated. Tsu'tey is furious, for Neytiri was promised to him. / **91.** Mo'at reminds Neytiri that if she chooses this path she cannot aspire to her rightful and elevated position in the clan. Neytiri confirms her decision. Tsu'tey challenges avatar Jake to a fight. Meanwhile, choppers arrive and drop marines into the forest. / **92.** Avatar Jake punches Tsu'tey to the ground and demands to be heard. / **93.** Quaritch barges into Site 26 and interrupts the link to Grace's avatar. / **94.** Avatar Grace falls unconscious to the ground. / **95.** Quaritch breaks the link to Jake's Avatar. / **96.** Avatar Jake falls to the ground just as he is about to announce his true purpose to the clan. Tsu'tey is about to cut avatar Jake's throat when Neytiri intervenes, defending her unconscious mate. / **97.** Jake awakens in his link unit and is immediately confronted by Quaritch who punches him in the face. Quaritch instructs his men to take him away. / **98.** In the control room, Grace talks of the neuron-like connections between the trees in the forest. She asserts that the Na'vi can upload and download data – memories – using this vast network. Indeed, all living things on Pandora are intimately and inexorably intertwined. Harming one harms the other. Humans need to understand this if they are to make progress with the Na'vi, but Selfridge dismisses this as mumbo-jumbo. Quaritch accesses one of Jake's video logs in which Jake claims that the humans have nothing to offer the Na'vi. Quaritch uses this to assert that force is therefore the only avenue left to him, since negotiation is pointless. / **99.** Selfridge instructs Quaritch to 'pull the trigger' on the Na'vi. / **100.** Trudy informs Grace and Jake that Quaritch has mobilized the gunships. / **101.** Grace confronts Selfridge and convinces him that killing children is bad publicity. Jake persuades Selfridge to try once again

to get the Na'vi to move. Selfridge gives Jake and Grace one hour to do so before sending in the troops. / **102.** Jake and Grace enter their link units in preparation for re-establishing the connection to their avatars. / **103.** At Hometree, avatars Jake and Grace warn the Na'vi of the forthcoming attack. In doing so, avatar Jake is forced to admit his original role as a spy, although he has now, in effect, changed sides. Neytiri is furious. Tsu'tey and the others force him to his knees. / **104.** Overhead, the gunships close in on Hometree. / **105.** Avatars Grace and Jake, tied to a rack, urge the clan to run. / **106.** From his command chopper, Quaritch instructs that gas canisters be fired into Hometree. / **107.** The Na'vi try to stand their ground but bows and arrows are no match for the heavily armed gunships. / **108.** The gunships begin bombing Hometree. The Na'vi scatter, retreating into the forest. / **109.** Mo'at frees avatars Jake and Grace, asking for their help. Avatar Jake leads them away as the gunships bombard the base pillars of Hometree. / **110.** Trudy rebels, turning her gunship away. / **111.** The Na'vi look on in horror, scattering as Hometree slowly topples over in flames, crashing all around them. They let out screams of anguish as they witness the hellish demise of their home and habitat. Quaritch congratulates his men on a job well done and orders that they head back to the base. / **112.** Neytiri stumbles over father's body. A large shard of wood protrudes from his chest like a spear. She wails in grief. With his dying breath, he gives her his bow and arrow, bestowing his role as leader to his daughter. Avatar Jake joins her, trying to comfort her, but she tells him to leave and never come back. / **113.** Selfridge issues orders to sever the link to Grace's and Jake's avatars. / **114.** Avatars Grace and Jake collapse to the ground while fires burn all around them. / **115.** Jake and Grace are dragged struggling from their link units. Norm and his fellow scientists are restrained to prevent them from interfering with the destruction of the Na'vi. / **116.** Grace's and

Jake's avatars are being pulled along the ground on hummocks by the retreating clan. / **117.** Grace, Norm, and Jake are held in a guarded containment chamber. Trudy comes in with a trolley of food, which turns out to be a ruse. She knocks out the guard and frees them. / **118.** The group manages to get to Trudy's gunship. Jake instructs one of the sympathetic scientists, Max, to stay behind and to help them from the inside. / **119.** Quaritch gets wind of the escape and fires on the gunship, but fails to stop it. / **120.** In Trudy's helicopter, Jake discovers that Grace has been shot during the escape. / **121.** Jake directs operations from the suspended module at Site 26 which is being airlifted by the Chopper towards the Hallelujah Mountains and the Well of Souls, the place where Ewe's presence is the most palpable and where the clan is most likely to go. Jake assures Grace that the Na'vi will help her. / **122.** The clan has indeed gathered at the Well of Souls. / **123.** The link module is placed on the ground. Jake enters his link unit. / **124.** Avatar Jake wakes up in the burnt out surrounds of Hometree, now abandoned by the clan. / **125.** His voice-over declares that in order to help the Na'vi against their human enemies, he will have to take things to a higher level. His banshee arrives. He mounts it and declares that his banshee will not like what he is about to do. Flying above a giant Leonopteryx, avatar Jake manages to avoid detection by the giant creature. He closes in over the unsuspecting Leonopteryx and leaps upon its back. / **126.** The clan, singing a prayer at the Well of Souls, looks up as avatar Jake, mounted on the giant creature, lands then walks amongst them. They bow before him in awe and respect. Even Neytiri is amazed by his feat, accepting him back into the clan. Avatar Jake asks for, and receives, Tsu'tey's commitment of help in the coming fight with the humans. Mastery over the giant Leonopteryx has once more brought strength and unity to the people. Avatar Jake carries Grace's human body, followed by Norm, who carries

avatar Grace. / **127.** Avatar Jake asks for Mo'at's help to save Grace. Mo'at directs avatars Norm and Jake to place Grace's avatar and human bodies amongst the roots which serve as an altar. She declares that if Ewe so wishes, she can take all that Grace is in her human form and permanently transfer her essence into her avatar body, in effect making Grace a true Na'vi. Fine glowing threads emerge from the roots and gently envelope Grace's human skin. The root cilia connect with the queue of Grace's avatar. / **128.** But she is too weak from the wound to respond. The transformation fails, despite the participation of the entire clan who are promoting the process through their own queues. Mo'at gently tells avatar Jake that Grace is with Eywa now. / **129.** With Neytiri by his side, and Tsu'tey translating, avatar Jake instructs the people to fly out as far as they can and gather the other clans for the coming battle against the humans. Avatar Jake's mastery over the great Leonopteryx pitted against the mighty human war machines, will be the catalyst which will once more unite the diverse clans of Pandora against a common enemy. The people scatter to do his bidding as he and Neytiri take to the skies upon the mighty Leonopteryx. Jake's voice-over floats over scenes that depict the various clans coming together to form a formidable force under his watchful gaze. / **130.** At the Operations Base, Quaritch is likewise marshalling his troops for the coming battle. In order to prevent them from being overrun by mounting Na'vi numbers, Quaritch declares that there will be a pre-emptive strike on the Na'vi's holiest of places – the Well of Souls which is home to their Deity, Eywa. / **131.** Jake's inside man, Max, informs him and the others of Quaritch's plans. Jake declares that although outgunned, the Na'vi will have home advantage. Additionally, radar guided missiles will not work in the mountains. / **132.** That night, avatar Jake pleads with Eywa to help them defeat the humans. / **133.** Next morning, the gunships take to the skies in numbers. Quaritch

conducts operations from a large command shuttle. / **134.** Avatar Jake leads the clan to battle from the sky. / **135.** On the ground, marines bolstered by a contingent of troops in armoured suits, trudge through the forest. / **136.** Then all at once, from the sky and from land, the Na'vi attack. Arrows punch through the choppers' shields and the marines' armour plating. Trudy joins the battle in her chopper, firing on Quaritch's shuttle. / **137.** Losses are heavy on both sides when things take a turn for the worse for the Na'vi. Trudy's chopper goes down under fire. Neytiri's banshee is shot down. Tsu'tey, too, is shot while attacking the command shuttle. Avatar Norm is shot and regains consciousness in human form, clutching his chest at the spot where his avatar was wounded. Quaritch's shuttle closes in on the Well of Souls for the kill. Neytiri, ignoring avatar Jake's pleas to pull back, arms her bow for one last suicidal shot at the advancing troops. / **138.** She hesitates as the forest is suddenly overrun by dozens of rampaging Hammerheads. The skies above fill up with hundreds of wild banshees. Neytiri cries out triumphantly that Eywa has heard and answered their prayers. The banshees attack the choppers, ripping them out of the skies. A ferocious six-limbed Thanator approaches Neytiri and offers itself as her mount. / **139.** Norm, his avatar killed earlier, joins the fight in human form. / **140.** The battle has turned. Quaritch issues the command to drop the bombs on the Well of Souls. / **141.** Avatar Jake lands on the bomber craft and drops a hand grenade down one of its shafts before it can fire its missiles. The bomber explodes in a blaze of fire. / **142.** Avatar Jake next attacks the command shuttle, landing on its outer shell and ripping out one of its side missiles. / **143.** Quaritch, furious, clambers outside the shuttle and shoots at him. He misses. Avatar Jake releases the missile, which smashes into one of the rotors. The shuttle is disabled, spiralling to the ground. Quaritch straps himself into his mechanised armour and jumps off the plunging ship, landing safely on the

ground. His face is consumed with hatred as he trudges off in search of revenge for his failed mission. / **144.** Avatar Jake meanwhile has plummeted safely to the ground, breaking his fall on the large leaves beneath. / **145.** Neytiri, mounted on the Thanator, crashes into Quaritch. Quaritch kills the Thanator with a stab of his robotic arm, and is about to do the same to Neytiri, when avatar Jake appears and squares off against him. Outgunned but more agile, avatar Jake is able to outmanoeuvre Quaritch. Quaritch realises that the way to defeat him is to attack his link unit, thus severing Jake's connection to his avatar. / **146.** He smashes the module housing the link unit. The link unit malfunctions. / **147.** Jake's consciousness flickers between his human and avatar form long enough for his avatar to slow down and allow Quaritch to grab hold of him. / **148.** Meanwhile Neytiri has freed herself from beneath the dead Thanator and rushes to Jake's aid. Just as Quaritch is about to cut Jake's throat, Neytiri fires two arrows into Quaritch's chest. / **149.** Quaritch topples over, finally defeated. / **150.** Jake regains consciousness in his link unit inside the cabin. He struggles to breathe the inhospitable atmosphere in his human form. / **151.** Neytiri realises what has happened and rushes to the cabin. She places an oxygen mask over his face, reviving him and saving him for the second time in as many minutes. As they hold each other, they exchange the phrase, 'I see you', used by the Na'vi to communicate endearment and respect, acknowledging the mutual acceptance of each other despite obvious differences. / **152.** Jake's voice-over floats over the scene in which he and others of the clans watch as the humans are escorted to their ships that are to take them home. Only a few, such as Norm and Max, have decided to stay behind. Even the great Leonopteryx is no longer needed and flies off into the distance. / **153.** Jake's voice-over merges with the scene in which he speaks into his video log camera. He declares that this day, which happens to be his birthday, is the

last time he will be recording an entry. / **154.** As with Grace before him, Jake's human and avatar bodies are laying close together at the altar at the Well of Souls. The clan sways rhythmically all around. Mo'at and Neytiri lean over the two bodies. Neytiri kisses Jake's human face goodbye, and then moves over to his avatar, gently touching his face. / **155.** Jake suddenly opens his eyes to gaze upon Neytiri, the world, and us, no longer as an avatar, but as a Na'vi, reborn on this, his first true birthday.

APPENDIX 2 – *DONNIE DARKO*: SYUZHET BREAKDOWN

1. A boy in pyjamas, who we presume to be Donnie (Jake Gyllenhaal), wakes up on top of a mountain in the middle of the road at dawn. A strange humming sound is audible on the soundtrack. At first he seems confused, but then he smiles as if privy to some secret known only to him. / **2.** He arrives home and we are introduced, through a series of elegant long takes, to the people we presume are his family – his mother Mary (Mary McDonnell), his father Eddie (Holmes Osborne), and a sister, Elizabeth (Maggie Gyllenhaal). Judging by their reactions, this is not the first time that he has stayed out all night. Through a note stuck on the fridge we confirm that the boy's name is Donnie. / **3.** We cut to a night scene at the dinner table where we meet Donnie's youngest sister Samantha (Daveigh Chase), learn the family's names, and their conflicting political views. We also learn that Donnie is seeing a psychiatrist, that he has stopped taking his medication, and that Elizabeth has applied to go to Harvard. / **4.** After dinner, Rose questions Elizabeth in the passage about how long she had known that Donnie had stopped taking his medication. / **5.** Rose confronts her son in his bedroom. They exchange words and she leaves, upset by the encounter. / **6.** Through the closed door, she hears Donnie call her a bitch and is obviously hurt by this. / **7.** Feeling guilty, Donnie begins taking his medication once again. / **8.** That night, unable to sleep, Eddie goes downstairs to watch TV. The program features the Michael Dukakis versus George Bush Presidential election campaign. The clock shows midnight. Fade to black. / **9.** A title screen informs us that it is now October 2, 1998. The title fades to black. / **10.** We hear a disembodied voice on the sound track asking Donnie to 'wake up' and cut to an extreme close-up of an eye with an expanding pupil resembling a black hole. A line drawing of a

rabbit's head inside a circle is subliminally superimposed over it. / **11.** Donnie gets out of bed, appearing to be sleepwalking. The voice informs him, 'I've been watching you.' / **12.** Downstairs, he hesitates near his sleeping father. The transmission has ended for the night and the television screen is swirling with 'noise' to a distorted and barely audible *Star Spangled Banner*. / **13.** The voice leads Donnie out of the house where he sees a tall figure in a rabbit suit, who informs him that the world will end in 28 days, 6 hours, 42 minutes and 13 seconds. / **14.** We cut back to Eddie sleeping in the armchair. We hear the same kind of strange sounds that we heard on the mountain. / **15.** Upstairs, Rose is sleeping alone. / **16.** Elizabeth arrives home from a date and leans against the front door. She smiles as she hears a car hoot and pull away. / **17.** Suddenly, the chandelier shakes violently as something massive crashes into the house. Elizabeth sinks to the ground, sobbing. Eddie wakes, shocked, and runs upstairs. / **18.** It is morning. Two men wake Donnie up from his sleep on a golf course. They make jokes about 'sleep-golfing' and 'drool' spots. Donnie notices that he has written the day and time of the world's destruction on his forearm. He apologises to the men and stumbles off. / **19.** He comes home to find a crowd gathered outside. Firemen and government officials are removing a jet engine from his bedroom by crane. His family is relieved to see him. The FAA officials take Eddie and Rose to one side and get them to sign a confidentiality agreement that binds them to secrecy. They promise to take care of things while the family is temporarily relocated to a hotel. Elizabeth tells Donnie that the FAA has no idea where the jet engine came from. / **20.** At the hotel, the children exchange banter. / **21.** Eddie reminds Rose of another child, Frankie Feedler, who had died on his way to the prom. He remarks how lucky they are that Donnie has 'dodged his bullet'. It must be because 'someone was watching over him.' / **22.** The following day, Donnie and

Samantha are dropped off to wait for the school bus. Donnie's friends are already at the bus stop and treat him like a celebrity for having cheated death. / **23.** At school we are introduced to some of the film's main characters and their attitudes towards each other through four remarkably economical and seamless long takes, which vary in speed from slow to fast motion, suggesting the differing ways we experience time. There are the two sneering, coke-sniffing boys, a disapproving and judgmental gym teacher, (Mrs. Farmer), an elegant and gentle looking girl (Gretchen Ross), the insincere Principal who looks past the coke-sniffing habits of his pupils, an overweight Chinese girl (Cherita Chen), a confident self-improvement guru (Jim Cunningham) being warmly welcomed by the Principal and Mrs. Farmer, two youthful teachers (Karen Pomeroy, a progressive English teacher and her boyfriend, Dr. Monnitoff, a science teacher), and the school's dance team (Sparkle Motion) practicing dance moves on the grounds. / **24.** We cut to Miss Pomeroy's English class where she has introduced Graham Greene's *The Destroyers* to her students. The story tells of a group of children that rob and burn down an old man's house. Donnie displays his intelligence by understanding that the true motives of the children were not to rob but to recreate a new order out of the old one. The lesson is interrupted when Gretchen, a new student, joins the class. She asks where she is to sit. Pomeroy somewhat inappropriately asks her to sit next to the boy she finds the cutest. Gretchen chooses to sit near Donnie. / **25.** On the way to see Donnie's psychiatrist, Dr. Thurman, Eddie nearly runs over Roberta Sparrow, dubbed 'Grandma Death', by the children. The old woman spends her days shuffling back and forth from her post-box as if expecting a letter that never comes. During the incident, Roberta Sparrow whispers something in Donnie's ear that troubles him. / **26.** In the next scene, Donnie tells Dr. Thurman about Frank, the six-foot tall man

dressed in a rabbit suit. Frank has asked Donnie to follow him into the future and has warned him about the end of the world. / **27**. At school, Mrs. Farmer has structured the lesson around Jim Cunningham's fear versus love lifeline. / **28**. During the lesson, Donnie hears Frank's voice asking him to pay attention so as not to miss anything important. Fade out. / **29**. We cut to a shot of Donnie sleeping on the couch. / **30**. There is another close-up of an eye. Images of the sea are superimposed over it, followed by a shot of the school half submerged by water. A bright light floods the screen. / **31**. Donnie wakes up on the couch to the jumbled sounds of thunder and distorted voices. He sees Frank standing silently opposite him. / **32**. The next shot shows him walking in a basement with an axe over his shoulder. He swings the axe into some pipes. / **33**. A title appears, indicating that it is October 6, 1988 and that twenty-four days remain. / **34**. At the bus stop, the kids learn that school has been cancelled because it has been flooded. / **35**. We cut to the Principal being shown the damage, including the embedded axe on top of the bronze Mongrel's (the school's mascot) head. / **36**. We cut back to the school children at the bus stop as they excitedly chat about the news. / **37**. An overhead shot emphasises the graffiti on the ground near the Mongrel, which reads: 'They made me do it.' / **38**. Still at the bus stop, another girl arrives and announces there were faeces everywhere. 'What's faeces?' asks one girl. 'Baby mice', is the reply. / **39**. We next see Donnie walking down the street, grinning. / **40**. Gretchen, who is still waiting for the bus, is approached and pestered by the two bullies. / **41**. Donnie spots them. He informs her that school has been cancelled. Gretchen asks Donnie to walk her home. During this interlude they exchange personal information. We learn that Gretchen's stepdad threatened her mom, forcing them to relocate and change their names. Donnie brags that he once set fire to an abandoned house. Donnie asks Gretchen if she would like

to be his girlfriend and she agrees. / **42.** During their next session, Dr. Thurman decides to hypnotise Donnie. He begins masturbating while under hypnosis and Dr. Thurman has to terminate the session. / **43.** Back at school, the kids in Pomeroy's class are asked to write their names on the blackboard in the presence of the police and Principal in an attempt to match their writing to that of the vandal's. / **44.** In the toilet, one of the bullies, Seth, attacks Donnie and accuses him of being responsible for the damage. / **45.** The following sequence shows Donnie as a conventional, albeit smarter-than-most, teenager shooting beer bottles with an air gun and talking about the Smurfs and sex with his friends. / **46.** A car pulls up and Mrs. Farmer drops Roberta Sparrow off at her home. The boys remark that someone should send the old woman a letter out of pity, as she seems to spend her life walking back and forth from her empty post-box. / **47.** The following shot shows Donnie lounging on the couch while the TV talks about the acts of vandalism at the school. / **48.** Meanwhile, his parents attend an emergency PTA meeting to discuss the damage to the school. / **49.** Mrs. Farmer hijacks proceedings and begins to put her case to the assembly. / **50.** We cut to Donnie entering his bathroom. / **51.** Mrs. Farmer continues building her case. / **52.** Donnie swallows a pill. Frank appears in the mirror and tells him not too worry because he, Donnie, has managed to get away with it. / **53.** Mrs. Farmer blames Graham Greene's short story, *The Destructors*, for inspiring the vandalism. / **54.** Donnie and Frank smash the bathroom mirror. / **55.** Mrs. Farmer continues to find links between the short story and the vandalism. / **56.** Frank tells Donnie that they both have the power to do anything they want. / **57.** Heartened by the applause from the crowd, Mrs. Farmer insults Miss Pomeroy. / **58.** Donnie asks Frank why he instructed him to flood the school. Frank responds by saying that they are in great danger. / **59.** Rose asks Mrs. Farmer if she even knows who Graham Greene is. Mrs.

Farmer shows that she does not by confusing him with Lorne Greene of the *Bonanza* television series. / **60**. Donnie asks where Frank is from. Frank responds by asking Donnie if he believes in time travel. Samantha interrupts the conversation by peering in and asking Donnie to whom he is talking. / **61**. In English class, Donnie reads his prophetic poem in which he describes himself as a dark and mysterious superhero that, in consultation with Frank, the six-foot bunny rabbit, manages to save the children from the monsters. / **62**. In contrast, Donnie refuses to participate in Mrs. Farmer's class, insisting that life is too complex to be viewed in the simple terms proposed by Jim Cunningham. / **63**. Donnie and his parents are called into the Principal's office to answer for Donnie's actions. As a result, Donnie is suspended from after-school activities for six months. / **64**. Rose tries in vain to have the penalty reduced by reminding Mrs. Farmer of the pressure put on everyone since the jet engine crash, but Mrs. Farmer refuses to budge. / **65**. In Donnie's room, Elizabeth, in a phone conversation, possibly with her boyfriend, Frank, says that her parents seem to have rewarded Donnie for telling a teacher 'to shove a book up her arse' by buying him new things. She believes that the gifts are in appreciation of his having escaped the jet engine incident. / **66**. A title screen informs us that it is 'October 10, 1998. Twenty days remain'. / **67**. At the end of class, Donnie approaches Dr. Monnitoff to ask him whether he believes in time travel, while outside, Cherita is eavesdropping intently. / **68**. Dr. Monnitoff tells Donnie that time travel is theoretically possible through a wormhole that connects two or more universes together. He gives him a book written by Roberta Sparrow, who, he explains, gave up being a nun to write the book and become a science teacher. / **69**. Donnie spots a picture of her in the school corridor. / **70**. The following shot shows us two pages from Sparrow's book about the nature of the 'Tangent Universe'. / **71**. We dissolve

to a scene around the dinner table where Donnie shows his family the book. / **72**.

There is an overhead slow motion shot of Donnie and Gretchen jumping on the trampoline outside Donnie's house. / **73**. The subject of Roberta Sparrow spills over into the following sequence with Dr. Thurman. Donnie tells Dr. Thurman that Roberta Sparrow told him that every creature dies alone. / **74**. Rose is having a drink with a friend who is singing Jim Cunningham's praises. / **75**. In the other room the men, including Donnie, sit in the lounge watching a football game. Donnie suddenly sees a liquid-like tube emerge from his father's chest, indicating the direction in which he will move. A similar tube flows ahead of Samantha as she runs through the room. Another tube emerges from Donnie's own chest. / **76**. It leads him to his parent's bedroom where he finds the gun his father keeps in a box in the closet. / **77**.

A title announces that it is 'October 18, 1988. Twelve days remain'. / **78**. At the bus stop, Donnie looks thoughtfully up at the sky as a jet flies overhead. / **79**. He arrives in class just as it is ending. / **80**. The screen dissolves over a chapter of Roberta Sparrow's book entitled, 'Water and Metal'. It is superimposed with a shot of rippling water. Another page talks about the two elements being key ingredients for time travel. / **81**. Donnie and Gretchen walk in the park and talk about their mutual school project, time travel, and share their first kiss. / **82**. During dinner at a restaurant, Eddie jokes to Rose about Donnie's indiscretion. / **83**. Donnie and Elizabeth sit at home carving pumpkins for Halloween. Donnie's pumpkin looks remarkably like Frank. / **84**. Rose and Eddie visit Dr. Thurman to talk about Donnie. The therapist believes that Donnie's aggression and detachment from reality stems from his inability to cope with the forces in the world that he finds threatening. She asks them whether Donnie has ever told them about Frank. / **85**. We cut to Donnie looking at his reflection in the bathroom mirror. / **86**. Dr. Thurman continues talking

about Frank. / **87**. Donnie moves closer to the mirror. / **88**. Dr. Thurman informs them that Donnie is experiencing a daylight hallucination. / **89**. Donnie, holding a knife, is invoking Frank by slamming it into the mirror as we cut to a close-up shot of the eye. Computer information runs along the left side of the screen, followed by a shot of rolling waves. / **90**. Dr. Thurman's diagnosis of Donnie is that he is a paranoid schizophrenic. She suggests more hypnotherapy and an increase in his medication dosage. / **91**. Donnie continues invoking Frank by slamming the knife into the mirror. Another shot of crashing waves follows. Frank glows with white light, and tilts his head to one side. Donnie smiles, knife raised. / **92**. Rose and Eddie accept Dr. Thurman's suggestions to increase their son's medication. / **93**. At a video game arcade Donnie explains to Gretchen what has been happening to him. / **94**. Two pages from the time travel book are momentarily superimposed over the sequence. / **95**. There is a shot of the familiar mountain landscape which opened the film. Distant rumbling is heard on the soundtrack. / **96**. In the staff room, Miss Pomeroy and Dr. Monnitoff chat about Donnie. / **97**. In the next sequence, Donnie verbally attacks Jim Cunningham who is preaching his facile views on life to a school audience, labelling him as the anti-Christ. / **98**. Donnie takes Gretchen to the place where he and his friends usually meet. He remains agitated about his encounter with Cunningham. Gretchen asks him to calm down and he changes the subject to Roberta Sparrow and time travel. He tells her that the things he has been seeing are described in her book. / **99**. They go to Sparrow's house but she does not open the door. They spot her looking at them from a raised terrace in the grounds. / **100**. Frank speaks to Donnie, telling him to 'send her a letter'. / **101**. A short sequence of overlapping images shows more pages from the book, men in protective suits removing fragments from the scene; the FAA men look on as the jet engine hangs in

mid-air, suspended by a crane. / **102.** Donnie and Dr. Monnitoff have another conversation about time travel that turns to a discussion about predestination, portals through which one can travel in time, and God. At the mention of God, Dr. Monnitoff withdraws from the conversation for fear of being fired. / **103.** Miss Pomeroy informs her English class that Graham Greene's book has been replaced by *Watership Down*. / **104.** That night, Donnie lies in bed looking at the calendar on the wall. / **105.** Images from the book reveal that the 'Living Receiver' in the tangent universe is blessed with fourth-dimensional powers, including 'increased strength, telekinesis, mindcontrol [sic], and the ability to conjure fire and water'. He is also 'tormented by terrifying dreams, visions and auditory hallucinations'. / **106.** The pages dissolve over a shot of Donnie walking past a stately house on his way back home from school. He sees a wallet belonging to Jim Cunningham on the pavement directly opposite the house. / **107.** He grins as he hears Frank tell him that he now knows where Cunningham lives. / **108.** In his next session, he shows Dr. Thurman Roberta Sparrow's time travel book. / **109.** Gretchen and Donnie present their school project to Dr. Monnitoff who points out its weak points. / **110.** During the presentation the bullies taunt Gretchen, reminding her that her dad stabbed her mother. / **111.** Gretchen runs out of the class in tears, followed by Donnie who tries to console her. Gretchen kisses him. / **112.** That night they go to the movie theatre to see *Evil Dead*. / **113.** Gretchen falls asleep and Frank appears to Donnie. Donnie asks him to take off his mask. Frank does so to reveal a bullet lodged in his right eye socket. Frank asks Donnie to watch the movie screen. As Donnie does so, a portal opens up through the screen. / **114.** There is a cut to the close up of the eye superimposed with computer data, the line drawing of the rabbit's head, and flames. / **115.** Franks whispers to Donnie to 'burn it to the ground'. Donnie pulls his jacket's

hood over his head and leaves the cinema. / **116.** We cut to the school where the children are performing. / **117.** Cherita is first up, dressed as an angel. / **118.** In the wings, Mrs. Farmer gives Sparkle Motion a pep talk. / **119.** We see Donnie approaching Cunningham's house. / **120.** Cherita finishes her performance and takes a bow. Cunningham appears and introduces Sparkle Motion. The girls begin to perform to Duran Duran's *Notorious*. / **121.** Donnie pours fuel over Cunningham's portrait. / **122.** Sparkle Motion's performance continues, presented to us in slow motion. Strange disembodied voices are heard on the soundtrack. / **123.** Donnie continues to pour fuel inside Cunningham's house. / **124.** Sparkle Motion continues performing. / **125.** Cunningham's couch catches fire. / **126.** The crowd applauds Sparkle Motion. / **127.** Donnie leaves the burning house. / **128.** The crowd continues cheering. / **129.** A hunting trophy burns on the wall. / **130.** Sparkle Motion holds its end pose. / **131.** Cunningham's portrait burns. / **132.** The girls move off to more applause. / **133.** We cut to Cherita sitting alone outside at the feet of the Mongrel. / **134.** Donnie takes his seat next to Gretchen. / **135.** Meanwhile, the fire has been discovered and put out by firemen. / **136.** Another page from the book, titled 'The Manipulated Dead,' appears then flips over to reveal Donnie and Gretchen lying on a blanket in a field. / **137.** Donnie returns home. Eddie is sitting in the garden. / **138.** Donnie joins him. He tells his father that he believes himself to be crazy. Eddie tells him that he is not crazy at all, just smarter than his detractors. / **139.** Inside the house, Elizabeth is watching TV. She learns that firefighters at Cunningham's house have discovered a child porn dungeon. Footage shows police arresting Cunningham and dragging him off to prison. / **140.** Donnie joins Elizabeth and watches the newscast. A slow smile spreads over his face. / **141.** The title screen informs us that the date is 'October 24 1988. Six days remain'. / **142.** In a shot played in fast forward, we see

students entering and leaving the school building. / **143.** We cut to the Principal's office to discover that Miss Pomeroy is being fired for using inappropriate teaching methods. / **144.** She leaves the office and screams in frustration, watched by Cherita who seems increasingly isolated. / **145.** As Pomeroy walks down the school corridor she hears an announcement over the intercom system informing the school that Sparkle Motion has been invited to *Star Search '88*, in Los Angeles. / **146.** The girls, Mrs. Farmer and the Principal celebrate, but someone holds up a newspaper headline to them, which reads that Cunningham has been arrested for child pornography. This wipes the smile off Mrs. Farmer's face. / **147.** In English class, Miss Pomeroy is showing *Watership Down*. In the ensuing discussion Donnie seems to miss the significance of the story to his own situation. / **148.** Samantha is jumping up and down on the trampoline. / **149.** Mrs. Farmer arrives at the Darko house to plead that Rose chaperone Sparkle Motion in her stead, as she intends to appear on Cunningham's behalf at his arraignment. / **150.** Later, Rose studies Donnie's calendar with concern. The dates have been crossed out to indicate a countdown to something. / **151.** Seated on Donnie's bed, Rose tells her son that she will be accompanying Sparkle Motion to Los Angeles but that she is leaving Elizabeth in charge. Donnie should call Dr. Thurman should he need to. Fade to black. / **152.** Donnie thoughtfully holds a letter addressed to Roberta Sparrow. / **153.** We see a shot of an ascending plane. / **154.** Rose gives Elizabeth the keys to the car and says goodbye. She gets into the vehicle that will take Sparkle Motion to the airport. Donnie tells Rose that there is nothing broken in his brain and hugs her goodbye. Fade to white. / **155.** Dissolve to Donnie entering the classroom where Pomeroy is packing her belongings into a box. She tells him she has been fired. He reads the phrase 'cellar door' on the blackboard and asks Pomeroy what it means. She tells

him that a famous linguist once said that he regarded this phrase as the most beautiful in any language in all of history. / **156.** Donnie notices Cherita in the corridor. He tells her that one day everything will be alright, but this upsets her and she runs out sobbing, dropping her notebook as she does so. Donnie notices that the notebook has his name on it. / **157.** Donnie is walking slowly down the pavement. / **158.** We see an exterior shot of Dr. Thurman's house. Under hypnosis, Donnie admits that Frank had instructed him to flood the school and to burn down Cunningham's house. He claims that he now knows how to build a time machine. Refusing to answer her questions, he begins sobbing and pacing the room. / **159.** Suddenly Frank appears to him. / **160.** We cut to a shot of clouds rushing by. / **161.** Donnie breaks down. Dr. Thurman tells him that it is time to stop taking his medication since it has been a placebo from the start. As if to give him comfort, she also tells him that she regards him to be an Agnostic and not an Atheist. / **162.** A title screen informs us that it is 'October 29 1988. One day remains'. / **163.** In the kitchen, Elizabeth tells Donnie that she has been accepted at Harvard. They decide to throw a Halloween party to celebrate. / **164.** On the night, Donnie is dressed in a skeleton costume. / **165.** Dr Thurman leaves a message on the answering machine asking Rose to call her back urgently. / **166.** We cut to a page from Sparrow's book, entitled 'The Insurance Trap'. / **167.** There is a knock on the door. It is Gretchen. She tells Donnie that her Mom has disappeared. Donnie takes her upstairs to his parent's bedroom. / **168.** Downstairs, Elizabeth asks if anyone has seen Frank, while upstairs, Donnie and Gretchen make love. / **169.** Rose leaves a message on the answering machine informing the family that she will be taking the flight back that night and that they will be home by 8.30 in the morning. / **170.** Donnie and Gretchen come downstairs. The clock reads midnight. / **171.** A title screen tells us that it is 'October 30, 1988' and that six hours remain. /

172. As Donnie walks across the room, it seems to spin through 360 degrees. The time tube extends from his chest again and leads him to the fridge where he reads a note that says that Frank has left to buy beer. Suddenly a tube appears from around the corner and moves through Donnie, engulfing him. / **173.** The eye reappears in a close up shot. A series of images flash by – overlapping images of clouds, the line drawing of the rabbit’s head, George Bush, the fire at Cunningham’s house, images from the film *Watership Down*, racing cars from the games arcade, and computer information. The camera moves through a tunnel towards a bright light. / **174.** Donnie tells Gretchen and his friends that they have to go. / **175.** They rush out and ride to Roberta Sparrow’s house on their bicycles. / **176.** They arrive and find their way into the house through the cellar door. Gretchen plays an ominous note on the old dusty piano. / **177.** Suddenly the two bullies appear and drag them outside. / **178.** They knock Gretchen to the ground. Seth holds a knife to Donnie’s throat. / **179.** Car headlights appear. Donnie calls out ‘deus ex machina’, and ‘our saviour’. The car swerves to avoid hitting Roberta Sparrow who suddenly has appeared standing in the road. In swerving, the car runs over Gretchen, killing her. / **180.** Two figures get out of the car dressed in clown and giant rabbit suits respectively. Frank has taken off his mask. He asks if Gretchen is dead. / **181.** Donnie shoots him in his right eye and tells the other boy to go home and tell his parents that everything is going to be all right. Roberta Sparrow touches Donnie’s shoulder and tells him to hurry because a storm is coming. / **182.** There is a shot of the mountains. / **183.** The sun is coming up as Donnie carries Gretchen’s body down the road. / **184.** Donnie enters the room where Elizabeth is sleeping, still dressed in the previous night’s Halloween dress and make-up. He kisses her on the forehead as if saying goodbye. He picks the car keys and goes outside. / **185.** As he tries to unlock the car door a strange distant sound is

heard. Donnie looks up at the sky. / **186.** We see a funnel of clouds forming above the house. Donnie starts the car and drives off, Gretchen lying dead in the passenger's seat. As he races down the road, ominous clouds roll across the sky. / **187.** We hear the sound of a helicopter as police cars pull up outside Donnie's house. In the sky above the house the cloud funnel continues to swirl. / **188.** We cut to the close-up of the eye as a voice counts down to zero. / **189.** A white flash envelops Donnie's car as it drives up to the mountain. / **190.** Sitting on top of the car, Donnie whispers to himself that he is going home. / **191.** In the distance, the cloud funnel hovering over his house is clearly visible. / **192.** We cut to Rose and Samantha in the plane on their way home. Suddenly there is a crashing sound and the cabin shakes. / **193.** We see something falling from the sky, sucked down towards the funnel. Donnie enters the car and looks lovingly at Gretchen. / **194.** The close up of the eye appears yet again. Computer text scrolls by on the screen. The jet engine is momentarily tracked on this screen as the word 'urge' flashes on the screen. A collection of moments from Donnie's life flash by in reverse order. We hear Donnie's voice-over on the soundtrack, addressing Roberta Sparrow about his hopes and fears, no doubt expressed in the letter that he had sent her. / **195.** We cut to Donnie in his bedroom, laughing to himself. / **196.** Downstairs, Eddie is sleeping. The television station has shut down for the night and the screen is showing noise. / **197.** Elizabeth arrives and closes the door. / **198.** Upstairs, Donnie smiles to himself, closes his eyes and turns his back to the camera. / **199.** Elizabeth leans against the door, smiling as a car hoots and drives off. / **200.** The jet engine crashes through Donnie's bedroom. / **201.** Rose sits up abruptly in bed. / **202.** Elizabeth slides to the floor in tears. / **203.** Eddie starts awake. / **204.** A page appears entitled, 'Dreams'. There is a dissolve to water, and another page that informs us that some will

remember their journey to the tangent universe, while others who do not will regardless suffer an unconscious remorse. / **205.** In a series of seamless shots, we pan across the bedrooms of Dr. Thurman, Miss Pomeroy and Dr. Monnitoff, Jim Cunningham, Mrs. Farmer, Cherita, and Frank, who, surrounded by sketches of rabbits, reaches out and touches his right eye as if he, like the rest, is somehow subliminally aware of his brush with the ineffable. / **206.** We cut to Donnie's house at dawn as his body is wheeled into the ambulance, watched by his devastated family. / **207.** Gretchen, who is riding past on her bicycle, stops and asks a young boy in the crowd about what happened. The boy tells her that a jet engine killed his neighbour. He tells her that his name was Donnie Darko. When asked by the boy if she knew him, she replies that she did not. / **208.** Gretchen stares at Rose. A look passes between them, as if somehow, they had once known each other. Gretchen waves at Rose. Rose waves back.

APPENDIX 3 – *THE MATRIX*: SYUZHET BREAKDOWN

1. Title screen: *The Matrix*, rendered in the glowing green letters of a computer screen. / **2.** A flashing green cursor is followed by text that indicates that a phone call is being traced. We hear a clandestine telephone conversation between a man and a woman that is interrupted when the woman hears a click on the line. / **3.** The screen now shows binary code on a computer monitor. We continue to close in on the code until we plunge through a ‘zero’ in the code and merge with a point of light. / **4.** This light becomes a flashlight as a police team closes in on a door in a passageway of a rundown building. The police break into a room where a woman (Carrie-Anne Moss) sits with her back to them, her hands on a computer keyboard. They order her to put her hands up in the air. / **5.** Outside, a black limousine pulls up. Men wearing dark suits, sunglasses and communication devices get out. One of them (Hugo Weaving) criticizes the police lieutenant because he has ignored orders which were given for the police’s own protection. He declares that the policemen inside the building are ‘already dead’. / **6.** Inside, the police attempt to handcuff the woman but she manages to beat them down them in an amazing gravity-defying display of martial arts skills. / **7.** Still inside the building, she uses her cell phone to call someone she refers to as Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) who informs her that she will have to get to another hard wired phone line to avoid the agents who are on her trail. / **8.** The police close in on her and she strikes off, running vigorously along the narrow corridors. The pursuit continues on the rooftop. An agent has now joined the chase. The agent keeps up with her as she leaps an impossible distance over the rooftops, much to the police’s disbelief. Addressing herself as ‘Trinity’, the woman spots a telephone booth that is

guarded by a large truck. The phone starts ringing. Trinity rushes to the booth and picks up the phone just as the truck smashes into it. The truck pulls back and the three agents approach only to discover that Trinity is gone. Their laconic dialogue reveals that they have an informant who has told them that their next target is someone called Neo. / **9.** We close into the broken telephone mouthpiece. / **10.** We emerge out through a computer screen, with the word, 'Searching' displayed on it. Newspaper headlines scroll down the screen. Next to the monitor, a man (Keanu Reeves) is asleep, his head resting on his dishevelled desk. He suddenly opens his eyes to read the text on the screen that instructs him to wake up. It informs him that 'The Matrix' has him in its grip and that he should 'follow the white rabbit'. The screen spells out the words, 'Knock, knock, Neo'. Just then there is a knock in his door. / **11.** A young man, Choi, accompanied by his friends, hands him money in exchange for a computer disk containing the virtual drug 'mescaline' that Neo keeps in a hollowed out book – Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulations*. Feeling the kind of unease that arises from being unable to distinguish between dream and reality, Neo at first refuses an invitation to a party by Choi who regards him as his 'personal Jesus Christ'. Upon noticing the tattoo of a white rabbit on Choi's girlfriend's left shoulder, however, he changes his mind and accepts the invitation. / **12.** At the party, leather-clad people are gathered in groups. Loud music plays. Neo is about to leave, when Trinity approaches him and introduces herself. He seems impressed with the fact that she is an infamous hacker. She informs him that he, like she once did, wants to know the answer to the question, 'what is the Matrix?' She tells him that the answer will find him if he wants it to. / **13.** Neo wakes up in his apartment to the sound of his alarm clock. / **14.** In his place of work at Metacortex, a premier software company, Neo receives a dressing down from his boss for being late and for having a

problem with authority in general. / **15.** Back in his cubicle, one of many in the honeycomb-like open office structure, he receives a FedEx package containing a cell phone. / **16.** The cell phone immediately rings. It is Morpheus. He urgently informs Neo that he has something to show him, but first Neo has to escape from agents who are coming for him. Morpheus gives Neo second-by-second instructions as to how to escape the approaching agents. / **17.** Morpheus leads Neo to an empty office and asks that he walk along the edge to reach a scaffold used by window cleaners. / **18.** Neo cannot beat his fear of heights, however, and is captured by the three agents. / **19.** Trinity, watching from a distance, sees this. / **20.** A bank of monitors show Neo enter a small interrogation room. Seamlessly, the camera enters the room. The lead agent, Smith, (Hugo Weaving) gives Neo an ultimatum: give up Morpheus or face the consequences for computer hacking crimes. Neo shows him the finger and asks for his mandatory telephone call. Suddenly, Neo's mouth begins to melt and fuse shut. The agents hold him down, and place a mechanical 'bug' on his belly, which quickly burrows into his body through his bellybutton. / **21.** Neo starts awake in his own apartment, as if from a nightmare. The phone rings and Morpheus informs him that he, Neo, is 'The One', and has only been allowed to live because the authorities do not yet know how important he is. He instructs Neo to go to the Adams Street Bridge. / **22.** Under the bridge, a car pulls up. / **23.** Neo gets in. A blond woman (Belinda McClory) points a gun at him but Trinity, who is also there, explains that it is for his own protection. / **24.** The scene culminates in Trinity removing the implanted 'bug' from Neo's body, through his bellybutton, using a specialized device. Neo is shocked to realise that the past few hours were not a just a nightmare, after all. / **25.** The bug is discarded in the middle of the street and goes dead. / **26.** The three of them enter a building and climb up a long spiral staircase with a

chequered floor. / **27.** Trinity leads Neo to Morpheus' door and bids him to 'be honest'. / **28.** Inside, Morpheus introduces himself. He explains that in order to understand what the Matrix is, Neo has to see it for himself by choosing to take one of two pills. If he swallows the blue pill, he will continue to live in ignorance, but if he takes the red pill, he will come to know the truth. Neo chooses the red pill. / **29.** Morpheus leads him to another room filled with computers. Neo is asked to wait for the pill to disrupt 'the carrier signal'. Cypher, one of the men present in the room, mentions that 'Kansas' is about to go 'bye, bye'. / **30.** As Neo watches himself in the mirror, its surface becomes viscous to his touch and spreads to his hand and body. Neo is about to go into cardiac arrest when the technical team find what they were looking for. / **31.** A spike in sound announces a change in scene where Neo, attached to several umbilical-like chords, claws his way through a membrane filled with a viscous amniotic-like fluid. His true self is revealed to be a naked and bald man, embedded in an artificial womb-like structure. Looking down and across from his location, he sees that he is surrounded by a countless number of similar structures attached to towers. / **32.** A large insect-like machine flies towards him and removes the umbilical-like tubes from his body. / **33.** Neo is flushed out of the system into a large body of water. / **34.** He is immediately dragged out by a large claw lowered from a craft hovering above. / **35.** Morpheus, surrounded by the people that Neo saw earlier, welcomes him 'to the real world'. / **36.** Fade from black as we hear Morpheus tell Trinity he is 'The One'. / **37.** A series of fades and dissolves shows Neo on a raised bed, surrounded by machines. Electronic needles penetrate his body as part of the program to aid in his recuperation. Morpheus hovers over the procedures. / **38.** Neo wakes up in a bunk bed in a steel room. He pulls the drip from his forearm. As he reaches to touch the interface mounted on the back of his neck, Morpheus enters

and informs him that the year is not 1999, as he thinks, but is in fact closer to 2199, although no one is quite sure. He offers to show him the truth. / **39**. Morpheus tells him they are on his ship, the Nebuchadnezzar. / **40**. He explains the basic functions of the ship and introduces him to the crew, some of whom he has already met while in the Matrix. / **41**. Neo is strapped into a chair and connected to a computer via the interface in order for him to understand what the Matrix really is. / **42**. Neo suddenly finds himself inside a fathomless white space. Morpheus appears and informs him that they are inside a computer loading program called 'the Construct'. Here they can load up whatever they need. Morpheus shows him what 'the real world' is really like by revealing it on a television set. It is a sterile and barren desert. He explains that the Matrix is a dream world, constructed by machines to keep humanity placated by making it believe in a world 'out there'. The purpose is to farm humanity for its bioelectricity. Morpheus explains that after the machines became conscious, humanity scorched the skies in order to deprive them of the sun's energy. The machines found an alternative form of energy in the human body. Neo refuses to believe it, panicking. / **43**. He gasps for air as he emerges into the real world of the ship. He jumps out of his suspension chair and continues to struggle, refusing to believe what he has seen and heard in the Construct. / **44**. Neo wakes up in his metal bunk. Morpheus is there, helping him come to terms with his realisation. He apologises for bringing him to the truth this late. He acknowledges that an adult mind finds it difficult to let go of the illusion. He did it because he believes that Neo is destined to defeat the machines and free humanity from slavery. He explains there was once a man who was born into the Matrix yet saw it for what it was. He taught others to free themselves. After his death, the Oracle prophesied that he would one day return in resurrected form. Morpheus believes that Neo is that man. But he is

going to need training. / **45.** Tank, who is to be Neo's 'operator', visits him in his room. He tells him about Zion, the only human city left. Tank declares that he is looking forward to seeing what Neo is capable of. / **46.** In the main deck, Neo is plugged in and seated in a suspension chair. Neo's body jolts as Tank loads the jujitsu program into his brain through the interface. / **47.** Tank continues loading program after program into Neo. Morpheus learns that Neo has been soaking it up for the last ten hours. / **48.** Neo announces that he knows kung fu. Morpheus challenges him to prove it. / **49.** Neo and Morpheus appear in the Training Program. / **50.** The crew excitedly assemble around the computer monitors to watch the fight. / **51.** After Morpheus tells him that speed is simply a construct of the program, Neo begins to show signs of improvement. / **52.** The crew comment on Neo's speed. / **53.** Finally, Neo beats Morpheus to the punch. This prompts Morpheus to instruct Tank to load the Jump program. Neo and Morpheus appear on top of a skyscraper. Morpheus tells Neo that he has to let go of fear and disbelief in order to free his mind. He demonstrates what he means by leaping to another building across an impossible distance. Neo prepares himself to do the same. / **54.** The crew take bets in predicting the outcome. / **55.** Neo leaps, but fails to reach the other side, falling to the street and bouncing off it. / **56.** The crew is disappointed but knows that everyone fails at the first attempt. / **57.** Neo and Morpheus are disconnected from the program. Neo notices some blood inside his mouth and is surprised. Morpheus explains that the mind makes events experienced in the Matrix real. If you die in the Matrix, you die in the real world, since the body cannot live without the mind. / **58.** Trinity enters Neo's room with a tray of food. She leaves without waking him. / **59.** Outside, she encounters Cypher, who seems jealous of Neo. / **60.** Morpheus continues to instruct Neo on the subtleties of the Matrix through a program enacting a busy city. A

woman in a red dress distracts Neo, and when he looks again agent Smith has replaced her and is pointing a gun at his head. Morpheus tells Neo that the agents are sentient programs that can move in and out of any software. They are the gatekeepers to the Matrix and sooner or later he will have to fight them. No one who has stood against them, however, has ever survived. But because they are rule-based entities, Morpheus believes that they can be beaten. The phone rings, warning Morpheus of trouble ahead. / **61.** The Nebuchadnezzar courses through the network of abandoned sewers, leaving a trail of an electromagnetic wave in its wake. Morpheus takes his seat next to Dozer. Another ship has sent out a warning that sentinels (search and destroy machines) are nearby. The Nebuchadnezzar sets down and stops its engines. Its main weapon, the EMP (electromagnetic pulse), is charged and ready to fire. / **62.** The sentinels swarm around the ship, but fail to find signs of life and leave. / **63.** The crew breathe a sigh of relief. / **64.** Neo approaches Cypher who is sitting alone, studying numerous screens displaying code. Cypher seems jumpy. He hurriedly switches to another display and, in casual conversation, expresses regret that he took the red pill. He advises Neo to run if he ever sees an agent. / **65.** Cypher has a clandestine meeting at a restaurant with agent Smith in which he offers to deliver Morpheus to Smith in exchange for being plugged back into the Matrix as someone rich and important ('like an actor'), with no recollection of his past life. / **66.** Back at the ship, the crew and Neo are having dinner consisting of a kind of white sludge. Their talk of virtual food and women underscores Cypher's belief that illusion is at times preferable to the harshness of reality. / **67.** Morpheus comes in and informs everyone that he is taking Neo to see the Oracle. / **68.** The crew takes the ship up to broadcast depth. / **69.** They plug into the Matrix. / **70.** The phone rings inside the Matrix. Morpheus, flanked by several others, picks it up and informs the others that

they are inside. / **71.** Exiting a building, Morpheus tells the others that he and Neo will be back in an hour. / **72.** Cypher secretly drops a live cell phone into a dustbin to broadcast their location. / **73.** Morpheus, Trinity, and Neo drive down a street that Neo recognises from his life in the Matrix. / **74.** Arriving at their destination, Morpheus asks Neo to accompany him inside. / **75.** The building is ordinary looking, except for a sign that reads 'Hotel Delivery'. In the elevator, Morpheus confirms that this is the same Oracle that made the original prophesy. Her function is that of a guide. / **76.** They approach a door at the end of a long passage. A woman shows Neo to a waiting lounge filled with children (other 'potentials'). / **77.** One of the boys is bending a spoon. He tells Neo that the secret is to think not of the spoon bending, but rather, the self. Neo manages to bend the spoon. The woman reappears and tells Neo that the Oracle is ready to see him. / **78.** Neo enters a kitchen through some beads hanging on a doorframe. The Oracle is baking cookies in the oven. She indulges in some homespun wisdom, puzzles over the notion of causality implicit in Neo's breaking of a vase of flowers, and tells Neo that being The One is something that one just knows, 'bones to balls'. After a cursory examination of his eyes, tongue and mouth, Neo comes to believe that he is not The One. She tells him that Morpheus will attempt to sacrifice his own life to save Neo's. One of them will die. Which one, will be up to Neo. / **79.** Neo, holding a cookie, emerges into the room where Morpheus is waiting. Morpheus tells him that what the Oracle told him is for him alone. / **80.** One of the crew members, Mouse, waits by the phone. The phone rings. / **81.** It is Tank to tell him that Morpheus and the others are on their way. / **82.** Morpheus, Trinity, and Neo arrive outside the building. Cypher, two red pinpricks of light reflecting in his dark glasses, grins at Neo. / **83.** In the ship, Cypher is laying motionless in his chair. Next to him, Tank notices something out of place in the code

displaying on the monitors. / **84.** Inside the Matrix, Neo notices that a black cat has crossed the doorway twice. He reports it as déjà vu to the others who identify it as a 'glitch'. This means that agents have changed something in the Matrix in order to trap them. / **85.** Mouse moves cautiously upstairs. / **86.** Tank looks at his screen in shock. / **87.** Someone cuts the phone lines. / **88.** Led by Morpheus, the group rushes up the stairs. / **89.** Mouse's cell phone rings. / **90.** Tank tells him that they have cut the hard line and that he should get out. / **91.** Mouse draws the curtains and discovers a brick wall where the window should be. / **92.** Tank's eyes widen with horror as he watches the scrolling code. / **93.** Mouse opens a case of weapons and takes out two machineguns. / **94.** Armed police in riot gear approach the door and kick it down. On the staircase, Morpheus looks up with concern. / **95.** Bullets rain as Mouse and the police fire on each other. / **96.** In the ship, Mouse shakes in his chair and blood leaks from his mouth. / **97.** The bullets continue to rain on Mouse as he slams against the wall. / **98.** Mouse gives a final death shudder in his chair. His vitals indicate a flat line on the monitor. Tank grimaces at the loss. / **99.** The doors burst open and the police storm in. Morpheus looks down at them from the staircase. They reach the room to discover the walled-in window. Morpheus takes out his cell phone to call Tank. / **100.** Tank searches the database for the building's structural drawings. / **101.** The police thunder up the stairs. / **102.** Tank continues his search while Morpheus' voice directs him. / **103.** Agent Smith has tapped into Morpheus' cell phone and is able to track him to the eighth floor. / **104.** Upstairs, the group moves in the direction of the escape route given by Tank. / **105.** The police close in. / **106.** Following Tank's instructions, Morpheus leads them along the maize of corridors. / **107.** Smith and the other agents arrive at the room to find it empty. / **108.** The place is swarming with police. / **109.** The group is creeping down inside the dry walls, trying to keep as

silent as possible. / **110.** The police are shining a torch on the walls. / **111.** Morpheus coughs behind the wall. / **112.** The police turn their guns in the direction of the sound. / **113.** Morpheus tries to suppress any further sound. / **114.** The police move closer to the wall to listen for any sound coming from behind it. / **115.** Morpheus sneezes. / **116.** The police realise that there are people hiding there. / **117.** Both groups start firing at each other through the walls. / **118.** One of the police is transformed into agent Smith. He smashes his fists through the wall and pulls Morpheus out. Morpheus instructs Trinity to get Neo out because that is all that matters. Trinity, Neo, and the others drop through the floors behind the dry walls. / **119.** The police are waiting for them below. More bullets and tear gas. / **120.** Agent Smith and Morpheus grapple with each other. Morpheus fights back, but Smith gets the upper hand. / **121.** Smith instructs the police to bring Morpheus in. / **122.** Tank shouts in helpless anguish at the computer console. / **123.** Trinity emerges from a manhole in the street. / **124.** Tank receives a call from Cypher asking for an exit from the Matrix. / **125.** Cypher says that he is calling from a telephone booth and blames the problem with the police on a car accident in the street. / **126.** Tank looks surprised and suspicious. / **127.** Cypher ironically attributes his own survival to divine intervention. / **128.** Tank locates him and tells him to go to an old TV repair shop situated at the corner of Franklin and Erie street for an exit. / **129.** Cypher makes off. / **130.** Tank receives a call from Trinity. / **131.** Upon learning that Morpheus is alive, she asks for an exit. / **132.** Tank tells her that they are not far from Cypher and gives her his location. / **133.** Trinity seems surprised that Cypher survived. She, Neo, and the others head for the location. / **134.** Cypher enters the derelict building by kicking the door down and picks up the ringing phone. / **135.** Dozer reports that he has got Cypher. Cypher regains consciousness in his chair then

approaches Tank to learn that the rest are about to make the call which is to bring them out of the Matrix. / **136.** Inside the Matrix, the phone rings. Trinity and the others approach it. / **137.** Cypher picks up a weapon and creeps up on Tank. / **138.** Trinity asks Neo to pick up first. / **139.** Cypher fires at Tank twice. Dozer rushes Cypher and is fired upon in turn. / **140.** Neo reports that the line has just gone dead. / **141.** Dozer lies wounded on the ground. / **142.** Switch has drawn her weapon. / **143.** Tank lies still on the floor. / **144.** Trinity calls Tank on her cell phone. / **145.** In the Nebuchadnezzar, the group lies unconscious on the suspension chairs. We close in on Trinity. / **146.** Inside the Matrix, Trinity is surprised to hear Cypher on the line. / **147.** Cypher, who has donned Tank's communication device, paws Trinity's unconscious body in the suspension chair while he speaks to her inside the Matrix, admitting that he had once believed he was in love with her. / **148.** Trinity paces helplessly inside the Matrix, listening. / **149.** Cypher is inches away from her face. / **150.** Trinity realises that Cypher has betrayed them. / **151.** Cypher admits that he is tired of the war and his austere life. / **152.** Trinity listens as he blames Morpheus for not telling him the truth. / **153.** Cypher mounts the unconscious Morpheus, taunting him, regretting that he will not be present when the agents finally break him. / **154.** Trinity realises that Cypher has betrayed Morpheus. / **155.** Cypher admits this, but blames Morpheus for pretending that waking up from the Matrix would make for a better life. / **156.** Trinity says that Morpheus set them free. / **157.** Cypher denies this, claiming that they are, in any case, not free to disobey Morpheus. He would therefore rather live inside the Matrix, unaware of his condition, than exist in the real world under the present circumstances. / **158.** Trinity restates that the Matrix is unreal and therefore inferior. / **159.** Cypher disagrees, asserting that it is more real than the real world and to prove it she will now watch Apoc die. / **160.** Inside the Matrix, Apoc

realises what Cypher is about to pull the plug on him. / **161**. Cypher does so. / **162**. Apoc falls dead to the ground inside the Matrix. Trinity says that Cypher could never go back inside the Matrix. / **163**. Cypher contradicts her, informing her that he has made a deal with the agents to be reinserted back into the Matrix. / **164**. Trinity listens helplessly on the phone. / **165**. Cypher moves towards Switch. / **166**. Trinity realises what he is about to do. Switch falls dead to the ground. / **167**. Cypher walks away from the body. / **168**. Trinity curses him. / **169**. Cypher asks her not to blame him because he is just the messenger and he will prove it by pulling the plug on Neo. / **170**. Neo looks up from Switch's body with concern. / **171**. Cypher claims that if Neo is The One, he will be prevented from killing him. / **172**. Trinity is almost in tears. / **173**. Cypher asks her to look into Neo's eyes as he dies. / **174**. Trinity turns to look at Neo. / **175**. Cypher continues to stretch the moment out, taunting her. / **176**. Trinity feels helpless. / **177**. Cypher cries out in disbelief as a wounded, but living, Tank fires on Cypher. Cypher falls dead to the ground. / **178**. The phone rings in the Matrix. / **179**. Trinity awakes in her chair to learn that Dozer is dead. / **180**. There is a shot of a helicopter approaching a tall building. / **181**. The helicopter lands and agents get off. / **182**. Inside an office, Agent Smith is addressing a bound and tortured Morpheus, while declaring that humanity's time as a superior species is over. One of the agents enters and informs Smith that there could be a problem brewing. / **183**. Back at the ship, Neo learns that Morpheus is resisting the agent's attempts to crack him, but that it is a matter of time before he breaks and gives them the codes to Zion's mainframe computer. Tank says that they will have to kill Morpheus to prevent that. / **184**. Smith meanwhile learns that Cypher has failed. He gives orders to deploy the sentinels against the Nebuchadnezzar. / **185**. Tank delivers the last rites over Morpheus. He is about to pull the plug on him when Neo stops

him, informing them that the Oracle told him that the time would come when he would have to choose between himself and Morpheus. Neo says that he has to go back inside the Matrix to save Morpheus because the Oracle also told him that he, Neo, is not The One. Therefore, Morpheus should not sacrifice himself in vain. Trinity refuses to believe it, as if privy to some secret. Neo convinces them that he can rescue Morpheus. Trinity insists on going with him. / **186**. Smith continues his interrogation of Morpheus by comparing humans to a virus. / **187**. Tank asks Neo what they need. / **188**. In the Construct, Neo asks for 'lots of guns'. / **189**. Tank punches in the code. / **190**. Shelves of weapons stretching into infinity surround Neo and Trinity. / **191**. Smith asks the other agents in the room why the serum is not working on Morpheus. He then instructs the agents to leave him alone with Morpheus. / **192**. Tank whispers over the unconscious Morpheus that help is coming. / **193**. Smith removes his communication device from his ear. He admits that he hates the stink of the reality that his pursuit of Morpheus and the others has placed him in. Once Zion is destroyed, he will be free to leave it and never return. He presses Morpheus for the codes. / **194**. Neo and Trinity enter the building and begin to shoot their way past the guards and armed police in a spectacular combat sequence. They enter the lift. / **195**. Two agents enter the interrogation room and are surprised to find that Smith has disconnected his listening device and does not know what has happened down below. / **196**. Inside the lift, Trinity uncovers an explosive device while Neo exits the lift through the ceiling. / **197**. Smith puts the earpiece back in his ear. The agents declare that the humans are trying to save Morpheus. / **198**. In the lift shaft, Neo and Trinity disconnect the lift from its attachments. Hanging onto the cables as the lift plummets down the shaft beneath them, they are pulled up by the counter weight. / **199**. The lift explodes on the ground floor. / **200**. The interrogation

room shakes as a result of the explosion. The fire sprinklers come on. Smith issues instructions to find and destroy the intruders. / **201.** The helicopter pilot announces that he is under attack. Neo and Trinity cut a swathe through the guards. The pilot morphs into an agent and confronts Neo. Neo opens fire but the agent is able to dodge the bullets. The agent fires back but Neo, too, is able to avoid most of the bullets. One, however, grazes him. He falls and is about to be shot by the agent, when Trinity intervenes and shoots the agent in the head. The agent morphs back into the now dead pilot. Trinity expresses wonder at Neo's having dodged most of the bullets. Neo asks her if she can fly the helicopter. Trinity phones Tank. / **202.** Tank uploads a flying program into Trinity. / **203.** Trinity heads towards the helicopter, followed by Neo. / **204.** The agents look up from inside the interrogation room as the helicopter appears outside the window. Neo begins firing at them with a mounted machine gun. The agents fall, but re-morph into dead police, indicating that they themselves are unharmed. Morpheus regains his will and rips off the chains binding his hands behind his back. He rushes towards the hovering helicopter as the agents who have reappeared fire at him through the walls. Morpheus is about to fall short when Neo, attached by cable to the helicopter, leaps into the air and grabs his arm. As the helicopter pulls away, a bullet punctures the fuel tank. The helicopter starts to veer out of control. Neo drops Morpheus to safety and manages to land on a rooftop himself, still attached to the helicopter by the cable. In a monumental show of strength, Neo arrests the falling helicopter by holding onto the cable with his bare hands. / **205.** Seeing this reflected in his code in the Nebuchadnezzar, Tank declares that Neo is indeed The One. / **206.** Neo finally manages to get Trinity onto the roof. Morpheus comes up to them and triumphantly reasserts his belief in Neo. / **207.** Tank arranges an exit for them at a nearby subway station. / **208.** Smith and the other

agents arrive on the roof. The agents inform Smith that they have traced the position of the Nebuchadnezzar and that he should order the sentinels to strike. / **209.** Neo and the others reach the ringing subway station phone. Morpheus picks up and exits the Matrix first. A beggar sees them. / **210.** Agent Smith becomes aware of this. / **211.** Trinity is about to tell Neo something when the phone rings again. She goes on to say that everything that the Oracle told her has come true except for this. A little way away, the beggar morphs into agent Smith. Trinity picks up the phone. Agent Smith draws his gun and approaches. Trinity exits the Matrix as Smith fires at the booth's glass, shattering it. / **212.** Trinity informs Tank that Smith has found Neo. Tank is unable to send her back to help him despite her protestations. / **213.** Agent Smith confronts Neo. / **214.** Trinity looks at the code and whispers that Neo should run. / **215.** Neo turns to face Smith. / **216.** Morpheus declares that Neo is beginning to believe in himself. / **217.** Neo faces off against Smith. They rush at each other, firing their guns. Out of bullets, they engage in hand to hand combat. / **218.** In the ship, Trinity tends to Neo's facial bleeding, worried that he is slowly being killed. / **219.** The fighting continues with the advantage swaying to and fro. / **220.** Neo shakes in his chair under the barrage of blows from inside the Matrix. / **221.** Agent Smith continues to rain blows on Neo. The fight takes them to the rail tracks and an approaching train. But Neo is able to jump out of harm's way while Smith drops directly onto the oncoming train and is hit at high speed. The train stops and Smith emerges from it unscathed. Neo runs up the stairs to escape. / **222.** Morpheus joins Trinity and Tank around the monitor as an alarm sounds. Morpheus and Trinity rush to the cockpit and discover that the sentinels are approaching. Morpheus instructs Tank to charge the EMP but not fire it until Neo has made it out of the Matrix. / **223.** Neo grabs a phone from a bystander and dials in. Smith turns in his direction, aware

of this. / **224.** Tank announces that he has Neo. / **225.** Neo screams for tank to get him out. / **226.** Tank gives him an exit point on the corner of Wabash and Lake Streets. / **227.** Neo rushes towards the address, pursued by agents. Smith starts firing at him. Neo receives directions from Tank and enters a building by kicking down a door. He rushes up the stairs pursued by agents. / **228.** The sentinels land on the hull of the Nebuchadnezzar. / **229.** Inside the Matrix, the chase continues down passages, apartments, and back alleys. / **230.** Meanwhile, the sentinels start cutting into the Nebuchadnezzar. Morpheus' hand hovers over the EMP button. / **231.** Agent Smith locates the building that Neo is searching for ahead of Neo. / **232.** Neo receives instructions from Tank to go to room 303 through a fire escape at the end of the alley. Agents shoot at him as he scrambles up the metal staircase. He enters the building, running hard down the corridor. / **233.** The sentinels breach the hull. / **234.** Trinity whispers to herself that Neo must hurry. / **235.** Neo reaches room 303 where a phone is ringing. He opens the door and is shot repeatedly in the chest by a waiting agent Smith. He falls against the wall. / **236.** In his suspension chair at the Nebuchadnezzar, Neo convulses at the impact of the bullets. / **237.** Smith shoots Neo one last time in the chest and he slides to the ground. / **238.** The monitors in the ship show that his heartbeat has stopped. Morpheus looks on incredulously. / **239.** The other agents join Smith and check Neo's pulse. They declare him dead. / **240.** Morpheus and Tank look on in defeat as lasers from the sentinels penetrate through the hull into the control room. Trinity declares that she is not afraid because the Oracle told her that she would fall in love with the man who was The One. By that logic, Neo cannot be dead because she loves him. She kisses him. Neo's pulse starts up again. / **241.** Inside the Matrix, Neo opens his eyes. / **242.** Trinity urges him to get up. Morpheus and Tank look on in amazement. / **243.** Neo does so and the agents

turn to face him. They fire at him. Neo holds out his hand and arrests the bullets in mid-air. / **244.** Morpheus asserts that he is indeed The One. / **245.** Neo is able to see the agents for what they are, streams of code. Smith rushes at him, throwing punch after punch at him, but Neo is able to outpace him without even looking at him. Finally, Neo flies through Smith's body. Smith begins to contort, then explodes in a flash of light. The Matrix wobbles around Neo. The other agents retreat fearfully. / **246.** The sentinels are almost inside the main deck. Trinity calls out Neo's name. / **247.** Neo rushes to the ringing phone. / **248.** The sentinels enter the main deck. Trinity calls out and Morpheus fires the EMP. The sentinels fall broken to the ground. Neo regains consciousness in his chair. He kisses Trinity. / **249.** A screen displays a systems failure error message as Neo's voice announces that he is about to show humanity a world without the Matrix. / **250.** Neo hangs up the phone in a busy street and walks out of the booth looking pensively at the crowd. He looks up at the sky. The camera pulls up and looks down on the city as Neo swoops up towards it.

APPENDIX 4 – *ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND*: SYUZHET
BREAKDOWN

1. A man (Jim Carrey) wakes up in bed. He seems depressed. / **2.** Outside, he notices that his car has a dent on the door. Inferring that the car parked next to his was the cause, he leaves a note under the windscreen wiper. / **3.** The day is grey and gloomy as he waits on a crowded platform. His voice-over informs us that it is Valentine's Day, 2004, and that he has skipped work that day on the spur of the moment, which is strange, since he is not an impulsive person. / **4.** We see him running down the platform, barely making it onto a train leaving for Montauk. / **5.** He enters the train and sits down, listing in his notebook the things he still has to do. / **6.** On a deserted platform, he calls work to excuse himself for the day, claiming he has food poisoning. / **7.** Joel walks on a deserted Montauk beach while ironically congratulating himself for choosing this cold day in February to play truant. / **8.** He sits on some steps and pages through his sketchbook. He notices some pages have been ripped out but he does not remember ever having done that. He begins writing, noticing that this seems to be his first entry in two years. / **9.** As he scratches about on the beach he notices a woman (Kate Winslet) dressed in a red windbreaker and jeans approaching. He fantasizes about being with her. / **10.** He sits at a table across from her at a diner. She nods at him but he looks away embarrassed. / **11.** Back at the platform, they find themselves alone. She waves at him and playfully tries to attract his attention. / **12.** Inside the train, Joel has drawn a sketch of her. She continues her attempts to engage him in conversation. She is surprised to learn that they are apparently both going to the Rockville Centre. She asks if they know each other from

somewhere. They establish that he shops at the Barnes & Noble bookshop where she works, but perhaps he does not remember her because she keeps changing her hair colour, which is currently streaked with blue. They exchange banter about hair colours. They introduce themselves as Joel and Clementine and shake hands.

Clementine objects to being called ‘nice’, then apologises for having yelled at him. She admits to being fickle, but for the moment she is glad that Joel thinks she is nice. He brushes her off and she punches him playfully on the shoulder. / **13.** He exits the railway station alone glancing over his shoulder to see if he can spot her. / **14.** Inside his car, he sees her walking on the street and offers her a ride, which she accepts. He drops her off at her flat, and she invites him up for a drink. There is an embarrassing hesitation as he considers this. / **15.** Up in her apartment, Joel examines her mantelpiece while she mixes drinks in the kitchen. She embarrasses him by talking about seduction. She struggles to engage him in conversation on the couch. They seem worlds apart. He is reticent and shy. She is bold, colourful, and spontaneous. She suddenly declares that she will marry him. / **16.** She snuggles up against his shoulder and asks him to go with her on a night picnic on the Charles River, which is frozen this time of year. Joel agrees, but excuses himself for now, claiming that he has things to do. Clementine gives him her number asks him to call her. / **17.** She sees him out and asks him to wish her a happy Valentine’s Day when he phones her. / **18.** Joel arrives at his flat and sits around nervously before he snatches up the phone and calls her. She makes another joke about marriage before deciding on the picnic for the following evening. / **19.** Joel gingerly walks across the frozen river, declaring the scene to be beautiful. Clementine rushes on ahead then slips and falls, cursing. She persuades him to join her on the ice, then lies down and asks that he do the same. / **20.** They lie side by side while she makes him name the constellations. Joel begins

making up names. She giggles, enjoying the game. / **21.** Clementine is asleep in the passenger's seat as Joel pulls up outside her apartment. The damage on his car door is clearly visible. He wakes her up and she asks if she could sleep at his house. He agrees and she rushes off to pick up her toothbrush. / **22.** As he waits for her in the car, a young man (Elijah Wood) knocks on his window and asks Joel what he is doing there. Joel replies that he does not understand what he means. The young man seems satisfied with that and leaves. Fade to black. / **23.** Joel is driving, tears streaming from his face. The film's titles are superimposed over Joel driving through rainy streets. A sad song is playing on the cassette player. Joel ejects the cassette and chucks it out of the car window. / **24.** The music on the soundtrack changes to an instrumental piece. Joel continues driving in anguish. / **25.** He parks the car and walks to his apartment carrying a brown bag. / **26.** A van pulls up next to him and someone says, 'that's him', but Joel ignores this. / **27.** He enters the foyer of his apartment block and collects his post. / **28.** Frank, a neighbour, who is also retrieving his post, chats to him about Valentine's Day, which is the following day, and tells him how lucky he is to have Clementine to celebrate it with. Joel notices Frank shuffle an envelope with the name 'Lacuna Inc.' typed on the top left corner. We notice that Joel has a small blue spot on his temple. He hurries to his apartment declaring that he has to go to sleep. Frank is surprised that Joel would go to bed as early as 8.30. Frank puts on brand new pyjamas and swallows some pills from a medicine bottle. / **29.** Joel looks out of his window and sees the van that had followed him in the street. He hears voices from within the van. He switches off the light and stumbles into the kitchen in the dark. / **30.** Seeing the light go out, two men get out of the parked van and gather their equipment from the back. They enter the building and stumble noisily up the passage. / **31.** They enter Joel's apartment. Fade

out. / **32.** Joel is lying in bed. A blue mark is visible on his left temple. / **33.** The two men are visible in the background. / **34.** Joel hears a replay of the conversation he had with Frank out in the passage. / **35.** Suddenly he is inside the memory itself, looking somewhat bewildered. He seems only partly engaged with the conversation now. The memory of Frank dims as the remainder of the conversation grows indistinct. The background shifts out of focus. / **36.** A voice echoes, forming a bridge to a memory of events which took place three days before Valentine's Day. Joel is explaining to friends Rob (David Cross) and Carrie (Jane Adams) that he cannot reach Clementine because she has changed her phone number. / **37.** We cut to a gift shop as his voice relates how he went to the Antic Attic so he could surprise her at work with an early Valentine's present. / **38.** We cut back to his friends' apartment as he continues to relate the tale, claiming that he found her cavorting at work with some young guy. / **39.** We cut to the scene at work where Clementine fails to recognise Joel and busies herself with her new friend, kissing him behind a bookrack. Joel is astounded. / **40.** As he walks out of the bookstore the lights go out behind him. / **41.** In a seamless transition between locations, he walks straight into his friends' apartment without breaking stride. / **42.** He continues to cry on their shoulder. They offer him platitudes but he continues to groan in anguish at his break-up with Clementine. Finally, against Carrie's wishes, Rob shows Joel a card from Lacuna Inc. requesting that they never mention Joel to Clementine again because she has had him erased from her memory. The card goes out of focus. / **43.** Joel finds himself in a hazy street, holding the card in search of the address. / **44.** Finding it, he enters the office. Mary (Kirsten Dunst) is on the phone making an appointment with a prospective client. She makes Joel fill in a form despite his saying that he just wants to chat to the doctor. Eventually she takes him to Dr. Howard Mierzwiak's

(Tom Wilkinson) room. Stan (Mark Ruffalo), one of the technicians who work there, jumps out at her playfully as they round the corner. Spotting Joel, he apologises promptly. / **45.** Inside his office, Dr. Mierzwiak apologises, declaring that Joel should not have read the card. He explains that Clementine was unhappy with their relationship and wanted to move on and so she had Joel erased from her memory. / **46.** Joel repeats this to his friend Carrie in her kitchen. Carrie tells him that Clementine had him erased almost as a ‘lark’. This seems to hurt Joel even more. / **47.** Inside his car, he slams his fists on the steering wheel in frustration. An outside shot of the car shows the damage on his front door. / **48.** Joel, followed by a protesting Mary, bursts in on Dr. Mierzwiak and a patient, declaring that he wants the same procedure undertaken by Clementine. / **49.** Dr. Mierzwiak takes him to his office and explains the steps he has to take prior to the procedure. / **50.** We cut to Joel lying in his couch while the doctor’s voice gives him instructions about ridding his apartment of all reminders of Clementine. / **51.** As Joel collects the mementos of his relationship with Clementine, we hear the doctor’s voice explain how they will use the items to create a map of Joel’s brain in order to target the memories for elimination. The procedure will take place that very night. Dr. Mierzwiak tells him that he will awake the next day in his bed as if nothing had happened. / **52.** Joel arrives at the Lacuna Inc. offices carrying two bags filled with mementos. While in the waiting room, he notices that others too have brought their own items. Mary, meanwhile, is trying to deal with a patient demanding a third procedure in a single month. / **53.** Dr. Mierzwiak enters the waiting room to take Joel to his office, mentioning that February is a very busy month for them because of Valentine’s Day. / **54.** On the way to his office, Dr. Mierzwiak formally introduces Joel to Stan who is busy mapping a patient’s memory. He tells Joel that Stan will be the person handling

his procedure that night. / **55.** Inside the doctor's office, Dr. Mierzwiak takes down notes while Joel recounts his first meeting with Clementine. / **56.** We cut to a scene on a beach as his voice-over recounts how Rob and Carrie had invited Naomi, his girlfriend at the time, and himself to a beach party. Naomi could not go, but he went anyway, despite not liking parties in general. It was there that he first met Clementine. / **57.** In the doctor's room, Joel turns abruptly to see someone picking up files from the floor. / **58.** Dr. Mierzwiak asks Joel to start with his most recent memories then work backwards. / **59.** Joel is seated with a device over his head that resembles a hair drier. Stan makes two blue marks on his temples and explains that this process will create a map of his brain. / **60.** Stan asks him to react to a series of objects, beginning with a snow globe, a cushion, and two Potato Head figures. All the while, his reactions register on the computer monitor. / **61.** Joel's eyes widen with alarm as Stan seems to place the Potato Head figure in front of Joel for a second time in a sort of play-back of the original action. / **62.** Stan asks Patrick for a favour. / **63.** The request is repeated on the sound track as we pull back to reveal an unconscious Joel in bed in his pyjamas hooked up to a similar but smaller contraption to that seen in the office. Patrick (Elijah Wood) and Stan fiddle with wires and a computer set up in Joel's bedroom. / **64.** We cut to Joel at the Lacuna Inc. waiting rooms while fragments of the conversation, about possible brain damage, that he had with Dr. Mierzwiak earlier is replayed in a muffled and indistinct way on the soundtrack. / **65.** In Joel's apartment, Stan asks Patrick to check the equipment. / **66.** Joel, dressed in his pyjamas, stands next to Dr. Mierzwiak. / **67.** The next shot shows him having his brain mapped in Stan's rooms at Lacuna Inc. Stan places a cup before Joel with Clementine's picture on it. Joel is confused. / **68.** Once more, he finds himself in his pyjamas, standing next to Dr. Mierzwiak, looking at a copy of himself. / **69.** Stan

continues the mind-mapping session at Lacuna Inc. / **70**. Dr. Mierzwiak seems oblivious to his presence. Joel claims that it must be déjà vu. Dr. Mierzwiak now takes hold of Joel's arms and says that they must get started. Joel realises that he must already be undergoing the procedure. Dr. Mierzwiak tells a seated Joel about the necessity of disposing the mementoes once the mapping is done, while a standing Joel looks on in his pyjamas, mouthing the very words spoken by Dr. Mierzwiak. / **71**. Joel finally seems to come to terms with the notion that he is indeed inside his own memory, playing and replaying the jumbled parade of passed and passing events. / **72**. Back in Joel's apartment, Stan calls out to Patrick. / **73**. At the mapping session at Lacuna Inc., Stan asks Patrick to check on why he is getting a reading of his own voice. At the same time, Dr. Mierzwiak's voice calls out Patrick's name. Joel, the observer, looks around puzzled. He too whispers Patrick's name, trying to remember what it means. / **74**. At Joel's apartment, Patrick is complaining about the number of wires and equipment required for the procedure. / **75**. At Lacuna Inc., a seated Joel is confused by a repetition of disembodied remarks about wires and equipment. / **76**. We cut to the street where Joel is carrying the two bags of mementoes to Lacuna Inc., walking past a version of himself seated under mind-mapping equipment. All the while, Stan's and Patrick's continuing conversation at his apartment is heard as voice-over. / **77**. At Lacuna Inc., a hand removes the mug from in front of the seated Joel while we hear Stan and Patrick's voice-over continue to discuss the wiring. Suddenly Mary asks how Joel is feeling. / **78**. At Lacuna Inc., the jumble of characters and conversations continues unabated. / **79**. Joel is close to tears in his memory-mapping chair. / **80**. At Joel's apartment, Patrick continues to fiddle with the equipment's wires. / **81**. Joel, seated in the memory-mapping chair, looks on with mounting concern. Stan and Dr. Mierzwiak talk about Joel's journal as

being an invaluable resource. Stan reads from it as images flash by. / **82.** Joel, seated in his memory-mapping chair, is aware of this. / **83.** Stan and Dr. Mierzwiak continue rummaging through Joel's notes and mementoes as the series of images accelerates to a blur. / **84.** Patrick screams as he bumps his head on the table at Joel's apartment. Stan asks him to take it easy and presses a button on the keyboard, eliminating another of Joel's memories. Joel, lying unconscious in his bed with the memory-wiping device strapped on his head, whispers Patrick's name. Patrick criticises the state of Joel's apartment. Stan urges Patrick to concentrate on the job at hand instead. / **85.** The camera closes in on Joel. / **86.** Clementine enters the apartment. Joel whispers that this was the last time he saw her. Clementine drinks water from the kitchen tap and lies down on the couch. Joel complains that it is 3:00 pm. Clementine admits to having had an accident with his car. Joel accuses her of being drunk. They argue. She storms into the bathroom. He follows her in to find that she has mysteriously disappeared. / **87.** He finds her in the kitchen where she hands him her keys. / **88.** She declares that their relationship is over and storms out of the apartment. / **89.** Joel rushes down the passage after her. / **90.** Stan announces the elimination of yet another memory. He remarks that Mary will be coming over. They start chatting about girls while sipping beers. / **91.** Joel groans in frustration as he spots the damage on his car door. Clementine is walking away down the pavement. Joel gets into his car and pursues her, but she refuses to stop and get in. As she continues walking away, surrounding cars and buildings begin to vanish. Joel calls out to her that he is glad that he is erasing her. / **92.** Leaving his car behind in the street, he runs after her on foot. Suddenly, and impossibly, he comes up to his car even though he has run in the opposite direction. Clementine continues walking away from him, but this time in the reverse direction to the one she had followed a moment

previously. Stan's and Patrick's voices float over the scene. As Joel continues to pursue Clementine, who keeps appearing at different locations, he hears Patrick admit to Stan that he is after Joel's girl. Joel unsuccessfully looks around for the source of the voices. / **93.** At the apartment, Patrick admits to having fallen in love with Clementine during the memory wiping procedure. He also admits to stealing her panties. / **94.** Joel overhears this and continues to search in vain for the source of the voices. / **95.** He sees himself lying on the floor near his foldout bed. / **96.** The scene rewinds as the bed folds back into a couch. Joel and Clementine moodily eat noodles out of boxes. / **97.** Joel looks up as Patrick's voice, which only he seems to hear, admits to there being more to confess. / **98.** Patrick scratches around Joel's kitchen. / **99.** Joel gets up, noodle box in hand, and goes to the kitchen in search of the voice, but finds it empty. He continues to hear Patrick admitting to going to Clementine's work to ask her out. Frantic, Joel continues to search for the source. / **100.** We cut to Stan castigating Patrick for his lack of ethics. / **101.** Joel looks on as Stan and Patrick burst out laughing at the fact that Patrick stole Clementine's panties. / **102.** Inside the noodle-eating scene, Joel tries to warn Clementine that there is someone else in the apartment with them and that this someone has stolen her panties. She says that she does not see anyone. / **103.** Joel hears a ticking clock but cannot find the source. He stumbles back. / **104.** Joel falls back on the couch as Clementine asks from the next room if he has seen her boots. Joel lies on the floor and smears red paint across his forehead, faking death. Clementine comes in. She ignores Joel and gets dressed in front of the TV. She declares that she should have left him at the flea market, and leaves the apartment. Joel sits on the couch, dejected. / **105.** Clementine and Joel are walking in the flea market. She declares that she wants a baby, but Joel does not think she is yet ready to take care of a child. They fight over this. Her voice grows

indistinct and his vision of her becomes blurred as she declares that she should leave him right here in the flea market. / **106.** The doorbell rings at Joel's apartment. Patrick lets Mary in. She brushes past him, greets Stan, and glances at the unconscious Joel. She asks for something to drink, other than beer. Patrick declares to Stan that Mary hates him. He confesses that he has not had much luck with women. He tries to own up to more indiscretions, but Stan stops him. Mary hands Stan a drink, skipping Patrick. She enquires whether Joel can be woken up by all this chatter, but Stan assures her that he cannot. / **107.** Clementine kisses Joel on the cheek in their bedroom, waking him up. She sadly complains that he never tells her anything. She, on the other hand, is like an open book. She admits to craving intimacy. / **108.** The soundtrack grows indistinct and a spotlight separates Joel and Clementine from their surroundings. Clementine declares that she wants to look through Joel's notebooks. He tries to embrace her but she pulls away. Joel's voice-over informs us that it is November 19, 2003. Joel busies himself by drawing in his notebook. / **109.** We see him and Clementine eating unhappily at a restaurant as his voice-over tells us that this is dinner at Kang's again. They end up having a disagreeable conversation about Joel's hair left in the shower. We hear a phone number being dialled. / **110.** Patrick, still in Joel's apartment, holds the phone to his ear. Stan urges him to pay attention to the job at hand. / **111.** At the Restaurant, Joel hears Patrick indistinctly greet Tangerine (Clementine's nickname) in a phone conversation. Joel looks around the restaurant while hearing Clementine declare to Patrick that she is feeling very miserable. / **112.** At the bookshop where Clementine works, we hear a voice ask Joel if he needs help finding something. Another version of Joel, holding chopsticks, enters the scene, almost bumping into 'himself' as the latter walks off without seeing him. / **113.** The disembodied phone conversation

between Tangerine and Patrick continues as Joel walks up to where Clementine is working. A young man is leaning towards her across the desk. Joel tries to turn him around but try as he might he can only see the back of his head. Joel walks away to look for the self-help section, while Patrick, still on the phone, tells Tangerine that he loves her. / **114.** Joel finds himself at a deserted Kang's restaurant while the phone conversation continues on the sound track. Patrick convinces Tangerine to let him go over to cheer her up. / **115.** Patrick asks Stan if he can leave to go to his girlfriend who is very upset. Mary chips in that Patrick should go and that she will help Stan with the work on Joel. / **116.** We hear Patrick tell Tangerine that he will be right over, while we see Joel in bed, reading a comic book. Tangerine parades her new Tangerine coloured hair, and Joel declares that he likes it. She joins him in bed and they kiss. She goes behind the curtain. Joel suddenly asks Clementine how Patrick knows to call her Tangerine, but she does not understand his question. / **117.** Stan and Mary lie next to Joel in the bed, talking about bands and smoking pot. Mary clearly admires Dr. Mierzwiak for freeing people from pain and suffering. / **118.** Patrick is walking down a street. / **119.** Through some curtains, we see him approaching a building. / **120.** Clementine lets him in. She declares that she feels lost and frightened and that nothing makes any sense. She suddenly asks Patrick to go with her to Montauk, to the frozen Charles, at that very moment. / **121.** Stan and Mary are dancing on Joel's bed. The phone rings and we hear Patrick's voice on the answering machine. Stan picks up. / **122.** Patrick asks Stan if he could carry on with the procedure on his own as he is having trouble with his girlfriend. / **123.** Stan, who would like to have time alone with Mary, says that he has everything under control. / **124.** Patrick rummages through a backpack containing mementoes and letters from Clementine's and Joel's relationship, looking for ways to impress Clementine. He

finds a note describing the night she and Joel spent together at the Charles River. Clementine comes into the room and he hurriedly pockets the note. He gives her the pendant that Joel had bought for her for Valentine's Day as if it were a present from him. Clementine is impressed with his choice of gifts. / **125.** Joel and Clementine are in bed under the blanket. Clementine asks Joel if he thinks that she is ugly. She always thought so as a child. / **126.** We cut to her childhood memories as her voice-over fills in the missing pieces. She yells at her ugly doll, also called Clementine, imploring her to be pretty, feeling that only then could she admit to being pretty herself. Joel assures her that she is pretty, kissing her. Clementine asks him never to leave her. / **127.** We see a shot of Joel crawling along a cheetah-print blanket while his voice-over pleads with Dr. Mierzwiak to let him keep this specific memory. / **128.** Clementine and Patrick are walking on the frozen Charles River. Clementine tells him that she does not want to hold his hand. / **129.** Joel is lying next to Clementine on the ice, declaring that he feels so happy that he does not mind dying at this moment. / **130.** Joel finds himself lying on a pavement next to Clementine, while people walk past without noticing them. Clementine recedes from him into the darkness. Joel looks up to the heavens and declares that he wants to call off the memory-erasing procedure. / **131.** Stan and Mary are dancing on Joel's bed in their underwear. / **132.** Their music mixes with Joel's inner scream. / **133.** He calls out Clementine's name and she answers from the darkness. / **134.** He finds her lying down on the ice. He grabs her hand and leads her away, declaring that he may have an idea of how to stop this. / **135.** Joel and Clementine thrash about in bed under the blanket and pink sheets. / **136.** Joel and Clementine are still running hand-in-hand in the darkness. / **137.** Joel is frantically painting a picture of Clementine with the body of a skeleton. / **138.** Joel and Clementine continue running aimlessly in the darkness.

/ **139.** They keep running, frantically changing direction. / **140.** Joel is jumping up and down on the bed as Clementine sits with her back to him. Dr. Mierzwiak's disembodied voice declares that he cannot show Joel confidential material. / **141.** Joel is thrashing about on the bed like a child. / **142.** We see a jumble of blurred images of Joel and Clementine while we hear Dr. Mierzwiak's voice repeating fragments of the earlier conversation he had with Joel about Clementine. / **143.** Joel and Clementine are still running around in the darkness on the frozen Charles River. / **144.** Joel and Clementine are watching a movie at the cinema as two figures (presumably Joel and Clementine) rush past them. / **145.** Joel and Clementine are running through a large railway station. / **146.** People around them start dissolving away. / **147.** Joel and Clementine enter a hallway. / **148.** They sit with Roy and Carrie. / **149.** They hurry down a passage, which leads them to Dr. Mierzwiak's office. He is interviewing Joel about his memories of Clementine. / **150.** Joel shouts to be woken up, but Dr. Mierzwiak says that he is inside his head and cannot help him from there. / **151.** Joel again catches a glimpse of a figure picking up files from the floor. It is a young man with inverted facial features. Dr. Mierzwiak tells Joel that this is Patrick. Joel informs Dr. Mierzwiak that this is the young man who is stealing Clementine from him, using inside information. / **152.** Patrick and Clementine look up at the stars. Patrick repeats comments to her made by Joel as if they were his own. This upsets Clementine who suddenly wants to go home. / **153.** Joel and Clementine are hiking through the woods. Joel admits to her that he hired people to erase her from his memory, but he no longer wants that. He cannot stop them, however, because he is asleep. Clementine says that he should try to wake himself up. / **154.** Joel momentarily opens his eyes in his bed. He sees Mary and Stan frolicking over him. / **155.** Back in the woods, Joel announces that his attempt to wake up almost

worked, but he could not quite move his body. / **156.** Back at the apartment, Clementine suggests that Joel hides the memories he wants to keep by taking her/them somewhere where they cannot be found. / **157.** Joel remembers himself as a child playing in the rain in a yellow raincoat outside his parent's home. / **158.** Both he and Clementine sing the 'row your boat' song. / **159.** We see a child's face through a window looking at the bicycle resting against the wall outside. / **160.** It begins to rain inside the apartment. Clementine declares that the plan is working. / **161.** We pan past to see the bicycle which is now inside the apartment. / **162.** Joel, as a young boy, wipes the rain from the bicycle seat. / **163.** Joel laughs and rushes under a corrugated iron-top table. / **164.** Joel, as a young boy, stands under a corrugated iron roof, seeking shelter from the rain. In his apartment, Joel continues crouching under the table. / **165.** The boy holds open his hand, feeling the rain. / **166.** Joel repeats the gesture from under the table. / **167.** The boy dashes away from under the roof. / **168.** An even younger four-year-old Joel crawls under the table inside his mother's kitchen. / **169.** At Joel's apartment, Clementine notices that Joel is no longer under the kitchen table, and calls out his name. The rain is still pouring down inside the apartment. / **170.** Joel, now dressed in child's pyjamas, is playing under the kitchen table in his mother's kitchen. Relative to the furniture, he is diminutive but retains the facial features of adulthood. Clementine appears in Joel's mother's kitchen. She is impressed to find herself dressed in outlandish clothes. Joel's mother enters her kitchen and asks 'Clementine' for help cleaning beans, then promptly exits the kitchen. Joel complains that his mother always ignores him and ducks back under the table. Clementine shows baby Joel her crotch to stop him crying. / **171.** A buzzer wakes up Stan who has fallen asleep in an armchair next to Mary. He declares that the machine has stopped erasing memories because Joel is 'off the map'. Mary

suggests that they call Dr. Mierzwiak. / **172.** Dr. Mierzwiak picks up the phone next to his bed. / **173.** Stan tells him that the machine is no longer able to recognise the map of Joel's memories. / **174.** Unable to solve the problem over the phone, Dr. Mierzwiak tells Stan that he is coming over to Joel's apartment. / **175.** Stan gets dressed and asks Mary to leave, but she refuses. / **176.** Baby Joel continues to cry under his mother's kitchen table, still feeling ignored. Clementine joins him under the table. She tells him that he must try and remember her in the morning, upon waking up, in order that he may find her and start their relationship again. His mother comes in to ask her neighbour (Clementine) to join her for a cocktail. Not seeing Clementine under the table, she leaves the kitchen. Joel tells Clementine about Patrick's scam to get her to be his girlfriend. / **177.** On the drive back from Montauk, Patrick continues to barrage Clementine with quotes from Joel's notes, but she grows even more distraught at this. / **178.** Meanwhile, Stan and Mary are desperately cleaning up prior to Dr. Mierzwiak's arrival. Mary seems very concerned with her appearance, and tidies herself up in front of the mirror. / **179.** The doorbell rings and Mary lets Dr. Mierzwiak in. She explains that she is there to help Stan and to learn more about the process. Dr. Mierzwiak puzzles over the problem at hand. He declares that he will re-examine Joel's entire memory to see if something comes up. Mary fusses around him, bringing him a chair. / **180.** Joel and Clementine are being bathed in the kitchen sink by his mother, who is singing *My Darling Clementine*. / **181.** Dr. Mierzwiak finds this memory but cannot understand why it has relocated to a different spot. He taps a key on the keyboard. / **182.** Clementine disappears from the sink and Joel sinks into the water. / **183.** In the apartment, Joel coughs, as if drowning. His eyes open. A worried Dr. Mierzwiak injects him with a tranquilliser. / **184.** Joel struggles in the sink water. Drenched and gasping for air, he sits up in his

car next to Clementine. They are at a drive-in movie, and Clementine is mouthing lines from the movie. / **185.** Dr. Mierzwiak declares that he is back on track. Mary overtly flirts with him. / **186.** We see that Joel and Clementine are watching the drive-in movie from beyond the fence. They make up for the absence of sound by filling in the dialogue themselves and then enact the screen kiss. Suddenly the screen and Clementine disappear. / **187.** Stan declares that he eliminated another memory. / **188.** Joel grabs hold of Clementine who has reappeared. They manage to scramble out of the car just as it too disappears. As they run off, the fence in front of them vanishes. / **189.** Stan, who is back on the memory-wiping machine, declares that run as they might, they cannot hide from him. / **190.** Joel and Clementine scramble down the gloomy street as objects continue to vanish around them. / **191.** Joel enters Dr. Mierzwiak's rooms, calling out for him. He locates him, but discovers that Dr. Mierzwiak has no face, while his distorted voice replays an earlier request to Joel to provide him with a list of memories. Joel, likewise faceless, finds himself inside the memory once more. / **192.** Stan is puzzled to discover Joel in a memory that he has already erased. / **193.** Out in the dark streets, Clementine admits to Joel that she no longer wishes to keep running. She is now standing next to huge shelves of books, which are rapidly disappearing. We hear Dr. Mierzwiak's voice declare that Joel has developed a resistance to the procedure. Clementine tells Joel to hide her somewhere deeper, like a humiliating memory. / **194.** Angry voices from his past intermingle as Joel and Clementine scramble past shelves of books and into the path of an oncoming bus. / **195.** Dr. Mierzwiak is about to leave Joel's apartment when Stan stops him because Joel has gone off the map again. / **196.** Joel attempts to hide Clementine inside a humiliating memory in which he masturbates over some drawings depicting the sex act. Clementine who has been inserted inside the memory

looks away in embarrassment. His mother comes into the bedroom and catches him at it. / **197.** Joel and Clementine are on the beach. Joel declares his anguish at his continuing loss of memories. / **198.** Back next to the shelves of books, Clementine tells him to hide her somewhere even deeper. / **199.** Joel, appearing as a child, is being urged by a group of children to slam a hammer on a wounded pigeon. Reluctantly, he does so. / **200.** An adult Clementine, dressed in little girl's clothes, appears inside the memory and drags a sobbing (adult) Joel away. / **201.** The children jeer as Clementine, now appearing as a child, leads Joel away. / **202.** An adult Joel dressed in children's clothes turns to face up to the bullies but is brought to the ground by a boy a fraction of his size. / **203.** Clementine (as a child) leads him away through a hole in the fence. / **204.** She consoles him, speaking in an adult voice. They reach Joel's childhood house. Joel pretends to smother Clementine with a pillow. His mother looks on from a window inside the house. Suddenly the house begins to age, becoming a derelict ruin before his very eyes. / **205.** Dr. Mierzwiak declares that although he is able to find Joel quickly enough, he does not understand what is happening. / **206.** Joel pulls the smothering cushion off Clementine to find her gone. He gets on his bicycle and rides off. / **207.** Clementine is smothering Joel in their bed with a cushion. Joel pretends to be dead. Discovering it is a joke, she presses the cushion down on him once more. / **208.** Joel finds himself alone in bed. Fade to black. / **209.** Joel and Clementine are horsing around on a snow-covered beach. / **210.** Suddenly, they spot a house. Joel tries to drag her away but she resists. / **211.** Clementine disappears from his grasp. Joel runs along the beach, looking for her. / **212.** At Joel's apartment, Mary flirts with Dr. Mierzwiak. Stan excuses himself and leaves the apartment. Mary continues to try and impress Dr. Mierzwiak by quoting Nietzsche. He seems to enjoy the flirtation. She goes on to quote Alexander Pope. /

213. Her words drift over a scene of Joel and Clementine hugging and laughing at a street carnival of parading elephants. Clementine disappears once more, much to Joel's distress. / **214.** Dr. Mierzwiak seems genuinely touched by Mary's quote. Mary kisses him and declares that she has loved him for a long time. He explains that he has wife and kids. / **215.** From his parked car, Stan sees them kissing through the window. Dr. Mierzwiak's wife arrives looking for her husband. She is dressed in her nightgown. Stan blows the car horn in warning, but Mrs. Mierzwiak sees her husband in Mary's arms. She walks up to Stan and slaps him for his part in the deception, then gets in her car to leave. Dr. Mierzwiak runs after her, followed by Mary. He tries to apologise, but Mrs. Mierzwiak tells Mary that she is, once again, welcome to her husband. She drives off. Mary now learns that she and Dr. Mierzwiak have had a previous relationship which she had erased from her memory when things did not work out. Deflated, Dr. Mierzwiak goes back to finish the procedure. Stan offers Mary a lift home but she walks off without responding. / **216.** Joel approaches Clementine at the Barnes & Noble bookshop where she is working. She tries to brush him off by claiming that he is probably already married and that she is just a messed-up girl looking for peace of mind. Joel tells her that he remembers that speech well. He asks her for another chance. She responds by saying that he should remember her and try his best to find her, and that perhaps they may get a second chance. / **217.** Clementine disappears. Joel is surrounded by bookshelves filled with colourless books. / **218.** Mary rummages through records at the office. She finds Clementine's file in a drawer. She plays a cassette from the envelope, which contains her interview with Howard relating her life with Joel. / **219.** Joel is helping Rob and Carrie unpack the supplies for their party at the beach. Joel's voice-over recounts that this is the day he met Clementine and admits that he

was drawn to her immediately. / **220.** Clementine introduces herself to Joel who is sitting on the steps of a beach house. Joel, aware of the event as a memory, recounts how she had taken a piece of chicken from his plate without waiting for his permission to do so. They chat about jokes surrounding her name. Clementine, aware of her role as a fragment of Joel's memory, tells him that it will all be gone soon. Joel tells her that they should enjoy it while it lasts. / **221.** They walk along the beach at night. She asks him if he is married. He tells her that he is not, but that he lives with someone else. She finds an open window at the beach house and climbs in. She opens the front door for him. She searches through the dark house and finds some wine. She asks him to choose the wine while she goes to find the bedroom. / **222.** Outside, the house is being erased. / **223.** Clementine runs upstairs. / **224.** Joel says that he should leave. Clementine calls out from upstairs that he should, if that is what he wants. / **225.** Joel, with the house dissolving around him, reminds her that he did leave at the time. / **226.** Joel walks through the house, which is filling up with surf. He declares that he wishes now that he had stayed. Clementine recounts that when she came downstairs he was already gone. Joel recounts how, upon leaving the beach house, he went back to the bonfire to hide his humiliation. / **227.** Joel runs out of the house toward the beach. Clementine appears and asks him what would happen if he stayed this time? He goes up to her and they kiss goodbye. He tells her he that loves her. As the memory fades she whispers that he meet her in Montauk. / **228.** Joel sits in the back of Rob and Carrie's car. / **229.** We see Clementine and Joel having soup in bed. / **230.** Bookshelves are jumbled in with other fleeting images from their time together. / **231.** Rob and Carrie chat about Clementine in the car. Joel tells them that she was nice. / **232.** Dr. Mierzwiak closes his laptop, indicating that the procedure is over. Stan removes the helmet from Joel's head and attempts to rub out the blue

target marks on his temple. Dr. Mierzwiak picks up his cell phone. Outside, Stan tells Dr. Mierzwiak that he has to drop the van off, and leaves. / **233**. Joel awakens in his bedroom, a blank look on his face. He gets out of bed in a repeat of the starting sequence. / **234**. Outside, he spots the damage on his car's front door. / **235**. Mary leaves the Lacuna Inc. building carrying a box with files. / **236**. Stan, who is unpacking the van, sees her and runs after her. He confirms that he never knew that she had the procedure, although he did once suspect it when he saw her with Howard. / **237**. Joel is standing on the railway station platform. / **238**. He runs off to take the train to Montauk, and barely makes it on board. / **239**. Stan tells Mary that he really likes her. But she does not respond and he walks off sadly. Mary drives off in her car. In the back seat are boxes filled with records from Lacuna Inc. / **240**. Joel pulls up outside Clementine's apartment. She is asleep in the passenger's seat. Waking up, she leaves to get her toothbrush. / **241**. Patrick knocks on Joel's car window. Clementine finishes brushing her teeth, picks up a large yellow envelope and exits her apartment. / **242**. She gets into Joel's car and they drive off. She opens the envelope and reads Mary's letter explaining the entire situation. Clementine pops the included cassette into Joel's car player. It is the recording of Clementine's meeting with Dr. Mierzwiak in which she describes all the things that she does not like about her relationship with Joel. Embarrassed and hurt, Joel stops the car and opens the door for her to get out. / **243**. Patrick is waiting for her outside her apartment but she tells him to get away from her. / **244**. Clementine is sobbing in her apartment. / **245**. Clementine drives to Joel's apartment. In the foyer, she searches for his apartment number by scanning the mailboxes. She runs into Frank, who recognises her. / **246**. She enters Joel's apartment through an open door and overhears Joel's own Lacuna Inc. recording in which he recounts all the things that

are wrong and right with her. / **247.** Clementine apologises for having yelled at him earlier. They seem about to get together, but Joel's pre-recorded remarks cut her to the bone. Upset, she leaves his apartment. / **248.** Joel stops her in the passage and a transcendent look passes between them. Clementine gives him her speech about who she truly is. She predicts that he will come to dislike her and she, in turn, will get bored with him and feel trapped. Joel tells her that would be 'Okay' with him. She echoes the same sentiment. / **249.** Clementine and Joel run down a snow-covered beach. / **250.** End Credits.

APPENDIX 5 – *NEXT*: SYUZHET BREAKDOWN

1. The film begins with a title sequence in which we glimpse fragments of a clock face and blurred close-ups of a girl (Jessica Biel) flashing in and out of focus. / **2.** A man (Nicholas Cage) sits at a restaurant sipping a drink and glancing at his watch, which reads ten past eight. The clock on the wall reads eight minutes past eight. The man resets his wristwatch and turns expectantly towards the door. Time passes, but no one comes. Disappointed, he leaves the restaurant. / **3.** Establishing shots of the evening Las Vegas skyline. / **4.** Backstage, the man walks past a bevy of chorus girls before making it onstage to be introduced to the small audience by the master of ceremonies as, ‘The Amazing Frank Cadillac. The man who knows what you’re going to do before you do it.’ / **5.** He proceeds to do some magic tricks. / **6.** We cut to a man (Tory Kittles) and woman (Julianne Moore) from the audience with an obvious interest in Cadillac. Their demeanour tells us that they are not there to be entertained. The man scoffs at Cadillac’s antics, but the woman seems to take his ability seriously. / **7.** Cadillac performs an impressive trick with a woman’s necklace. / **8.** We cut to Cadillac walking down a Vegas street. His voice-over informs us that although most magic acts are an illusion, a small percentage, including his, are not. / **9.** He enters a casino. / **10.** In the continuing voice-over he admits to cheating against the house, betting small so as not to attract attention. He asserts that he does so by being able to see two minutes into his future, except when it comes to a certain girl. He promises to tell us more about that later. / **11.** We cut to a control room where a group of people are monitoring events at the tables. One of the men recognises Cadillac from his show. He issues orders to apprehend him, but Cadillac looks up at the camera as if aware of this plan. / **12.** Cadillac coolly puts out his cigarette and

walks off. / **13.** His voice-over informs us that the curious thing about the future is that it changes each time you look at it. / **14.** As Cadillac cashes in his chips he notices a man in a light blue jacket approaching. The man suddenly whips out a gun and holds up the cashier. When approached by security and asked to drop the gun, he shoots two people, grabs the money and runs. / **15.** The background flashes in and out of focus while we stay close on Cadillac's face. A series of short clipped sound spikes draw our attention to the peculiarity of the scene. / **16.** We see a repeat moment of the same man in the blue jacket approaching the counter. Cadillac suddenly attacks him and grabs the gun out of his jacket pocket. Security arrives and tells Cadillac to drop the gun. He does so, informing them that the man was going to shoot two people. He turns and runs away. / **17.** Security pursues him assisted by cameras in the control room, but Cadillac, appearing very casual and sure-footed, impossibly evades them at every turn. / **18.** Outside, he makes his getaway in a stolen car but is immediately pursued by police cars. Again, he mysteriously evades the police car by hurtling across a rail crossing a split second before the train cuts the pursuit off. / **19.** In a government electronics lab, the same woman we saw at the show, who we now learn is a special Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.) agent named Callie, is watching a video of Cadillac's escape. In conversation with her superior we learn that she regards Cadillac as having genuine paranormal abilities. Her superior reminds her that a Russian Federation ten kilo-ton bomb has been missing for the past five weeks and scolds her for thinking she can find it using cheap magic tricks. However, he gives her five days to pursue her theory. / **20.** Back at the Casino, Callie's partner, Cavanaugh, approaches the Casino chief, Roybal and demands that he accompany him. / **21.** Cadillac pulls into a garage workshop and is greeted by a friend, Irv (Peter Falk). / **22.** Cavanaugh takes Roybal to a large truck

and trailer. Inside, he introduces him to Callie Ferris. She asks him about Cris Johnson, alias Frank Cadillac, and learns from the conversation and from the recording at the casino that Cadillac is able to see into the future once others impinge on his life – in this case, he is able to learn that security has been instructed to apprehend him. Roybal is sworn to secrecy and driven away. / **23.** Back at the garage, Irv implores Cris to stop stealing cars and to forget about the girl in his head. What if he never meets her? Cris responds that he will, at the Dinner at 8:09. They agree to shoot pool until then. / **24.** Meanwhile, Callie deduces from the videotapes that Cris must be able to see between a minute and a half, and two minutes and sixteen seconds, into the future. Cavanaugh comes in and informs her that they have just traced Cris through the electronic tracking device in his stolen car. / **25.** Cris and Irv are shooting pool in the garage. They discuss why it is that Cris can see much further ahead when it comes to the girl. Cris proffers that it is perhaps because she is ‘the one.’ / **26.** Cris suddenly looks at his wristwatch and announces that the cops are almost there. / **27.** Callie arrives and begins to question Cris, but he denies that he has any special abilities. She tells him that she needs help to track stolen nuclear material that may already be in the United States. He insists his abilities are an act. Callie then threatens him with possession of a stolen vehicle and for assault involving a gun at the Casino. The garage doors slide open and the police stream in. The room spins. / **28.** We cut back to moments before Callie arrives. Cris rushes out as the agents arrive. / **29.** Callie finds him gone. / **30.** In the Casino parking lot, a man and woman approach Roybal and question him about Cris. When he claims not to know Cris, they shoot him in the foot and threaten him with a knife. / **31.** We cut to a series of blurred slow motion images of the same girl we saw in the beginning. / **32.** Cris sits at the same spot at the restaurant, sipping a drink while waiting. Again, he readjusts

his watch to match the time on the wall clock. / **33**. The girl enters in a shot that seems to be a continuation of the images we saw of her seconds previously. / **34**. Cris, gobsmacked, watches her take her seat. / **35**. He approaches her and asks if he might join her, but she refuses him. / **36**. The camera swings past his shoulder to reveal another version of his approach, this time to ask about the coffee, but again she brushes him off. / **37**. His tries again, this time asking for a light. No luck. / **38**. In his fourth attempt, she stops him before he even leaves his seat. / **39**. Then, her ex-boyfriend, Kendall, strides in and sits opposite her. She tries to brush him off but he gets angry, raising his voice and grabbing her wrist. / **40**. Cris intervenes, informing Kendall that he, Cris, is her future. Kendall takes several swipes at him but Cris is able to duck easily out of the way while he simultaneously introduces himself to her. Distraught at the display of so much male bravado, she leaves. / **41**. We jump back to the moment when Kendall grabs her wrist. / **42**. Cris again intervenes. This time he allows Kendall to knock him down. Liz chases Kendall out of the restaurant and tends to the fallen Cris. / **43**. At the table, they introduce themselves to each other. Liz ends up offering Cris a ride as they seem to be going in the same direction, providing he is willing to wait while she makes a stop of several hours in order to take care of personal business. He agrees gratefully. / **44**. In the car, they chat about destiny and they both express the view that it would be nice not to know what is around the corner. / **45**. At the Dinner, Callie questions the employees about Cris' movements. She discovers that Cris got a lift heading towards Flagstaff. / **46**. Outside, Cavanaugh informs Callie that Roybal had his throat cut the previous night. / **47**. We cut to the docks where a gang of men, including the man and woman who shot Roybal, receive components that constitute what we take to be a nuclear device. One of the men, Jones, orders them to hunt down and kill Cris because he is afraid

that his abilities might jeopardise their plans. / **48.** Liz and Cris arrive at the Havasupai Reservation near the Grand Canyon where Liz teaches once a week, but has come this day to deliver a birthday present to one of her students. The children ask her if Cris is her boyfriend, prompted by the way that he looks at her. Cris then performs a trick for the children. On the way back to the car Cris tells her a little about himself. Liz declares that she finds him charming but odd. / **49.** Cavanaugh informs Callie at the shooting range that a traffic camera has identified the car Cris is in. / **50.** Cris is driving through the night rain. Liz is asleep, her head on his shoulder. She wakes and they chat lightly. / **51.** They come to a roadblock, which has been erected because of flooding. A traffic official redirects them to a motel a couple of miles back. Cris surprises the official by naming the motel. / **52.** Callie and Cavanaugh review the traffic tape and are able to identify details on a permit stuck on the windscreen of the car. / **53.** Cris and Liz enter the motel room. Cris offers to sleep in the car as there is only one bed. / **54.** From the window, Liz watches him tossing and turning in the vehicle. / **55.** Cavanaugh informs Callie that they have tracked Cris and Liz to the Cliffhanger motel. The couple made an impression on the traffic official because Cris seemed to know about the motel before he could even suggest it. / **56.** Just then, Callie and Cavanaugh are called to the control centre to learn that the stakes have just got higher. They now have a confirmed nuclear alert in the California region. Callie urges her chief to let her team pick up Cris Johnson. / **57.** As the convoy of F.B.I. cars leaves the building, they are watched from the opposite building by a man speaking in French on the phone. / **58.** We cut to the same group of terrorists that we saw earlier, who instruct him to follow the cars. / **59.** As he leaves the apartment, we see a dead girl lying on the floor with her throat slit. / **60.** Back at the motel, Cris suggests to Liz that they eat indoors. Liz has just

showered and is wrapped up in a towel. Cris compares her to a Carlotti painting and presents with her a paper rose that immediately burst into flames, then turns into a real rose. He hands her the flower, closes his eyes, and seems to sample the moment, declaring it ‘incredible’. They kiss. / **61.** Callie and Cavanaugh are up in a helicopter closing in on Cris. They deduce, through the discovery of the dead girl in the apartment, that someone is tracking their movements. / **62.** Cris and Liz are lying in each other’s arms, having just made love. Liz whispers that maybe there is such a thing as destiny. We cut to an extreme close up of Cris’ eye as the camera pulls back smoothly. Two quick dissolves continue the pull back until it culminates in a ‘God shot’ – the overhead placement of a camera aimed straight down. / **63.** From the distance, Callie and her team are surveying the motel with binoculars. / **64.** She watches Liz leave the motel. / **65.** On her way back, Liz, bag in hand, is simultaneously being observed by the terrorists. / **66.** Callie approaches Liz and introduces herself as an F.B.I. agent. Watched by the terrorists, Liz gets into the car with Callie. / **67.** Callie shows Liz the Casino gun incident on video to support the accusation that Cris is a sociopath. Liz initially believes her. Callie persuades her to go back to the motel and drug Cris’ drink. She instructs her to do this at least two minutes *after* she gets Cris out of the room. / **68.** The terrorists watch Liz leave the car and head back towards the motel room. / **69.** Once inside, she lets Cris kiss her, but he seems to sense that something is wrong. Liz denies that there is anything the matter. She asks him to go and wash up while she makes breakfast. / **70.** Back at the F.B.I. trailer, the agents carefully keep track of events. / **71.** Cris shaves in the bathroom. Liz prepares breakfast, glancing at her watch. / **72.** Callie counts down the seconds. / **73.** The terrorists drink coffee behind the nearby shrubs, keeping watch. / **74.** Liz holds the pill given to her by Callie in her hand. / **75.** Callie continues her

countdown. / **76.** Liz is about to drop the pill in the glass of orange juice. / **77.** One of the terrorists takes aim with a rifle fitted with telescopic sights. / **78.** Liz still has not dropped the pill into the glass. / **79.** Callie finishes her countdown. / **80.** Liz drops the pill into the juice. Cris enters and she hands him the glass. He hugs her and she has second thoughts. She suddenly tells him not to drink from the glass. Whispering, she confesses everything that occurred on her way back from the shop. She asks him if what they say of him is true. Cris switches on the television set to mask their conversation. / **81.** Callie, who has the room bugged, asks for a noise reduction filter. / **82.** Cris asks Liz to speak softly, but to continue to act normally. Learning that the drug would have taken five minutes to take effect, he parades outside with Liz's harmless glass of juice in his hand, sipping from it. / **83.** The F.B.I. agents see him drink the juice. / **84.** The terrorists, watching from a distance, cannot get a clean shot. / **85.** Cris goes back inside and proves his abilities to Liz by randomly switching channels and reciting snatches of dialogue from television programs seconds before they are uttered. At first Liz is upset because she thinks that Cris has used his ability to set her up, but then she seems to accept it. He explains to her that the F.B.I. wants him to help them with a matter of national security, but they do not understand that he can only see two minutes into the future, and even then, only in matters concerning himself, with one exception. When Liz is involved in an event, he can see well beyond that time limit, although no one else is aware of this fact. He gives her an envelope with almost ten thousand dollars in it and tells her that she must leave immediately. They synchronise their watches. Cris gives Liz a note and instructs her to read it when he leaves. She is then to wait exactly forty five seconds before she does what it says. He promises that if she can wait for a week, or a month, he will find her. They kiss and he leaves. In the F.B.I., trailer Callie senses that there is

something wrong. / **86.** She rushes outside and looks through the binoculars. / **87.** Cris appears outside the motel, glancing at his watch. It is 9:17. Inside the motel room, Liz reads the note. / **88.** Cris is looking directly at Callie across the distance as if he can clearly see her with the naked eye. / **89.** Callie whispers ‘don’t do it.’ / **90.** Cris says, ‘I already have’, and jumps off the edge. / **91.** Callie issues orders that they should catch him alive. / **92.** Liz puts on her jacket and prepares to leave. / **93.** The F.B.I. pursues Cris through the rocky terrain. Liz gets into the car and starts the engine. / **94.** Through the cross hairs of a telescopic sight, we see Cris running down the slope. / **95.** Cris hesitates as if willing the man to take the shot. / **96.** The terrorist fires, but Cris dodges the bullet and runs off. / **97.** Liz starts the vehicle and jumps out. As the vehicle thunders over the edge, it pulls a water tank perched on a tower over with it through an attached chain. / **98.** Cris, who is directly in its path, hesitates until the last second then ducks. The vehicle rolls harmlessly over him. / **99.** Debris continues to rain down from the domino effect initiated by the tumbling vehicle and water tank, forcing the F.B.I. to take cover amongst the trees. / **100.** Cris makes it to the road but is held at gunpoint by Callie. She puts the gun away as logs come rolling down towards her. / **101.** Cris grabs her and pulls her to the ground as a police car falls on top of them, forming a protective barrier against the logs. Cris is knocked out but not badly hurt. Callie instructs her team to get him to safety. / **102.** The terrorists see that the F.B.I. have Cris and relay the message by phone. / **103.** We cut to Liz who is walking on the side of the road. A car pulls up alongside her. A gun is pointed at her. / **104.** In an F.B.I. interrogation room, Cris is strapped to a chair. His eyes are held open with a metal device. / **105.** Callie enters and thanks him for saving her life earlier. They exchange remarks about individual rights versus those of eight million people. Callie switches on the television showing a news channel. Her hope is to

force Cris to ‘see’ the broadcast about the explosion before it happens in order to learn about the details of the attack before the device actually detonates. Callie glances at her wristwatch, which reads: 3:15. / **106.** We close in on Cris in a subjective shot that reflects his point of view as the television announcer is washed out by a brightening glow. / **107.** There is a close-up of his eye, widening. The room spins with Cris as the centre point. We cut to another close-up of his eye, then to a blur of shots, as if in fast-forward, ending on Liz who is tied and gagged in a wheelchair somewhere outside in broad daylight. Cris gasps while we hear a male voice announcing a breaking news story in downtown Los Angeles. / **108.** Callie turns and glances at the screen but all she sees is a newscaster calmly reading a technology report. / **109.** Cris is seeing a very different picture. An announcer reports that the Los Angeles Police Department’s (LAPD) bomb squad is in that area. The television cuts to another reporter who is broadcasting live from a rooftop across the road where Liz is tied to a wheelchair. A threat has been conveyed by phone that explosives tied to her will be detonated at 6 PM. / **110.** We cut to Cris saying that he is sorry. / **111.** Callie wants to know what he sees. / **112.** Cris continues to watch as the announcer informs viewers that the bomb squad is closing in on the victim. Suddenly, the wheelchair explodes. / **113.** Cris pulls back on his chair. / **114.** Callie turns from the screen to look questioningly at him. / **115.** Cris gasps as the announcer identifies the victim as Elizabeth Cooper. Cris gasps in anguish. / **116.** The camera pulls back then spins around Cris as the soundtrack issues a sharp clipped sound to indicate the end of the future-viewing event. / **117.** The television now shows the same announcer seen by Callie earlier, continuing with normal reporting. / **118.** Cris agrees to help Callie if she frees him from his restraints. Callie agrees. / **119.** Meanwhile Cavanaugh approaches Callie with information about the murdered girl

in the apartment. There were traces of potassium iodide found on her body, a chemical typically used as a treatment against radiation poisoning. The inference is that it came off her murderer who had to be taking the substance to protect him from contamination from the nuclear device. / **120.** Cris is shown to a secure cell. He asks the guards for a cigarette, then, using his power of clairvoyance, he is able to escape from the security complex. / **121.** Callie and her team pursue Cris into the busy streets. A helicopter assists the agents from the sky. / **122.** Callie follows Cris to the top level car park where he ‘saw’ Liz being killed in the explosion. / **123.** There is a blurred fast pan across the car park as Cris again looks into the future, seeing Liz tied to the wheelchair strapped with explosives. The police who have surrounded the area fall to the ground as the bomb explodes, killing Liz. / **124.** Cris looks worried as Callie approaches him. He tells her that Liz has died two hours from now. He points to the precise spot on the roof. Callie devises a plot to catch the terrorists. She says that they are the same people who are using Liz as bait in order to kill Cris because he can stop their plans to detonate the nuclear device. Callie suggests that they let the terrorists think that they have shot Cris. She orders that the cell phone communication grid be shut down within a two-mile radius to prevent the terrorists from speaking with each other. We pan to a rooftop where one of the terrorists is bending over what we presume to be the nuclear device. He spots Cris walking on the roof opposite and throws off a tarpaulin to reveal a mounted high-powered rifle beneath. / **125.** Cris turns and looks at him from the distance. With the gun’s crosshairs on Cris, the terrorist fires and sees Cris fall to the ground. Convinced that Cris is dead, he tries to call in to report it, but his cell phone fails to connect to the network. Suddenly an F.B.I. helicopter rises behind him and brings him down in a hail of bullets. / **126.** Callie approaches Cris who gets up unharmed. She informs him

that the incident has bought them a little time. Cris tells her that no matter how hard he tries, Liz always ends up dead in his visions. Callie suggests that he look at the future a little earlier so he can spot the number plate of the vehicle dropping her off. / **127.** The shot goes in and out of focus as Cris ‘sees’ a van pull up. Three terrorists emerge from the vehicle and deposit Liz on the rooftop. She is gagged and strapped to the wheelchair with explosives. / **128.** Cris, eyes shut, calls out the number plate of the vehicle. / **129.** With the communication grid presumably back on, Callie relays the information via cell phone. / **130.** Cris wistfully reaches out towards the struggling Liz but she, of course, cannot see him. A ripple passes through the shot reinforcing the notion that this view is of the future. / **131.** Cris opens his eyes in the ‘present’. We cut to a close-up of the same number plates then back to see the terrorists bundling Liz into the van. Back at the F.B.I. building, Callie lays out her plan for apprehending the terrorists. Cris plays a central role, asking everyone to do exactly what he says as that will save their lives. Callie backs him up. / **132.** Meanwhile, the van carrying Liz leaves the hideout while two of the terrorists approach a waiting helicopter. Police helicopters fly over the area. Police cars suddenly surround the terrorist’s van. The police helicopters prevent the terrorist’s helicopter from taking off. A gunfight ensues. The van reverses, trying to escape. / **133.** Cris closes his eyes and asks the F.B.I. marksmen to wait for his call before shooting, then gives the order to fire. The van rolls down the hill but Liz manages to scramble out and reach a warehouse. / **134.** Cris continues to direct the F.B.I.’s fire as they eliminate snipers. / **135.** Inside the warehouse, the terrorists rearm. Liz tries in vain to remove her deadly body harness. / **136.** Outside, Cris and the F.B.I. continue to exchange fire with the terrorists who then enter the warehouse. / **137.** Liz continues to hide in the warehouse, but suddenly she is caught from behind by a

terrorist and dragged outside as a hostage. / **138.** Cris continues to time the F.B.I.'s counterattack as they follow the terrorists up the gangplank to a moored ship. / **139.** The terrorists booby-trap the ship's control room that Cris and the F.B.I. team must pass through. / **140.** Cris foresees the trap and avoids it. / **141.** Cris leads the team deeper into the bowels of the ship. / **142.** He points to a number of nearby traps and asks them to stay close. / **143.** As he leads the way down a passage, he is suddenly shot in the chest and goes down. / **144.** We pan back to reveal Cris re-emerge from around a corner and walk towards the camera. A quick shift of focus and a sound spike announces another moment of clairvoyance. Cris reports the presence of a sniper who is shot by the F.B.I. / **145.** The terrorists continue rigging the ship with explosives. / **146.** Cris says that if the team can secure the deck they are currently on, he will manage the remainder of the task on his own. / **147.** There is a ripple in the shot as Cris splits into multiple copies of himself and begins to inspect the passages. / **148.** There is yet another split as 'he' explores even more passages. / **149.** Yet another, as one Cris goes up some stairs while two other versions of himself go left and right. / **150.** A shot shows Cris high up on a platform, while the other versions search below decks. / **151.** The F.B.I. cautiously proceeds down the decks. Suddenly, the female terrorist jumps out and shoots Cavanaugh in the head. Callie shoots her, in turn. / **152.** Meanwhile, Cris crosses a gangplank, which then explodes. / **153.** Another version of Chris comes around the corner, and then splits into two more versions. One spots Liz down below. He dissolves from the shot. / **154.** He reappears below and announces to Callie and the team that Liz is near the engine room. / **155.** A terrorist, gun in hand, pushes forward holding Liz in front of him as a shield. / **156.** Callie confronts him, forcing a standoff. / **157.** Cris tells the terrorist that he has seen every possible ending and none of them end well for him. / **158.** Cris starts to move

towards him. As the terrorist fires at him, Cris splits into more versions of himself following different paths, most of which result in being shot. / **159.** But eventually, he finds the correct path which allows him to reach the terrorist who has now run out of bullets. Liz ducks away from the terrorist and Callie shoots him in the head. Cris assures Liz that it is over, but Callie reminds him that there is still the nuclear device to be found. / **160.** Callie takes Cris and the team to some equipment whose function is to indicate shifts in the earth's crust. She asks Cris to tell her what he foresees. / **161.** Suddenly Cris cries out that he has made a terrible mistake and that the bomb is about to detonate. / **162.** There is a flash and a giant fireball sweeps through the city killing everyone. / **163.** Fade to black. / **164.** We cut to a close-up of Cris' eye as the camera rips back to the 'God shot' to reveal him lying in bed with Liz. / **165.** An exterior shot shows the motel where Cris and Liz are staying. / **166.** We cut to Callie and her team preparing to apprehend Cris at the motel. Cris calls Callie and promises to cooperate if they leave Liz alone. Callie agrees. / **167.** Cris goes back into the motel room and wakes Liz up. He tells her he has to go. But if she is willing to wait for him for a week, or a month, he will find her. They kiss and he leaves. / **168.** Cris waits outside the motel. His voice-over reminds us that the thing about the future is that it changes every time you look at it. That, in turn, changes everything. Callie arrives and asks Cris if he is ready. He says that he is and gets into the car with her. They drive off to save Los Angeles.

APPENDIX 6 – *CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS*: SYUZHET BREAKDOWN

1. Following the opening credits, we cut to a formal banquet honouring Dr. Judah Rosenthal (Martin Landau). Surrounded by family, friends and colleagues, Judah is introduced as a cultured and modest man, nervous about delivering his speech at the podium. / **2.** We cut to a flashback at the Rosenthal home, where he and his wife Miriam Rosenthal (Claire Bloom) are preparing for the dinner. While on the way to have a shower, Miriam informs Judah that there is mail for him on the table. Sifting through the envelopes, Judah confesses to dreading having to make the coming speech that evening. He selects one letter in particular, looks nervously over his shoulder to ensure he is alone on the room, and opens it. A voice-over informs us that the letter is from his mistress, Dolores Paley. It is addressed to his wife, Miriam, and reveals that she and Judah have been having an affair for the past two years and that they are deeply in love. Dolores demands that they meet in order to resolve the situation. Judah, looking worried and rather shocked, burns the letter in the fireplace. / **3.** We cut to the present where Judah is delivering his speech concerning his having helped establish a new ophthalmology wing at the hospital. During the speech, Judah reminisces about his origins, emphasising his father's religious influence on him, although he has gone on to become a man of science. / **4.** We cut to a flashback of men in religious garb, reading the torah, while Judah's voice flows over a shot. We learn that his father always told him that the eyes of God were upon everyone. / **5.** He proffers that this very phrase was most probably responsible for his choosing ophthalmology as a profession. After the speech, Judah and Miriam have their photographs taken in the hall, while music plays in the background. / **6.** The next day, Dolores (Anjelica Huston) walks down the street on her way home, carrying a

newspaper and some groceries. / **7.** She enters her apartment to find Judah already there. He confronts her about the letter she wrote to his wife. Dolores accuses him of misleading her about leaving his wife for her. She claims that she gave up personal and business opportunities because of him. Judah is dismissive, but then hugs her after the argument, temporarily placating her. / **8.** We cut to a scene from a black and white Hollywood movie, which replays a similar situation to the one we just saw. / **9.** Clifford Stern (Woody Allen) and his niece, Jenny, are watching the movie in a theatre, sharing popcorn. Outside the cinema, Clifford looks for a cab while making plans to get together with his niece the next day for another movie or a trip to a museum. The scene ends with Clifford advising her to ignore her teachers and concentrate instead on the way people look. / **10.** Clifford arrives home. His wife, Wendy (Joanna Gleason), informs him that her brother, Lester, called and wants them to join him for a dinner party that night. Clifford clearly does not like Lester. Wendy accuses him of resenting her brother because he is a respected and successful television producer. Nevertheless, she tells Clifford that Lester wants to offer him a job. / **11.** Jenny and Clifford arrive at the dinner party. A dashing and charming Lester (Alan Alda) introduces them to an attractive blond he is grooming for his new series. Lester's brother, Ben (Sam Waterston), and his wife Carol, arrive and join the group. Ben, who is a practising rabbi, informs them that he has been seeing Dr. Rosenthal because of his deteriorating vision. Wendy prompts Lester to take Clifford aside to tell him about the job. / **12.** The job, a documentary, is part of the network's *Creative Minds Series*, and is about Lester himself. Clifford seems reluctant, informing Lester that he is currently working on a documentary of his own about a philosophy professor. Lester seems unenthusiased about Clifford's project. He tells him that although Clifford was not his first choice, he is offering him this job because of

Wendy. Lester insults Clifford further by recording an idea on his pocket cassette recorder for a farce about a loser who agrees to do a story about a great man's life and in the process learns deep values. / **13.** Judah is driving in his car, looking sombre and worried. A voice-over cuts into the shot. It is Dolores asking him what he will be doing in Boston. / **14.** The next shot reveals a flashback of how Judah and Dolores met on a plane. / **15.** We cut back to Judah driving. / **16.** The voice-over of their conversation continues over a shot in which we see them kissing inside an apartment. / **17.** Another shot of Judah driving. / **18.** Judah arrives at his rooms and is told by his receptionist that a Miss Paley called and asked that he call her back. / **19.** Judah calls Dolores, castigating her for calling him at work, but reluctantly agrees to see her later that day. / **20.** During Ben's eye examination, Judah confides in Ben, whom he has known for many years, about his illicit affair. He confesses to Ben that the woman is threatening to tell his wife about their affair. Although he seems to blame himself for this situation, he is reluctant to accept Ben's advice about coming clean with his wife. He believes that she will leave him if he does so. / **21.** Dolores waits for Judah in her apartment. / **22.** We cut to a flashback in which she and Judah jog along a beach. She compliments him on his fitness, including his sexual stamina, kissing him. Judah seems nervous about them being seen together. They chat about music. Dolores confuses Shuman with Schubert and Judah promises to teach her the difference someday when they have a lot of time together. / **23.** We cut back to her apartment to find Dolores deep in thought. Judah arrives. They kiss and she offers him a drink. They argue about her having called his house and hung up. The argument leads to accusations and counter accusations. Dolores again claims to have given up opportunities for him, but Judah denies that this is true. She suggests that they go away for a while but Judah tells her he will not do that. He offers her money

to make up for any missed opportunities, but she raises her voice at this, claiming that she is after Judah and not his money. She threatens that Miriam should know that he is a liar and an embezzler. The accusation of embezzling upsets Judah who denies ever having stolen money from the hospital's philanthropy fund. / **24.** Clifford is shooting Lester's documentary in a New York park. Lester is relating his view of comedy as being 'tragedy plus time'. Clearly, Clifford has no respect for his opinions. The film roll finishes. Lester says he has to leave but he will pick up from where they left off the following day. Lester then walks up to one of the executives, Halley Reed (Mia Farrow), who is on her cell phone. He flirts with her and asks her to accompany him to Barbados, but she politely sidesteps the invitation, pressing the cell phone to her ear. Lester leaves. / **25.** Clifford approaches Halley and introduces himself. He criticises Lester to her for being shallow and she admits that she wanted to do a documentary about someone else, but the network wanted to 'mix it up' by featuring Lester. Clifford tells her that he is only shooting this documentary because he wants money for his own documentary on Louis Levi, a philosophy professor. He invites her to view material that he has already shot. / **26.** Halley agrees. She is impressed with Levi's philosophical ruminations on God and morality and tells Clifford that the professor would make a wonderful addition to the series of programs being produced for the network. Clifford uses the opportunity to tell Halley that he has taken an instant liking to her. / **27.** On his way home, Clifford stops by his sister's apartment to drop off a book for his niece. Jenny goes off to do her homework and Barbara bursts into tears. She tells Clifford about a man she met through the personals column. / **28.** In a flashback, we see Barbara and the man preparing to have sex in her apartment. / **29.** Clifford is shocked to learn that she allowed a man she barely knew to tie her to the bed. But his shock turns to horror

when she tells him that the man then defecated on her. This has left her feeling like a wreck. She says that she only went out looking for someone because she is lonely, a feeling that Clifford would not understand because he is married. Clifford uses the opportunity to tell her that his marriage is falling apart. / **30**. Clifford tries to discuss his sister's traumatic experience with his wife, but she turns her back to him, indicating that she has to be up early the next morning. / **31**. Outside the Rosenthal home, Judah and his brother Jack (Jerry Orbach) discuss Judah's problem. When Jack, a member of the underworld, suggests that they pay someone get rid of Dolores, Judah seems initially shocked. Jack, however, tells him that he must be contemplating having some dirty work done, since that is the only time he ever calls him. Judah prevaricates around the issue of having Dolores killed, indicating that he is clearly conflicted. He finally tells Jack that he cannot go through with it. / **32**. We cut to a scene from a Hollywood film in which two characters talk about murdering a woman. / **33**. The next shot shows Clifford and Halley at the cinema watching this very film. Halley intimates that they should get back, but Clifford tells not to worry. Besides, he has had enough of Lester. Halley admits that her weakness is going to the movies during the day. Clifford admits to the same weakness, pouncing on the opportunity to show that he and Halley share the same passion. Halley tells him that the network is showing an interest in Professor Levi. She hands him a box of sweets. / **34**. Rosenthal's family surprise Judah with an exercise machine as a birthday present. The phone rings. Judah's daughter informs him that it is Miss Paley. Judah blurts out an explanation and hurries to take the call. / **35**. Dolores is calling from the gas station a block away from his house. She threatens to come over and reveal their affair, but Judah placates her by agreeing to see her. / **36**. They meet in her car. She demands that they go away together and that when they get back Judah should

conclude things with Miriam. She hands him a birthday present. / **37.** That night, Judah paces his empty lounge as lightning flashes outside. In his mind, he replays the conversation he had with Ben over his affair with Dolores, at the end of which he seems to come to a decision. He picks up the phone to his brother, giving him the go-ahead to have Dolores murdered. / **38.** Clifford is filming Lester as the latter goes about his various activities – in a cell phone conversation on the street, at the University grounds, in his limo again on the phone, and in his office instructing his team about the right way to do comedy. / **39.** We cut to film footage of Professor Levi talking about the paradox of love. Clifford and Halley are watching the footage on Clifford's editing desk. They both agree that it is good material. Clifford offers her some champagne and she accepts. Clifford flirts with Halley by talking about Levi's book which examines the idea of love at first sight. The phone rings. It is Lester, who has Halley agree to meet him at nine that evening at a nearby hotel. Clifford is clearly upset by this. Halley spots a copy of *Singing in the Rain* and they agree to watch it over some takeaways, while she waits until it is time for her meeting with Lester. As they eat and watch the film, Clifford slips his arm over her shoulder and warns her to be careful with Lester as he is clearly after her. / **40.** On a rooftop, a man gets out of a red pickup and walks ominously off screen. / **41.** Dolores leaves a bottle store and walks towards her apartment. It is now evening. We see the same man who drove the red pickup follow her home. / **42.** Inside her apartment she takes her coat off just as the downstairs bell rings. / **43.** The Rosenthals are entertaining guests at a dinner party in their home. The phone rings. It is Jack wanting to speak to Judah. / **44.** Judah takes the call in the bedroom. Jack, who is calling from a callbox, tells Judah that the deed is done and had been made to look like a break-in. Judah seems in shock. He whispers that God should have mercy on

them and puts the phone down. He washes his face, trying to regain his composure. He rejoins the dinner party, intimating that he is upset over some news of Jack. Clearly, he is too upset to concentrate on the conversations. / **45.** A flashback of times spent with Dolores lying on her lap in her apartment flits through his mind. He makes up a story about having left some important papers at work that he needs that evening in order to prepare for a conference the following day, and excuses himself and leaves, despite Miriam's protests. / **46.** He parks his car outside Dolores' building and cautiously walks inside. / **47.** He lets himself into the apartment with his own key. Finding Dolores dead and bleeding on the floor, he takes a moment to assimilate the event. In a flashback to his childhood, he replays his father's warning about the eyes of God seeing all, rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. The next shot shows Judah inside the apartment removing all traces that might tie him to Dolores. He then leaves. / **48.** At home, he spends time anguishing in the bathroom while his wife sleeps in the bedroom. Suddenly the phone rings, startling him. He picks up, but there is no answer from the other side. / **49.** Lester, Halley, Wendy, and Clifford are having drinks at a restaurant to the accompaniment of a jazz band. Lester shows an obvious interest in Halley, much to Clifford's agitation. Clifford jumps at the opportunity of agreeing with Halley's assertion that Emily Dickenson is her favourite poet. But Lester thwarts him by showing that he can recite more than a few of the poet's lines. They agree to call it a night, with Lester seemingly failing to get Halley to have another drink with him. / **50.** At home, Clifford and Wendy disagree about Halley being attracted to Lester. During the argument we learn that Wendy has not slept with Clifford for almost a year. While Wendy is in the bathroom, Clifford decides to sneak a phone call to Halley at home to confirm that she has not stayed out with Lester, but is hurt to discover that Lester

has followed her home instead to talk 'business'. / **51.** While on an outing with his niece, Clifford admits to being in love with Halley, but that Lester is making a play for her too. He is afraid that Lester's success will win out over Clifford's 'great depth and smouldering sensuality'. Clifford praises Lester's brother Ben, who happened to have called him the previous night. Clifford admires Ben's great attitude to life, despite his creeping blindness. / **52.** We cut to an eye exam that Judah is giving Ben in his rooms. / **53.** Judah experiences a flashback of himself and Dolores flirting in the foyer of her apartment. The conversation revolves around the eyes being the windows of the soul. Ben informs Judah that his daughter is getting married. / **54.** Ben reminisces briefly about the past, specifically when both their daughters were babies. Clearly the men have known each other for a long time. Upon being asked about his difficulties, Judah tells Ben that the problem has solved itself. / **55.** In a clandestine meeting in his car, Jack tries to console a remorseful Judah by insisting that he had no alternative but to do what he did. Judah admits that he went to her apartment to retrieve incriminating evidence and was shocked to see her staring at him with lifeless eyes. / **56.** Judah is deep in thought as he drives alone in his car. / **57.** He has another flashback of a religious ceremony involving his father. / **58.** Judah arrives outside his old family home, now occupied by another family. A woman emerges from the inside and upon hearing that the house used to belong to the Rosenthals, invites Judah in. / **59.** Judah wanders over to the dining room where he experiences a recreation of the memory of himself as a young boy having dinner with his extended family. The gist of the conversation around the table is over a moral and religious worldview versus a pragmatic and secular one, represented by his father and his aunt respectfully. Clearly, both views have had an influence on Judah. In a fanciful moment, Judah enters the conversation, all but admitting his involvement in

the murder of Dolores, to which his father replies that ‘murder will out’. His sister, a liberal intellectual, offers the other side of the argument by claiming that if the murderer gets away with it and can live with his deed, then he is home free. Judah’s father chooses God over truth and faith over logic. His sister espouses the contrary view³⁵. / **60**. Back at his office, Judah’s secretary tells him that a detective called the office and insisted that he talk to Judah privately. / **61**. We cut to an extract from a musical featuring a song which repeats the word ‘murder’ in the lyrics. / **62**. Clifford exits the cinema with his niece. She asks about Halley and he responds that he will soon move in on her, but that he has an ethical dilemma because he is already married. On checking his phone messages, he is devastated to learn that Professor Levi has committed suicide. / **63**. Halley joins Clifford in his editing room, offering her emotional support over Levi’s death. They discuss how the suicide will put a damper on the proposed television program. Clifford uses the opportunity to kiss her, but she discourages him, reminding him that he is married and that she is not ready for an affair. / **64**. A police detective interviews Judah in his rooms about his dealings with Dolores, noting that she called him both at the office and at home, but seems satisfied with Judah’s response that she was merely a patient. / **65**. In a further clandestine meeting with Jack, a rattled Judah threatens to come clean with the police over his part in the murder but is persuaded by his brother’s veiled threats that he will not allow himself to go down with Judah. Judah continues his remorseful castigation of himself, claiming that sin leads to sin - to adultery, fornication, lying, and murder, reminding us that ultimately, both Judah’s and Clifford’s strands are transcendently linked through a universal system of values. Jack tells Judah that he is beginning to sound like their father. / **66**. We cut to a shot of an anxious Judah sitting

³⁵ This scene, then, not only defines the moral and religious spine of the Judah strand, but it also echoes the ethical, social, and philosophical dilemmas that arise within Clifford’s world, as represented by Professor Levi. In short, it summarises the tragic-comedic value system in the film.

in his car outside Dolores' apartment building. / **67.** During drinks at a restaurant with their daughter, Miriam complains to Judah that he is a different person of late. Judah blurts out that he believes in God, because without him the world is a cesspool of sin. Miriam accuses him of drinking heavily. Judah loses his temper at his daughter's suggestion that they leave, and slams his fist on the table. He exits the restaurant and wanders about the grounds on his own as if to clear his mind. / **68.** Lester is watching Clifford's cut of the documentary in the theatre. Clifford has edited the footage to show the worst possible side of Lester – as an opinionated, bullying, superficial womaniser who uses his position to solicit sexual favours. He has even juxtaposed shots of Lester with Mussolini, suggesting that Lester is nothing but an egotistical dictator. Lester is shocked by what he sees. He fires Clifford on the spot. As Clifford leaves, the reel which is still running shows a donkey mouthing another of Lester's dictums. / **69.** Clifford discusses his firing with Halley. He ends up proposing to her. Halley tells him that she is going to London to produce a few shows. She will be gone for three or four months. She says she needs the distance. Clifford is devastated. / **70.** We cut to footage of a prison in which time is measured by the daily chores of its inmates. / **71.** Clifford has once again taken his niece to see a movie. / **72.** A title is superimposed over a night shot of a public venue, informing us that it is now four months later. Inside the venue, Clifford's sister Barbara is introduced to Ben's family on the occasion of Ben's daughter's wedding. Wendy implores Clifford to try and get along with her family since this is the last time that he will have anything to do with them. Judah and his wife are also at the gathering. Ben, who is now blind, warmly greets Judah. In another conversation Clifford tells his sister that he and Wendy have finally decided to end their marriage. In a devastating encounter, Clifford spots Halley together with Lester at the celebration.

He overhears Lester introduce Halley to guests as his fiancé. During the wedding ceremony Clifford continues to look upset. / **73**. At the post-service celebration, Clifford, who is drinking alone at the bar, is approached by Halley who tries to redefine Lester as a wonderful and warm man. Clifford brushes this aside, claiming that Lester is merely successful. Halley hands him back a love letter that he had sent her. Her last words to him are that she hopes that they can remain friends. / **74**. As the celebrations wear on, Judah wanders off to another chamber where Clifford is drinking alone near a grand piano. This encounter finally brings the two strands together in a shared scene. The men strike up a seemingly whimsical conversation. Clifford tells Judah that he has been sitting there planning the perfect murder. Although intended as a joke, this comment strongly underscores the parallels that exist between the two men. In a chilling confession masked as a plot for some future movie, Judah begins to spell out the events that have led to his having Dolores killed. / **75**. This scene is inter-cut with one in which Wendy tells Lester that she has met someone else and that she and Clifford are getting divorced. Lester is exuberant at the news. / **76**. Judah continues with his disguised confession, admitting that the part of the killer that was steeped in his father's religious aura had caused him initial pain. But just when he was about to have a mental collapse and confess everything to the police, he awoke one morning to find his inner crisis lifted. And so he proceeded to live his life as if nothing bad had ever happened. No punishment was ever forthcoming. The murder was attributed to a drifter with a long list of murders to his credit, while the true murderer's life prospered, insulated by a protective sheath of wealth and privilege. Clifford questions whether a man in that situation could ever truly go back to his old life. Instead, he proffers a different ending, namely, that the killer surrenders to authorities, because in the absence of God, man must assume

responsibility for himself. That is the essence of Tragedy. Judah remarks that such an ending only happens in a Hollywood movie. Miriam enters the room, casting a disinterested look at Clifford, and then leads Judah away. They kiss in the passage, commenting that their own daughter's wedding will be at least as good as this one. They move off happily as if without a care in the world. Clifford sits alone, contemplating his empty life. / 77. We cut to a shot of Ben dancing with his daughter, then to jump to a flashback of Judah and Dolores, followed by Clifford kissing Halley. A series of shots from the lives of the major characters follows, while Professor Levi's voice-over talks about greater and lesser moral choices. The Professor concludes by saying that although the universe does not seem to consider human happiness important enough to build it into the very fabric of existence, human beings nonetheless keep trying to find it through the love of family and work as well as through the hope that future generations might one day understand more. Ben finishes dancing with his daughter to the applause of the crowd, an applause which seems to extend to the Professor's concluding remarks as well.

APPENDIX 7 – CRASH: SYUZHET BREAKDOWN

The lack of ontological ambiguity in this category allows for a somewhat shorter breakdown, since we do not have to keep track of multiple spatio-temporal frameworks.

1. Opening titles are superimposed over an out-of-focus shot of a city at night. A black man, Graham (Don Cheadle), and a Hispanic woman, Ria (Jennifer Esposito), have just been involved in a car accident. Graham, who seems a little disorientated by the crash, asserts that people have been so cut off by the glass and metal of modern cities that they have to crash into each other in order to feel anything at all. Ria gets out of the car and approaches the other party involved in the accident, a Korean woman, Kim (Alexis Rhee), who is being interviewed by a traffic officer. In a racial exchange, the two women argue about who caused the accident. / **2.** Graham gets out of the car and approaches the scene of another nearby accident. Addressed as ‘detective’ by other officers in the scene, he learns that the victim is a young man. He suddenly notices something beyond the frame that we cannot see. His face turns ashen. Fade to white. / **3.** Fade from white. A title superimposed over a shot of a city announces that it is ‘Yesterday’. / **4.** A father, Farhad (Shaun Toub), and daughter, Dorri (Bahar Soomekh), speaking Persian, are arguing over the purchase of a gun. Dirk (Jack McGee), the salesman, seems impatient with them. He interrupts their conversation by making racist remarks about language and terrorism. An argument breaks out between the two men, displaying the fears and prejudices resulting from the religious and ideological divide between the Arabic and Western cultures. Dirk instructs his security guard to escort Farhad out of his shop. / **5.** Dorri continues to

negotiate with Dirk for the sale of the gun on her own. Dirk makes pointed sexual references during the negotiation aimed at insulting Dorri, but they settle on a deal. She takes the gun and a box of bullets and leaves the shop. / **6.** We cut to another door being opened as two young black men, Anthony (Ludacris) and Peter (Larenz Tate), exit a restaurant and walk along a street. Anthony seems preoccupied with the notion of racial discrimination, claiming that the waitress was more attentive to the white customers than to the black, because black men do not tip. Peter is less obsessed with the racial angle and points out that the waitress too was black. This does not persuade Anthony. / **7.** We cut to Rick (Brendan Fraser) and Jean Cabot (Sandra Bullock) walking down the street. Up ahead, Jean is complaining that Karen keeps calling Rick. Rick asks her if she is jealous. / **8.** We cut back to Anthony who tells Peter that he noticed that the white woman (Jean) moved closer to her partner (Rick) upon seeing him and Anthony approaching. Anthony uses this to argue his point that white people stereotype blacks. Anthony and Peter then immediately produce guns and proceed to hold up Rick and Jean. They steal their black Lincoln Navigator and drive off. Inside the car, Peter places a figurine of Saint Christopher on the dashboard. As they drive past a crime scene on the pavement, the camera stays on the scene. / **9.** A body lies on the ground next to a Mercedes. A uniformed officer leads Graham and Ria to the crime scene. The officer tells them that the driver of the Mercedes pulled a gun on the Ford pickup that cut in front of him, not realising that it belonged to an off-duty white cop, Detective Conklin (Martin Norseman), coming off his shift. The Mercedes driver then took a shot at him. Conklin shot back. The Mercedes hit a wall and the driver died. Upon closer inspection, Graham and Ria discover that the dead man is a cop himself, William Lewis, from the Hollywood Division. Graham remarks that Conklin shot himself 'the wrong nigga'. / **10.** A

Hispanic locksmith, Daniel (Michael Pena), is changing locks in Jean's and Rick's home. Jean, still shaken by the hold-up, is nervous of the Hispanic man and clearly wants him out of her house. She interrupts a meeting Rick is having in the lounge with Karen (Nona Gaye) and other advisors (Rick happens to be the Los Angeles District Attorney), to insist that he has the locks changed again, because she believes that the Hispanic man could be a gang member who will have his friends use copies of the keys to break in, a prejudice she bases solely on Daniel's appearance. / **11.** In the kitchen Daniel, who has heard the argument, hands her two sets of keys and leaves. / **12.** Rick and Karen discuss the implications of the hold-up. The pitch of Rick's response as the District Attorney is crucial, especially because the men were black. If he is soft on the incident, he will lose the white vote. If he is too hard, he will lose the black vote. In order to neutralise the effects of the incident, he tells his assistant that he needs a picture of himself pinning a medal on a black man. The conversation carries strong racial overtones about blacks and Iraqis, which points to the polarised nature of race relations in the community. / **13.** Two Korean patrons in a diner complete a transaction. As the older man gets up and leaves, we hear a phone conversation that a uniformed officer, Ryan (Matt Dillon), is having on a payphone at the entrance to the diner. / **14.** Ryan demands that the clinic help his father with medication immediately. The woman on the line refuses to do so, saying that his father has already been to the clinic and that his urinary infection does not constitute an emergency. Upon hearing that her name is Shaniqua (Loretta Devine), Ryan remarks that he is no longer surprised over her response. Shaniqua slams the phone down on him. / **15.** On his way to the police car, Ryan crosses paths with the Korean man who had just left the diner as the latter drives past in a white panel van. Ryan gets into the police car next to his partner, Officer Hansen (Ryan Phillippe), in time to

hear an announcement over the car radio about the robbery of a Lincoln Navigator vehicle by two black suspects. Ryan drives off. He comes up behind a black Lincoln, but Hansen tells him that this is not the vehicle they are looking for because the plates do not match. / **16.** Ryan decides to stop the car anyway, claiming that the occupants were up to no good. The driver is Cameron Thayer (Terrence Howard). Next to him is his wife, Christine (Thandie Newton). Both are well dressed. Ryan and Hansen approach the vehicle and Ryan checks Cameron's licence. Ryan has Cameron perform an alcohol test. Christine gets out of the car and argues with Ryan. The situation escalates with Ryan ending up body searching Christine, running his hands between her legs, humiliating both her and Cameron who is powerless to prevent it. Ryan tells Cameron that he stopped them because his wife was performing fellatio on him while he was driving. Hansen looks on, clearly disapprovingly of Ryan's behaviour. After making Cameron apologise to him, Ryan lets them go with a warning. Christine looks at Cameron with contempt, feeling betrayed. / **17.** In Farhad's shop, Shereen (Marina Sirtis), Farhad's wife, complains that the back door does not close. Meanwhile, Dorri is loading bullets into the gun she purchased earlier. Farhad takes it from her and puts it in a drawer, reminding Dorri about a recent robbery as justification for buying the gun. / **18.** Back at their house, Cameron and Christine argue about the incident with the policemen. Clearly Christine blames Cameron for the way he handled things. She accuses him of caring more about what his white friends would read in the newspaper than standing up for her. / **19.** Meanwhile, Daniel arrives home and goes straight into his child's bedroom. The child, Lara (Ashlyn Sanchez), is lying under the bed because she heard a noise that sounded like a gun. They discuss the bullet that entered through her window in their old house and Daniel tries to reassure her that they are now in a better

neighbourhood. He plays a game with her, in which he claims that he forgot to give her something on her fifth birthday which was given to him by a fairy when he was five – an invisible and impenetrable cloak. He claims that nothing will be able to harm her if she keeps it on. Then, when she too has a daughter and she turns five, she must give it to her in turn. As he leaves the bedroom, his work pager goes off. He grimaces. / **20.** Daniel's white panel van reverses onto the road. / **21.** We cut to the stolen black Lincoln Navigator. Peter and Anthony are arguing about the merits of Hip-Hop, which Anthony brands as 'music of the oppressor'. / **22.** So engrossed are they in their argument that they fail to see a person by the side of the road next to a white van, knocking him down. It is the older Korean man we saw earlier at the diner. Peter and Anthony get out of the stolen Lincoln and Peter discovers that the man they refer to as a 'Chinaman' is caught under their vehicle. Peter persuades Anthony to help him disentangle the victim from under the vehicle. / **23.** Meanwhile, Hansen, in a conversation with Lt. Joe Dixon (Keith David), his African-American superior, is requesting a new partner. Dixon agrees that Ryan is a 'racist prick' but intimates that as a black man, he would endanger his job if he acted against a white officer. He suggests that Hansen put in a request for a single vehicle by making the excuse that he suffers from 'uncontrollable flatulence' to avoid risking both Dixon's and his own career. / **24.** Peter and Anthony drop the Korean man on the pavement outside the hospital emergency exit and speed away. / **25.** Daniel has just finished replacing the lock on Farhad's shop's door. He tells Farhad that the door needs replacing too, but Farhad insists that he fix, not replace, the lock and calls him a cheater. Frustrated, Daniel tells him to keep the lock, crunching up the invoice for the job and throwing it into the dustbin. As he leaves the shop, Farhad hurls verbal abuse after him. / **26.** Anthony and Peter are negotiating with Lucian (Dato Bakhtadze), the

owner of a 'chop-shop' about the Lincoln Navigator. Lucian complains that the car is useless to him because they ran over the 'Chinaman' with it and the police have ways to trace this. He saw as much on the discovery channel. He tells them to get the hell out of his shop. / **27.** Graham and Ria are having sex in Graham's apartment. The phone interrupts them, much to Ria's frustration. It is Graham's mother (Beverly Todd), looking for her son. Graham tells her not to worry about him and tells her he has to ring off because he is 'having sex with a white woman'. The couple then argue about Graham's definition of 'white' and 'Mexican' people. She proceeds to give him a geography lesson about the distinct nature of her true origins. The conversation betrays Graham's racial prejudice when, in responding to her claim that her father was from Puerto Rico and her mother from El Salvador, he says that this does not prevent all those so-called distinct cultures from parking their cars on their front lawns. She exits, slamming the door behind her. The sound of the door carries over into the following scene. / **28.** Ryan wakes up to hear his father (Bruce Kirby) groaning in pain while urinating in the bathroom. Ryan caringly helps him from the bathroom, distressed at his suffering. / **29.** Farhad discovers that his shop has been vandalised. The door with the new lock has been forced open. / **30.** Rick and Karen are discussing a new case. Rick is concerned that the incident might be racially motivated. / **31.** Peter and Anthony get into a car. Anthony is still arguing about race, claiming that the only reason a black man would steal from another black man is because he is terrified of white people. The car does not start. / **32.** Jean picks on her Hispanic housekeeper, Maria (Yomi Perry), about the dishes not being in the cabinet. / **33.** Anthony declares to Peter that he has never stolen from a black person in his life. Peter hails a bus, but Anthony complains about having to ride in one. He claims that buses have big windows in order to humiliate black people who have to ride on

them. / **34.** Cameron wraps up shooting for the day and walks off the set. Fred (Tony Danza), a studio executive approaches Cameron and requests that they do another take because one of the characters is talking ‘a lot less black’ lately. When Cameron shows reluctance, Fred subtly intimidates him into acquiescence. Suppressing his humiliation, Cameron agrees to do another take. / **35.** Ryan is shown into Shaniqua Johnson’s office. He explains that he is unhappy with the diagnosis provided by the current doctor. Shaniqua says he can get another opinion from a doctor outside the government scheme, but if he gives a different opinion, the administration’s doctor will still have to approve it. This results in an argument between Ryan and Shaniqua along racial grounds. Ryan leaves in a huff. / **36.** Farhad is complaining to Daniel’s office about the lock that Daniel installed, which he blames for having failed to keep out the vandals. Farhad demands the locksmith’s name but the girl at the office refuses to give it to him. / **37.** Graham visits his mother at her run-down house. Family photographs stand on top of a piano. He spots drug paraphernalia scattered on a table. His mother is sitting outside in the cold. He brings her inside. Seeming drugged, she enquires about his younger brother. She again requests that Graham find him and bring him home. Graham checks the fridge. There is nothing inside but leftover meat and rancid milk. / **38.** Graham gets into the car next to Ria. When she questions him about his mother, he tells her that she was not there. Ria informs him that internal affairs called to tell her that they found incriminating evidence in the Mercedes. / **39.** Cameron wraps up for lunch. Christine is there to see him. / **40.** They walk down the back lot of the studio. Christine apologises for her part in their recent falling out. She explains that she felt that he let the policemen rob him of his dignity, and that is why she responded in the way she did. Cameron agrees with her but walks off, leaving her sobbing. / **41.** Farhad is cleaning up the mess created by the vandals

in his shop. The insurance man tells Farhad that because the locksmith told him to fix the door and he did not do so, he is not eligible to receive any insurance cover. Farhad walks away, crushed. Dorri tries to comfort him, but he drifts off, strangely calm. / **42.** At the police station parking lot, Hansen spots Ryan and tells him that he has been reassigned. Ryan tells him that he will come around to Ryan's point of view after spending a few more years on the job. Hansen gets into his car and checks in with the station. The officer on the other side makes a pejorative joke about noises coming from Hansen's car – referring to Hansen's supposed flatulence given as a reason for splitting up with Ryan. / **43.** Meanwhile, Ria and Graham are shown stashes of money hidden in the spare tyre at the back of detective Lewis' Mercedes. / **44.** At the studio, Cameron moodily prepares for filming. / **45.** Farhad empties the rubbish at the back of his shop and walks off. As if having remembered something, he returns and rummages through a rubbish bag, finding the invoice that Daniel had thrown into the dustbin. / **46.** Ryan and his new partner arrive at the scene of an accident. Ryan rushes to the overturned vehicle, which is leaking fuel. He struggles with the door but it is stuck fast. Risking his life, he crawls inside the burning vehicle to rescue a woman who is trapped inside. The woman is none other than Christine who, recognising Ryan as the molesting officer, tries to fight him off. But when Ryan explains that the car could explode at any moment, she is forced to cooperate. As the fire spreads, Ryan tries to calm her terror. His partner drags him from the burning vehicle, fearing that it could explode at any second, but Ryan crawls back in despite the great risk to himself. At last, he manages to free Christine from the wreckage. The car explodes. Ryan hugs Christine in an act of redemption. Christine turns back and looks at him in forgiveness, as she is led away. / **47.** In a meeting at the D.A.'s office with, the head of Media Relations, Flanagan (William Fichtner) pressurises

Graham to have Detective Conklin charged with the shooting of Detective Lewis to alleviate pressure from black groups. When Graham points out that Lewis had 300,000 dollars stashed in a tyre in the back of his Mercedes, Flanagan asks Graham to suppress the evidence so as not to make Lewis look guilty, since that would not go down well with the pressure groups. Graham points out that the Coroner's report will probably show that Detective Lewis was high on cocaine, which casts further doubt on his innocence and mitigates blame from being attributed to Conklin. When Flanagan fails to solicit Graham's help in covering up evidence against Lewis by offering Graham a position with the D.A.'s office, however, he blackmails him with a file which shows that his twenty-year old brother, Peter, is about to be arrested. Under the three strikes rule, Peter would go to prison for a long time. / **48**. Out in the passage, he tells the District Attorney (Rick) what he wants to hear – that he, Graham, thinks that Conklin is guilty, thus helping to frame him. / **49**. In a press conference, Rick thanks the public for their support over the hijacking of his vehicle, and counterbalances the news by announcing that detective Lewis was gunned down by a fellow officer, Detective Conklin, thus putting the official stamp on Conklin's framing. / **50**. Farhad arrives outside Daniel's home. He sees Daniel's young daughter, Lara, arrive home from school, greeted by her mother at the front steps. He reaches for his gun on the passenger seat. / **51**. Cameron stops at the stop street, lost in gloomy thought, fingering his wedding ring. / **52**. Peter and Anthony sneak up to him and try to hijack his car. Anthony is surprised to see he has held up a black man. Defiant, Cameron fights them off, knocking Anthony to the ground and kicking him. With police cars in the vicinity, Peter runs off but Anthony jumps into Cameron's Lincoln. Cameron jumps in after him. He drives off with the police in hot pursuit. / **53**. One of the policemen in a separate vehicle is Hansen. He recognises that the car

being pursued is the same one involved in the molestation incident with Ryan. / **54.**

A second police car stops and the officers jump out. They aim their guns at the Lincoln, which has also stopped. Cameron gets out, defiantly challenging them by refusing to lie down, face to the ground, on request. Hansen intervenes, recognising Cameron. He manages to smooth the situation over between his fellow officers and the aggressive Cameron and lets him go with a warning. Cameron drives off with Anthony still hiding in the passenger seat. / **55.** Cameron pulls up along the side of the road some distance away. He gives Anthony his gun back, tells him that he is an embarrassment to both of them, and lets him out. Anthony slinks out, saying nothing. / **56.** Daniel arrives home. Farhad is still watching the house. Farhad approaches Daniel. Blaming him for his troubles, he demands money at gunpoint to make up for the damages to his shop. His daughter, Lara runs out of the house, shouting that he does not have his protective cloak on because he gave it to her. With her mother running after her, Lara jumps into Daniel's arms just as Farhad fires at Daniel at point blank range. Miraculously neither Lara nor Daniel is hurt. Farhad stands rooted to the spot as Daniel takes Lara inside. Farhad walks off in shock and awe. / **57.**

Graham stacks his mother's fridge with groceries. / **58.** Hansen greets a fellow officer in the changing room who ignores him. / **59.** Jean is venting to a friend over the phone. She admits to having been angry at the world even before the carjacking, and admits to not knowing why. Her friend cuts her short, telling her that she will call her back. On her way down from the bedroom, Jean slips on the top step and falls. / **60.** Peter is trying to thumb a lift in a suburban street. It is night. / **61.** Ryan is driving thoughtfully down a gloomy street. / **62.** A car pulls up and gives Peter a lift. It is Hansen, off-duty. In the ensuing conversation between the two men, Hansen thinks that Peter is mocking him and gets into an argument based on

misunderstandings and mutual racial misconceptions. He pulls up and asks Peter to get out of his car. Hansen misinterprets Peter's action of reaching into his pocket, thinking he is going for a gun, instead of a small statue of Saint Christopher that matches the one on Hansen's dashboard, and shoots Peter. Discovering his error, he dumps Peter's body on the side of a deserted road. Fade to black. / **63.** Graham and a host of police are investigating the scene of the crime. Graham sees that the victim is his brother. His face turns to ash (linking this scene to the start of the film). / **64.** Anthony is on a bus in a desolate part of the city. He sees something out of the window and yanks the chain to stop the bus. / **65.** The white panel van belonging to the Korean is still parked on the side of the desolate road. Anthony gets in and turns on the ignition. / **66.** Kim Lee, the Korean man's wife (who was involved in the car accident with Ria and Graham) rushes to her husband's bedside at the hospital. She tells him about her car accident and admits that she screamed and swore at the 'poor woman' (Ria) because she was worried about him. He asks her to get his wallet and take out a cheque. This is the cheque given to him by the younger Korean man at the diner earlier. He asks her to cash it immediately. / **67.** Anthony has driven the Korean's white panel van to Lucian's. Upon examining the back, they discover that it is filled with illegal aliens. Lucian tells Anthony to keep the van but that he will pay 500 dollars per head for the illegal aliens. / **68.** Ria looks on tearfully as Graham tries to comfort his distressed mother, who has recognised Peter's body at the city morgue. Dorri, dressed in a medical apron walks past to answer a phone call, glancing down as a sign of respect to the grieving Graham and his mother. Graham promises his mother that he will find who did this to his brother. In a devastating moment, she accuses Graham of being responsible for Peter's death and sends him away. Her parting remark is that Peter had come home while she was asleep and left

her groceries. Graham does not have the heart to tell her that Peter never came back – that it was he and not Peter who brought her the groceries. He walks away, defeated.

/ **69.** Dorri finds her father sitting on the floor with a gun in his hand. He tells her that he shot a little girl but nothing happened. He claims that the girl is his angel come to protect them from the ills of the world. He gives Dorri the gun. She places it in a drawer next to the distinctive box of bullets she purchased earlier. We notice for the first time the word ‘Blanks’ is printed on the side of the box, explaining why the gun did not go off. It seems that Dorri intentionally bought blanks to prevent an incident such as this. **70.** Jean phones Rick who is still at work and tells him that she fell down the stairs but that she is all right. Jean tells Rick that none of her friends were available to drive her to the hospital. In the end, she had to rely on Maria, her housekeeper, to do so. Jean tells Rick she loves him and he hurriedly repeats the endearment. Karen is standing next to him, listening. A look passes between Rick and Karen, hinting that the two of them are having an affair. Rick enters the lift and Karen walks off, alone and crestfallen. / **71.** Maria brings Jean some tea in bed. Jean hugs her tenderly and tells her that she is the best friend she has. / **72.** Hansen has just set his car alight in a deserted field to destroy any incriminating evidence of the shooting. He walks away looking lost and bewildered. / **73.** Ryan hugs his suffering father in the bathroom. / **74.** Rick locks the door to his home, looking out of the window apprehensively. / **75.** Daniel looks out of his own bedroom window while his daughter and wife sleep in bed. / **76.** Cameron drives home. He stops the car and gets out, letting the snowflakes fall on him. / **77.** A crowd has gathered around Hansen’s burning car. Cameron walks towards it. Just then, his wife calls him on his cell phone. He tells her that he loves her. / **78.** Graham is standing at the scene of his brother’s death. He finds the small statue of Saint Christopher in the soil and clasps it

in his hand. / **79.** Anthony drops off the illegal aliens in Chinatown and gives one of them forty dollars so he can buy them all some food. He drives off, a small, satisfied grin playing on his lips. / **80.** Two cars smash together in a rear-end accident. One of the drivers is Shaniqua. She tells the driver of the other vehicle not talk to her unless it is in 'American'. The camera ranges over the Los Angeles nightscape as snowflakes drift down. End Titles.

APPENDIX 8 – SYRIANA: SYUZHET BREAKDOWN

1. Shots of migrant workers scrambling to get onto a bus in the desert at dawn are interspersed with the opening credits. It is clear that only a few of the men will be getting work for that day. / **2.** In a Teheran apartment, Robert Barnes (George Clooney), referred to by others as Bob, has negotiated a deal with a group of Arab men who are now unwinding by indulging in women, alcohol, and drugs. One of the men, Arash (Kayvan Novak), enquires about Bob's son, but Bob is laconic on the subject and seems eager to get on with the job at hand. Arash informs him that the deal will go ahead after prayers. / **3.** The men arrive at a building on a busy Teheran street. They go inside and Bob arms what appear to be two explosive devices by installing detonators that he has brought with him. Arash drags one of the devices to another room through a closed curtain. Bob remarks that he did not realise that the deal involved someone else. Arash hands him a wad of money and tells him that it makes no difference. He and his men then exit the building. / **4.** Curious, Bob walks through the curtain to see at what lies beyond, but is ushered out at gunpoint by a blue-eyed Arab, Mohammed Sheik Agiza (Amr Waked), in traditional garb, but not before having established that the man does not speak Farsi. / **5.** Out in the street, Bob hurries past Arash and his men as they load the remaining device into the boot of their car and get in. / **6.** Bob quickens his step. Arash's car explodes. / **7.** Dean Whiting (Christopher Plummer) summons Bennett Holiday (Jeffrey Wright), an employee of his company, Whiting-Sloan, to his home to brief him on an important assignment. He tells him that Connex, a large Texan company and an important client of their own firm, has lost a large natural gas contract in the Persian Gulf to the

Chinese. At the same time, a smaller company, Killen, has acquired the rights to one of the largest untapped oilfields in Kazakhstan. To minimise fallout over its loss to China, Connex plans a merger with Killen. This results in the U.S. government investigating the merger, specifically Killen's acquisition of the Kazakhstan's oilfield rights. Whiting instructs Bennett to find out if any indiscretions have been conducted by Killen, before the government does, in order to eliminate any potential threat to the merger. / **8.** At a Connex and Killen meeting of executives, Killen's Jimmy Pope (Chris Cooper) recounts events that have led to the proposed merger – Connex's loss to China. He warns of the dangers to the merger posed by the government investigation. Connex's Washington council, Sydney Hewitt (Nicky Henson), introduces Bennett as the man who will be building consensus on a day-by-day basis between the two companies. / **9.** On a private flight, Hewitt emphasises to Bennett the need for the government to approve the merger, and urges him to eliminate any potential obstacles to the deal before they arise. / **10.** Bryan and Julie Woodman (Matt Damon and Amanda Peet) are having breakfast with their two sons, Max (Steven Hinkle) and Riley (Nicholas Art), cracking jokes about their bacon substitute. A television report announces the Connex-Killen Corporation merger. The resulting company will be the fifth largest oil and gas conglomerate in the world, employing a workforce of thirty-seven thousand workers from 160 countries and will generate revenues larger than the national economies of Pakistan or Denmark. At the end of the news segment, Connex's chairman Leland Janus (Peter Gerety) and Killen's Jimmy Pope shake hands, cementing the deal. / **11.** We cut to Bryan Woodman driving to his scheduled broadcast of economic analysis for a local T.V. station in Geneva. The soundtrack relays his remarks surrounding the merger and the reasons behind it. / **12.** Bryan continues his analysis in the studio. / **13.** Bryan speaks

to his children on the phone from his office. His boss enters his office and asks him to accept the Emir's invitation to a summer party in Marbella. The Eremite has put out an important strategy document and Bryan cannot miss the opportunity to establish closer contacts. He is told that he may relocate his entire family there to be close to the source. / **14.** We cut to an oil refinery at the Persian Gulf. / **15.** In a meeting at the facility, a group of workers is told that they have been fired due to a change of ownership. Wasim (Mazhar Munir) tells his father, Saleem Ahmed Khan (Shahid Ahmed), the bad news. As their work-permits have now lapsed, they have to report to the department of immigration within two weeks or face deportation. / **16.** On their way to their living quarters, Saleem chats to his son about his dislike of the Chinese and of his memories of the distant snow-covered mountains of Pakistan. Wasim is impatient with the stories, which he has heard many times before. To Saleem, however, the mountains seem to represent all that is clean and incorruptible in his life. He promises to bring the rest of the family over as soon as he can afford a house for them. The two men approach the cluttered workers' compound. / **17.** Bob is driving through light drizzle. / **18.** At the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) in Langley, the discussion centres on the need to make certain operations even more clandestine by ensuring that Bob, who has not yet arrived at the meeting, refrain from writing memos that can act as a record of suspect activities. / **19.** Bob enters a tunnel on his way to the Capitol. / **20.** At Langley, the conversation continues to be about the Company's future plans for Bob. / **21.** While waiting in the corridor to be summoned to the meeting, Bob overhears that he is to be given his own station in Beirut as a reward for his successful record in the area and his knowledge of Hezbollah, although the suspicion is that the desk job is hardly a promotion. / **22.** During the meeting, Bob offers his views on Iran but they are dismissed as

insubstantial. He is asked a pointed question, whether or not the economic embargo against Iran will result in a new pro-West government anytime soon. Contrary to his beliefs, the view of the American government is that Iran is a natural cultural ally of the United States. The presence of representatives of the Committee for the Liberation of Iran (C.L.I.) at the meeting seems to indicate clandestine Company support for the overthrow of the Iranian government in order to protect USA petroleum interest in the region. / **23.** At a restaurant near the Princeton University campus, Bob meets with his son, Robby (Max Minghella). The conversation revolves around the secretive nature of both his parents' work and the fact that they might have to relocate overseas because of what is, in effect, Bob's demotion within the agency. Robby is unhappy about the whole setup and leaves abruptly. / **24.** The Woodman family arrive at Marbella, Spain and are welcomed to their quarters at the Casa de las Palmas. A televised message from the Emir invites guests to enjoy the facilities during their stay. The Woodman family looks around the bustling pool and recreational areas. / **25.** At his quarters in Marbella, Emir Hamed Al-Subaai (Nadim Sawalha) welcomes the Chinese delegation in person. Prince Nasir hands a pen to the Chinese representative who signs the agreement on behalf of his government. Nasir's younger brother, Prince Meshal (Akbar Kurtha), looks on. / **26.** Bryan and Julie relax while their sons play with the other children by the pool. Julie discourages Bryan from intervening to help Max from being pushed into the pool by the other boys, asserting that it is important for the child's autonomy to solve problems on his own. / **27.** Meanwhile, Wasim mingles with other unemployed young men, hoping to get work through one of their uncles, but this turns out to be a false promise. / **28.** Bryan, who has been waiting for a meeting with the Emir, is approached by two of his representatives who offer to hear his proposal instead, in the foyer. Bryan offers them

the usual generalizations, but it is clear that the meeting is more in lip service than genuine interest on the part of the Emir's representatives. / **29.** Meshal is playing with a sophisticated remote control that allows viewing and control of certain functions in the estate through a monitor. Prince Nasir busies himself with paperwork, seemingly unimpressed with such toys. While attempting to turn on the pool lights remotely, the gadget seems to malfunction. We cut to an underwater shot of the pool light sparking ominously. / **30.** By the poolside, the children dare Max to jump into the pool. He does so, and is immediately electrocuted. Bryan rushes to his side, shouting for someone to cut the power to the pool. Bryan jumps in and brings Max out. The boy dies by the poolside. / **31.** Bennett Holiday arrives home to find his father (William C. Mitchell) sitting by the steps. A television program about government committees, companies, and politics is heard on the soundtrack. Inside, father and son are clearly at odds. Bennett resents his father's drinking, which has resulted in his unemployment. He asks his father not to smoke inside the house, but is ignored. A board on the wall depicts aspects of the Connex-Killen deal in diagrammatical form. All the while the television commentary continues punctuating the background. / **32.** Wasim approaches an Arab foreman at the docks, asking for work. The man tells him there is none and urges him to learn Arabic to promote his chances of gaining employment. / **33.** In the foreign workers compound, several men are bunking down, watching a black and white television set with bad reception. Farooq (Sonell Dadral) mentions that he got free French fries and lamb skewers at the Islamic school that day. / **34.** In a long queue, guards are checking identity cards. They instruct the men not to talk, but Saleem complains about the heat. The guards strike him with batons. Wasim intervenes in defence of his father and is struck down too. / **35.** The Woodman family bury Max in a sombre ceremony. / **36.** That night,

Riley cries out in his sleep. Bryan rushes to his side and tries to comfort him. / **37.**

Bryan's television commentary on the oil business is flat and listless. During a session with his employers, Bryan is told that Prince Nasir's man called again and requested a meeting with Bryan. / **38.** Bennett arrives for a meeting at the U.S. Attorney's office at the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington D.C. The U.S. Attorney's representative hints that while Bennett's position has had many who have tried unsuccessfully to fill it, his boss Sydney Hewitt is still there. The implication is that Hewitt is Bennett's real enemy. / **39.** In a squash match with Hewitt, Bennett tells him that he thinks that the authorities have an informant on the inside. / **40.**

During drinks at an exclusive club, Hewitt greets the U.S. Attorney representative who is seated a little further away. Dean Whiting, here to discuss Bennett's progress, among other matters, joins Hewitt and Bennett. His greeting to Bennett is rather cold. / **41.** Bryan arrives at an apartment in the Emirate. In a strained phone conversation with his wife he gives her impressions of the city, people, weather, and financial affairs. / **42.** His flat monotonous voice-over floats over a series of shots on the soundtrack – diving into a large swimming pool below his apartment, being greeted by a representative of the Prince, and waiting aimlessly at his desk at his apartment. / **43.** Wasim is attending prayers, dressed in Islamic garb. / **44.** Afterwards, food is provided for the attendees, while they listen to Islamic fundamentalist propaganda. / **45.** At a party on his private yacht, Prince Meshal entertains various guests, amongst them Dean Whiting. In a conversation pregnant with insinuation, Whiting offers to help him become king, bypassing his eldest brother. / **46.** Meanwhile the C.I.A. has seemingly gathered damning evidence against Prince Nasir. They decide that Robert Barnes is the man to deal with this matter. / **47.** During a briefing on the Emirate's Royal Family and their affairs of state, he is joined by members of the C.I.A. who

inform him that Prince Nasir is a 'bad guy', perhaps linked to Al Qaeda. The implication is that Bob should assassinate him during the latter's planned visit to Beirut, after which he can choose any position within the agency that he would like. /

48. Bryan arrives at one of Prince Nasir's houses where the Prince is granting an audience to the local population concerning the day-to-day affairs of state. The Prince informs Bryan that his father has ordered that the Marbella estate be razed to the ground and replaced by a park in honour of Bryan's son. / **49.** Clearly plagued by guilt over the death of Bryan's son, the Prince offers Bryan's company a deal worth 75 million dollars. Bryan steers the conversation towards the subject of the Emirate's diminishing wealth due to lost opportunities. Nasir decides to hire Bryan's company for 100 million dollars to help devise a plan to change things around. Bryan immediately tells him that instead of sending his oil to the world via ships around Africa, he should build a pipeline through Iran, which will result in a doubling of profits. / **50.** During a hunting session at his Texas ranch, Killen's Jimmy Pope confides in Bennett that Whiting and the Connex chairman, Janus Leland, are involved in the efforts of the C.L.I. to liberate Iran, as is one of the men present, Danny Dalton (Tim Blake Nelson). Dalton was present during the deal with Kazakhstan. The implication is that Danny has information that could be used to their advantage. / **51.** Over drinks, Stan Goff (William Hurt), an ex-C.I.A. agent, enquires about Bob's wife Margaret, expressing surprise at how two people with such a high security rating have managed to stay married. / **52.** On their way to the car park, Stan tells him that private consulting is more profitable than working directly for the C.I.A. Bob then asks him whether or not it is safe for him to return to Beirut. Stan, who is obviously very well connected, advises Bob to clear it with Hezbollah first. / **53.** Bob arrives at the Hezbollah controlled suburb in Beirut in a

taxi. There are armed men everywhere, from the streets to the rooftops. / **54.** He is pulled out of the taxi by several armed men. He protests that he is here to see Said Hashimi. He is transferred to another vehicle and a hood is placed over his head. / **55.** When the hood is pulled off, Bob finds himself seated in an inoffensive looking waiting room, surrounded by ordinary folk. / **56.** Bob is led through to a room where Said Hashimi is seated. Hashimi seems sympathetic to Bob. He says that he has a good feeling about the American people. After all, ten million Muslims live in America. Bob thanks him for granting him audience and informs him that he has a business proposal that will benefit everyone, but that his business is not with Hezbollah. Hashimi welcomes him to Lebanon, in effect granting him immunity. / **57.** Wasim and Farooq are playing soccer in the sand, talking about Spiderman and spider bites. Suddenly another man, Mohammed, who we recognise as the same blue-eyed Arab that took possession of Arash's second explosive device, joins the game. After commending the boys for being virgins, he asks them to join him in prayers. / **58.** At a pier in Beirut, Bob meets Mussawi (Mark Strong) and tells him that he wants Nasir killed in a car accident during his forthcoming trip. / **59.** Bryan and Prince Nasir emerge from a building. Nasir speaks of reform in front of the media, while Bryan talks to his wife on his cell phone about his progress as the Prince's advisor. / **60.** Bryan accompanies the Prince to another meeting. / **61.** Bob enters the lift, as if by coincidence. The Prince asks if he is American. Bob replies that he is Canadian. / **62.** Bob eats a sandwich at a street side café, while keeping an eye on the Prince and his entourage. / **63.** A car pulls up and two men get out. / **64.** Bob leaves the café. / **65.** The two men seem to be following Bob. / **66.** Bob enters his room at the hotel. Through his window, he can see the Prince looking out of his own window in the opposite building. Suddenly the two men overpower Bob and tie

him up. They take him out to their van in a body bag. / **67.** At his firm's information storage facility, Bennett is searching through boxes of documents. While there, he receives an urgent telephone call. Bennett arrives at a pub and is given a note written by his father asking that Bennett be contacted. Bennett walks through the bar and finds his father slumped over a table, presumably drunk. / **68.** Mussawi tortures Bob, who is tied to a chair in a sealed room. Mussawi wants to know the name of every person who has ever taken money from Bob. Just as he is about to cut his prisoner's head off, someone enters with the message that Said Hashimi, who has granted Bob immunity, is very angry with Mussawi for his treatment of Bob, in effect rescuing him from certain death. / **69.** Mohammed shows Wasim and Farooq a bomb hidden in a shed and how to arm it. It is the second device supplied by Bob to Asher earlier. / **70.** Bob lies in a semiconscious state on the floor. / **71.** At Langley, two C.I.A. operatives discuss that Mussawi has circulated the story that the company has sent Bob to assassinate Prince Nasir. They report to their superior that Mussawi has turned, and is now working for Teheran. Their boss instructs them to distance the C.I.A. from Bob in order to prevent damaging fallout from sticking to the organisation. He orders them to paint Bob as a rogue ex-agent driven by his emotions resulting from the 9/11 incident, in effect setting Bob up as the fall guy. / **72.** Bob lies recovering in a hospital bed in Washington, D.C. On the soundtrack, we hear Bob being interviewed about his knowledge of certain events. / **73.** We cut to the scene of the interview in the hospital room where the two men inform him that his actions have caused a diplomatic incident and that they require that he hand them his passports. / **74.** Bennett is handed evidence of a wire transfer written in Russian involving an amount of money transferred to a school in Switzerland. / **75.** So important is this finding that Bennett barges into a closed meeting of the C.L.I. to

give Sydney Hewitt the news in person. / **76.** At a high powered meeting of concerned parties, Bennett reveals his discovery of documented links between Danny Dalton, Killen, the Swiss school, and the Kazakhstan deal that could provide the District Attorney's office with the evidence they require to scupper the Connex-Killen merger. / **77.** With trouble brewing over 'aggrieved Royals' who have had their allowances reduced, Nasir, trailed by Bryan, tries to speak to his father but is denied access because he is in a closed meeting with American lawyers. He expresses his concerns to Bryan about his cousins and younger brother, whose influence on the Emir are far from altruistic. Bryan spells out that with the world's oil supply running out, the future looks bleak for the Emirate unless it stops squandering money and invests in infrastructure. Nasir takes Bryan aside and confides his goals to him. Nasir, who has a PhD from Georgetown University, traces out an enlightened social and economic plan for his country based on sound democratic principles. The problem is that American policies intervene. One telephone call from the U.S. President to his father results in the Emirate buying overpriced jet fighters and other non-essentials. And because he has sold rights to the Chinese, he is now being branded an enemy. He points out to Bryan that Dean Whiting, who represents Connex Oil, supported by the Emirate's aggrieved Royals, has been pressurizing his father to negate the deal with the Chinese. / **78.** Back in Geneva, Bryan excitedly talks to his wife at a park about Nasir's enlightened plans, while their son plays nearby. Julie accuses him of profiting from the death of their son and they end up arguing bitterly. She tells him that she and Riley are going back to the United States. Bryan indicates that he will not follow. / **79.** Meanwhile, Wasim and other young men continue to be inducted into Islamic militancy through meetings and videos of 'martyrs' espousing suicide bombing. / **80.** Bennett meets

with Dalton to inform him about the evidence against him. An unrepentant Dalton proudly declares that corruption is America's indispensable weapon in the fight to preserve its way of life. / **81.** Bennett reports back to Sydney Hewitt. Hewitt seems unconcerned that Dalton has been offered up as a sacrifice to the authorities. Congratulating Bennett on his work, he hands Bennett an invitation to Janus Leland's Oilman of the Year dinner. / **82.** Bob, looking worried and the worse for wear, is denied access to his departmental contacts who are clearly trying to distance themselves from him. / **83.** During his afternoon run, Donald Fairish offers Bennett a ride in his limousine and Bennett links Dalton to corruption in the Kazakhstan deal. But Farish demands a more important scalp than that if he is to drop further investigation into the Connex-Killen merger. / **84.** Bennett is dropped off at home to find his father sitting on his front steps. One look at each other is enough to make them clash. His father leaves, giving him the finger in contempt. / **85.** Shut out of the Agency, Bob tries to work out what is happening behind the scenes by trying to access relevant information about Mussawi and Prince Nasir over the network. But access is denied. / **86.** Bob goes to see his supervisor, but he is stonewalled and informed that he is under criminal investigation. We cut to a shot through a car windscreen that indicates that the two men are being watched. / **87.** Wasim gets stung by a bee while working with them. He walks off, fed up with his lot. He confides to his friend that he lacks faith and might not be the right person for what is being planned. He is told that if he does as instructed, they can help bring his family over. / **88.** In a meeting with his father, Nasir is told that his brother is to be the next Emir. Nasir informs him that his brother is not qualified to run a brothel let alone a country. Nasir walks off angrily, refusing to accept the arrangement. / **89.** He engages in a meeting of loyal Royals, in which he outlines his plans for the future. But some

express concern, indicating that his brother's coronation is the following day and has the support of the Americans and their ten thousand troops in the country. Nasir indicates that there are those who will support him. / **90.** Bob meets with Stan Goff who informs him that his bosses are worried. The stakes are large. If Nasir will not allow American bases in the Emirate, and his younger brother will, the powers that be will have to do something about that. But they cannot be implicated in any impropriety. Hence, Bob being positioned as the fall guy. Bob asks specifically who is doing this. Stan leans over and whispers a name in his ear. / **91.** Whiting is woken by a telephone call from his home security firm, advising him of an error message from the alarm downstairs. Whiting arms himself and goes downstairs. He finds that a door has been opened and asks for a car to be sent. / **92.** Whiting meets Bob at a nearby overnight diner. Bob threatens Whiting that if he does not use his influence to ensure the safety of Bob's family, and a return to relative normality, Whiting and his family will be killed. / **93.** Wasim's indoctrination into Islamic militancy continues. Mohammed approaches him and hints that he is ready for an important mission. / **94.** During a make-shift cricket match amongst the migrant workers, in which an onlooker listens to news about Connex-Killen's gift of a children's hospital in honour of the new Emir, Wasim asks his father for some bus money, then hugs him as if it is the last time he will see him. / **95.** At a barbeque, Bennett tells Pope that Dalton is not enough for the Attorney's office to give up its investigations into the merger. They need someone more important. Pope suggests that they sacrifice someone high up in Bennett's firm. / **96.** Bob flies to the Middle East. / **97.** Bryan is soliciting support from foreign businessmen at a gathering of supporters, informing them that Prince Nasir, who favours healthy economics, will be head of the Emirate within a few days. Nasir emerges to polite applause. / **98.** Bryan informs someone on

the phone, presumably his office in Geneva, that Nasir has the support of nine of the eleven Generals for the proposed coup. / **99.** A man in traditional regalia informs someone on the phone, that Nasir has entered a Silver Range Rover. His is the fourth in the convoy of cars. / **100.** The message spills over a shot from a satellite at U.S. Military Operations, where Bob's supervisor looks on, as several operatives monitor events in the Middle East. Prince Nasir's convoy starts on its way. / **101.** Bennett and Hewitt meet in the lift on their way to a meeting with Janus Leland. Hewitt congratulates Bennett on a job well done. / **102.** Janus offers drinks, but Bennett abstains. / **103.** Bryan, who is riding in the same car as Nasir, remarks on the beauty of the landscape. / **104.** We cut to a monitor shot of the procession from the satellite as observed at the American operation headquarters. Someone asks about a mass of activity in the middle of the road. / **105.** We cut back to the convoy, which has been brought to a stop by Bedouin herders moving goats along the road. Nasir informs Bryan that the Bedouin always have right of way. / **106.** At the Leland meeting, Bennett sketches events thus far, concluding that everyone wants the merger to go ahead, even the Justice Department, since it means access to oil for the American people. All that the department asked in return was proof of due diligence, beyond that of giving up Dalton. Bennett tells Leland that during his investigations, he uncovered a clandestine and illegal deal involving excess Iranian pipeline capacity arranged by lead lawyer, Sydney Hewitt. Hewitt's scalp has satisfied the authorities and has been a necessary sacrifice. Hewitt suddenly realises that it is his turn to be sacrificed in this high-stakes game. / **107.** At a seaside oil facility, representatives of Connex-Killen toast their return to the gulf in front of a gathering of interested parties. A wheel is turned and oil flows into the storage tankers along a pipeline. / **108.** Bob, who is on his way to warn Prince Nasir of the planned assassination, stops

at a crossroad, checks his map, then drives off again. / **109.** Prince Nasir walks amongst the herd as it shuffles past the convoy. / **110.** Bryan suggests that the Prince ride with his wife and children instead of him. / **111.** The monitor at the operational headquarters is unable to discern these details from the vantage point of the orbiting satellite. / **112.** We cut to Leland being honoured for Oilman of the Year at the formal dinner. / **113.** Bob spots the convoy in the distance and cuts across the dunes to intercept it. / **114.** He is spotted by the satellite. Operational Headquarters are puzzled by the intrusion of another vehicle. / **115.** Bryan spots Bob waving a white handkerchief in the distance and draws the driver's attention to it. / **116.** Bob continues to try and flag down the convoy. / **117.** Nasir looks on in interest. / **118.** Events continue to be monitored by satellite. / **119.** Bob pulls onto the road and redoubles his efforts to stop the convoy. / **120.** The scene plays out on the satellite monitor. / **121.** The convoy stops and Bob gets out, arms held high. Guards surround him. / **122.** The stationary vehicle identified earlier as the target is brought into view. After a moment's hesitation, the supervisor gives the instruction to take the target out. / **123.** Bob approaches Nasir. / **124.** The operations centre announces that the missile is four miles away. / **125.** Bob approaches Nasir's car. / **126.** The missile is now declared to be two miles from target. / **127.** Nasir frowns as he recognises Bob as the Canadian from their earlier encounter in the lift. The missile strikes Nasir's vehicle, killing everyone nearby, including Bob. / **128.** The operation concluded, his colleagues congratulate the supervisor. / **129.** Leland makes his acceptance speech to tumultuous applause. / **130.** Bryan stumbles out of his car, dazed but alive. / **131.** Leland personally singles out Nasir's younger brother Emir Meshal for special thanks. / **132.** Bryan walks away from the scene of the explosion towards the city. / **133.** Wasim's boat, armed with explosives, moves along a flotilla of other fishing

boats. / **134.** Nearby, executives and men in traditional garb discuss their successes. Wasim's boat breaks away from the other fishing boats and heads for the nearby oil tanker. The boat slams into the ship, exploding. / **135.** In a videotape watched by other recruits, Wasim, who had once watched such a tape himself, describes how his funeral is to be conducted. / **136.** Bryan returns home and is warmly greeted by his son. His wife seems more surprised than glad to see him. / **137.** Bob's office is being cleared of all traces of him, while on the soundtrack we hear Wasim's voice recounting how he wants to be remembered. / **138.** His voice continues over a shot in which Bennett returns home to find his father slumped over the steps. He leads his father into the house and in a gesture of acceptance, picks up the beer left on the step and follows him in. / **139.** End Credits.

APPENDIX 9 – *BABEL*: SYUZHET BREAKDOWN

1. We fade up on the opening titles, then cut to a shot of Hassan Ibrahim (Abdelkader Bara), travelling on foot along bleak and mountainous Moroccan terrain. He carries something in a makeshift bag on his back. / **2.** Hassan arrives at a small dwelling hewn out of stone and is let into the family home by Abdullah (Mustapha Rachidi), who is surrounded by his wife and children. Hassan produces a high-powered Winchester rifle and a box of bullets from the bag and the two men barter over it, eventually agreeing upon the sum of 500 Dirham and a goat. / **3.** Outside, Hassan shows Abdullah and the boys how to load and fire the rifle, so it may be used to shoot jackals preying on the family's livestock. In a gesture that shows favouritism, Abdullah asks that his younger son Yussef (Boubker Ait El Caid) shoot first but Ahmed (Said Tarchani), who is the eldest of the two boys, grabs the rifle from his younger brother and fires into the distance only to step back, startled. Yussef snatches the rifle back from him and immediately does a better job of shooting, praised for it by his father. / **4.** As the two men make off together, Abdullah instructs his sons to kill at least three jackals with the rifle, but not to be seen carrying it by anyone. / **5.** In a scene that highlights the rivalry between the two boys, Ahmed catches Yussef spying on his sister through a hole in the wall as she undresses. / **6.** He castigates him and forces him to help lead the goats to some nearby grazing. / **7.** The boys take turns in shooting at a tin can, while minding the goats, with the younger Yussef doing better than his elder brother. They spot a jackal, but Ahmed makes a hash of the shot, allowing the animal to get away. / **8.** They sit under the shade of a tree. Yussef admits to Ahmed that his sister does not mind being spied on, but Ahmed, who is the more straight-laced of the two, says that he will tell their

father if it happens again. Annoyed, Yussef walks towards the edge of the hill. He climbs a little way down to be by himself. He starts masturbating, but is interrupted by the sound of shots. It is Ahmed firing aimlessly in the distance. Yussef joins him and takes the rifle from his older brother. He again does a better job of hitting a distant rock as a target, proving that the rifle has the long range that Hassan promised. Ahmed, however, claims that it won't reach the three kilometres mentioned earlier. To prove it, he shoots at a car in the road below, missing. Yussef grabs the rifle from him and fires at an oncoming bus. Initially, he too seems to have missed, but moments later the bus stops in the middle of the road. Frightened, the boys run away. / **9.** We cut to a young boy, Mike Jones (Nathan Gamble), running and ducking behind a couch in the living room. Nearby, his equally young sister, Debbie (Elle Fanning), is also hiding from their Nanny, Amelia (Adriana Barraza), in a game of hide-and-seek. / **10.** The game is interrupted by a phone call from the children's father, Richard Jones (Brad Pitt). He informs Amelia that his wife Susan (Cate Blanchett) is recuperating in hospital after a shooting incident, but will have to be operated on. He assures her that Rachel (Susan's sister) is flying in that night and will find someone to take care of the children so that Amelia can leave as was originally planned, but in the meantime, she should not tell the children anything about what has happened. Amelia is grateful for this arrangement. Richard then requests that he talks to his son. Mike chats to his father about the hermit crab that nipped him in class. / **11.** Later, Amelia tenderly tucks the children into bed, enquires about their having brushed their teeth and kisses them goodnight, switching off the light. Debbie requests that she leave the light on. Amelia comes back into the bedroom to comfort Debbie who is afraid that what happened to her baby brother, Sam, who died in his sleep, will happen to her. Amelia lovingly reassures her that

what happened to Sam happens to very few babies and only when they are little. She promises to stay by her side until she falls asleep. / **12.** It is daylight when the phone wakes Amelia up. A terse Richard instructs her to stay with the children, as Rachel cannot be there to take over, after all. Amelia complains that she needs to attend her son's wedding, but Richard brushes this aside, volunteering to pay 'for a better one' and puts the phone down on her. / **13.** Distraught, Amelia telephonically tries to arrange for a friend to take care of the children for the day but fails. / **14.** She tries again, this time in person, but is again unsuccessful. / **15.** She decides that the only alternative is to take the children with her and starts packing some clothes, while they question her about the trip. / **16.** Her nephew Santiago (Gael Garcia Bernal) arrives to pick Amelia up in his car. Upon learning that she intends to bring the children along, he seems concerned and asks her whether she is sure about this, but Amelia explains that she does not have any choice. / **17.** We cut to a series of shots that show Susan and Richard Jones vacationing in Morocco. They order coke and something to eat. It is obvious from Susan's tone and gestures that she is sad and annoyed. She asks Richard why they have bothered to go there at all. Richard replies that they have done so in order to spend some time alone. She echoes the word 'alone' and we realise that her whole demeanour is tied to the death of their child. She quibbles about the purity of the ice in her cool drink, snatching it away from Richard. Richard asks her if she will ever forgive him, but she evades his question. Richard refuses to get into an argument with her, and this annoys her even more. / **18.** A series of shots show a long dusty road meandering through the sandy plain. Richard and Susan sit on the tour bus, remote and uncommunicative. Susan's face is filled with sadness as she stares blankly out of the window at the exotic figures that pepper the landscape. She slowly reaches out and takes hold of Richard's hand; but only for a moment, as

if the intimacy is too painful for her. / **19.** The bus continues winding along the road. Richard is paging through a book, while Susan naps, her head resting against the window. Suddenly a shot punches through the glass hitting her near the left shoulder. Blood oozes out of her wound as Richard cries out for the bus to stop and lays her down on the floor. / **20.** We cut to a netball match between two female Japanese high-school teams. It is clear from the hand signals that the girls are deaf. One of the girls, Chieko Wataya (Rinko Kikuchi), argues with the referee about a point, while one of the spectators on the stand, Yasujiro Wataya (Koji Yakusho), a distinguished looking man in his forties, who we later come to learn is her father, looks on with interest. Chieko walks away from the match in disgust and frustration. In the stands, Yasujiro looks away in disappointment at her unsportsmanlike behaviour. / **21.** In the changing rooms, the girls argue in sign language over Chieko's actions which have cost them the game. One of the girls accuses Chieko of always being in a bad mood because 'no one's fucked her yet'. Chieko makes off but not before hurling an insult back and says she will meet her friends later. / **22.** In the car, Yasujiro, asks Chieko what she wants for lunch, but she tells him that she has arranged to meet her friends at J-Pop. He seems disappointed because he thought they had a prior arrangement to eat together. Chieko denies this and accuses her father of not paying attention to her, unlike her mother who always did. Yasujiro suggests that she is trying to pick a fight with him and reminds her that he too misses her mother and that he is doing the best he can. He drops Chieko off at J-Pop's, reminding her of her dentist appointment at 3 pm. / **23.** After an uncomfortable moment trying to lip-read a waitress's question about whether she has a table, Chieko joins her friends at a corner spot, picked so that the girls have a good view of some attractive boys opposite. Chieko exchanges flirtatious looks with one of them. / **24.** We cut to the girls playing a game at one of

the machines. They are approached by one of the boys who invites them to sit with him and his friends. But upon realising that the girls are deaf, he walks away, accusing his friends of trying to humiliate him. / **25**. In the toilets, Chieko angrily devises a plan to strike back. She takes off her panties and marches back to the table. She exposes her genitals to one of the boys who quickly tells his friends. An SMS from her father reminding her about her dentist's appointment puts an end to the game. / **26**. Ahmed and Yussef hurriedly usher the herd back home and away from the scene of the shooting. They cower in the house, claiming that they have stomach cramps, but their mother chases them out to do chores. / **27**. The boys look up from their chores in trepidation as their father is dropped off from work at dusk by a van. Over dinner, Abdullah explains he was late in getting home because the police had closed off the road and they had to take the long road home. Apparently, terrorists shot and killed an American tourist on a bus. The boys exchange a secret look as their fear mounts. They spend a sleepless night in bed, worrying. / **28**. Amelia and Santiago exchange banter with the children as they drive through the border to Mexico. The children look on curiously as a series of shots reveals snapshots of bustling Mexican life. / **29**. They arrive at the homestead set in a dusty rural setting where the wedding is to take place, and are welcomed by family and friends. Debbie and Mike are introduced to another child, Lucio, and they reluctantly run off to play. / **30**. In the bedroom, Amelia, surrounded by her daughters, struggles to fit into an old dress. / **31**. Meanwhile, the children are playing a game of catching chickens. Mike and Debbie are shocked when Santiago twists the captured chicken's head off, blood squirting from its open wound. / **32**. We cut to the bloodied figure of Susan as she is lowered to the floor of the bus. Richard calls out in vain for a doctor. He learns from one of the guides, Zohra, that the nearest hospital is four hours away and the

nearest clinic one and a half hours. Richard spots an approaching car. / **33**. He jumps out of the bus and tries to hail it down, but the vehicle accelerates away. Zohra suggests that the bus drive to his village, which is a lot closer and where there is a doctor. They can also call for an ambulance from there. Susan cries out in pain as the bus leaves the main road and drives over rougher terrain. / **34**. It arrives at a dusty, arid village peopled by the curious folk clad in traditional garb. / **35**. Richard carries the bleeding Susan across the street toward a house as children run after them curiously. / **36**. They eventually reach the house. Inside, Richard instructs an old woman to keep pressure on the wound so that he can go to a nearby phone to call the American embassy and an ambulance. / **37**. The American passengers accost Richard in the street, complaining about the heat and dangers inherent in the area. Richard asks for a little time to work things out and rushes off with Zohra to find the phone. Inside the house, the old woman chases the children away, while Susan looks on in pain and trepidation. Richard gets hold of Rachael on the phone and tells her what has happened. He instructs her to get help from the American embassy. / **38**. The doctor, who we soon discover is a veterinarian, arrives at the house and examines Susan's wound. He explains that the bullet did not touch her spine but that she is bleeding to death. Susan must go to the hospital but in the meantime, he will stitch her wound to stop the bleeding. He will also secure her broken clavicle with a splint. Richard holds the screaming Susan down as the doctor stitches her wound with a coarse needle. / **39**. In the dentist's waiting room, Chieko watches the patients talking among themselves. Inside the surgery, the dentist closely examines her teeth. As he leans in for a closer look, Chieko licks his face in a sexual gesture. She repeats the gesture then takes his hand and places it between her legs. He snatches his hand away just as the nurse enters then promptly leaves again. The dentist asks Chieko to

leave immediately. / **40.** Chieko walks home sombrely, cut off from the bustle of the busy urban street by the silence inflicted by her deafness and her failure to find the intimacy she desires. / **41.** In the foyer, two plain-clothes policemen approach her and request that they speak to her father. The younger of the two men, Lieutenant Kenji Mamiya (Satoshi Nikaido), gives her his card and asks that her father contact him when he gets back. / **42.** In the apartment, she reads a note from her father advising that he will be back late from a meeting. Through the video link on her cell phone, she learns that one of her friends is on her way over to the apartment. / **43.** Bored, she flicks aimlessly through the channels on TV, glossing over a report about the shooting in Morocco which shows a picture of Yussef. / **44.** Chieko's friend arrives. While Chieko is fetching her bag, her friend notices Lieutenant Mamiya's card on the table. We learn through an exchange between the two girls that the police had questioned Yasujiro about his wife's death for some time. In spite of this, Chieko admits to liking one of the policemen. / **45.** At dawn, Ahmed and Yussef hide the rifle between the rocks and cover it with dried long grass. / **46.** The same man who refused to stop for Richard has been stopped by the roadside and is being questioned by police. The captain is called to the spot where four bullet shells have been found. Examining the soil, he declares that the culprits are from the area and that they should search for anyone who has a .270 calibre rifle. The police arrive at Hassan's home and force him roughly to the ground. / **47.** In Abdullah's homestead, things seem to be carrying on as before. / **48.** Meanwhile, Hassan is forced to admit that he sold the rifle to Abdullah. The police spot Ahmed and Yussef skulking across the arid land. The captain questions the boys about Abdullah's address. Yussef lies, sending them off in the wrong direction. / **49.** The boys run all the way home and tell their father everything, amid much boyish accusations, confessions and counter

accusations. They fall to the ground, wrestling. / **50.** At the wedding party, the celebrations are in full swing. Amelia is made to dance with her son. The evening wears on but the dancing, eating, and drinking show no sign of abating. Even the children seem to be having a fun time. An old flame asks Amelia for a dance and, learning that he has been widowed for the past ten years, she accepts. Inside the house, Amelia and the widower make love, while outside the wedding cake is cut, the children run around merrily, and the festivities continue. / **51.** The American tourists shuffle uncomfortably around the stationary bus while a news report on the radio recounts the incident, denying claims from the American government that this was a terrorist attack. / **52.** Inside the house, the doctor leaves, having done everything that he can for Susan. Susan pleads with Richard to allow her to call the children, but he tells her that she should not move. The old woman lights up a pipe, presumably containing cannabis and lets Susan draw on it. This calms Susan down. She settles back while the old woman gently strokes her head. / **53.** Inside the bus, the passengers are feeling the heat as the air conditioning has been switched off to conserve fuel. / **54.** One of the passengers has had enough of waiting around for the ambulance to arrive and tells Richard that the bus will wait for another thirty minutes, then leave regardless. / **55.** Chieko and her friend meet other friends in a public place. One of the girls tells Chieko that one of the boys is her cousin. The boy, speaking slowly so as to be understood, introduces himself as Haruki. He slips her a small bottle of whiskey and some pink pills, which get passed around. As the chemicals take effect, the kids frolic happily in the fountain situated in the middle of the square. Chieko, looking happier than ever before, sways dreamily on a nearby swing, as if without a care in the world. At dusk they take the train to a different part of the city, where they continue with their drug-induced carefree behaviour through

the streets. / **56.** They end up at a dance club. Although Chieko cannot hear the music, she soon seems to merge with the light displays and bobbing bodies surrounding her. Her mood changes when she sees her friends making out on the dance floor with the boys. / **57.** Dejected, she leaves the club and wanders the streets on her own. As we glimpse the silent crowds swirling around her from her point of view, we get a heartfelt sense of her isolation from the rest of the world. / **58.** In the foyer of her apartment block, she asks the receptionist to contact Lieutenant Mamiya to ask him to come over as she has things to tell him about her father, despite the lateness of the hour. / **59.** The Lieutenant takes the call and agrees to come over. / **60.** At the homestead, Abdullah scolds and strikes Ahmed and Yussef for actions that have brought misfortune on the entire family. He then slaps his daughter for taking off her clothes while Yussef was watching. He asks where they have hidden the rifle. / **61.** At Hassan's homestead, the police continue to interrogate him. He tells them that a Japanese hunter gave him the rifle as a gift in gratitude for his services as a guide. He has his wife show a photograph of himself, the hunter, and the rifle. We clearly identify Yasujiro as the Japanese hunter. / **62.** The boys unearth the rifle from its hiding place in the rocks and give it to their father. Abdullah tells his wife that he is going to a friend's house. If the police come looking for him, she should tell them that he went South. / **63.** The captain arrives at Hassan's homestead and kicks Hassan in the ribs for lying to him about where Abdullah lives. He forces Hassan and his wife to point out the place in person. / **64.** Abdullah and the boys trek over hilly terrain. / **65.** The police head towards the hills. / **66.** A long shot shows the police vehicles snaking along the dusty road in the valley below, while in the hills above, Abdullah and the boys trudge on. / **67.** Inside the van, Hassan's wife spots the figures and alerts the captain. / **68.** Yussef sees the vehicles approaching and warns his father

who instructs them to run. / **69**. The vehicles pull up. The police jump out and start firing on Abdullah and the boys. / **70**. The three of them hide behind the rocks as bullets strike all around them. Frightened, Ahmed makes a dash to escape and is shot in the leg. Yussef ignores his father's requests to put down the rifle and fires back in retaliation, hitting a policeman in the arm. / **71**. It is almost dawn at the wedding celebration as Santiago, Amelia, and the children prepare to leave. Amelia wishes her son and daughter-in-law goodbye. Santiago, who has been caught drink-driving before, denies that he is too drunk to drive them back. / **72**. It is pitch-black as the car heads towards the border. Santiago momentarily loses control of the vehicle, but manages to veer back on the road. He tells Amelia that he will take a shortcut through Tecate which will get them to San Diego quicker. / **73**. At the border crossing, the police take the children's passport and run a check on them. They inspect the trunk of the car, glove compartment, and Amelia's purse. The inspection turns into an argument with the result that Santiago makes a dash for it in the car with Amelia and the children still in the vehicle. / **74**. With the police in hot pursuit, Santiago pulls off the main road in an attempt to lose them. / **75**. He tells Amelia and the children to get out. He promises to come back for them once he has shaken off the pursuit, then drives off, leaving the three of them in the pitch-black wilderness. / **76**. In Morocco, Richard sits near his unconscious wife, waiting for the ambulance to arrive. A child, Zohra's daughter, comes in with some tea for Richard and her father. Zohra asks Richard whether he has any children and Richard shows him a photograph of Debbie and Mike in his wallet. / **77**. A policeman arrives and informs them that the ambulance is not coming, but that the American embassy has declared that it will deal with the problem. It appears that the Embassy itself stopped the Moroccan ambulance from being sent out in preference for sending an American

helicopter. Richard curses the policeman in frustration and storms away. / **78**. When one of the tourists announces that the bus is leaving, Richard wrestles him to the ground, threatening to kill him if he attempts it. / **79**. Back on the phone, Richard is told that the American Embassy is doing everything to resolve political obstacles and to get help out to them as quickly as possible. Richard learns that the story has made the news on television. Richard is still on the phone when he hears the bus pulling away. He runs after it, but in vain. / **80**. In the apartment, Chieko burns incense near her mother's photograph as she waits for Lieutenant Mamiya to arrive. / **81**. Her cat alerts her to the doorbell being rung. Chieko lets the Lieutenant into the apartment and offers him some tea. / **82**. Communicating with him by writing in a notepad, she informs him that her father had nothing to do with her mother's death, as he was asleep at the time. She takes him out into the balcony of the high-rise apartment and points to the spot from where she claims she saw her mother jump. The policeman is confused by this admission. / **83**. Just then, Chieko's phone flashes and she goes into another room to answer it. Mamiya walks around the lounge, looking at hunting pictures of her father on the wall. One of them is with Hassan. / **84**. Chieko comes in with more tea. Mamiya tells her that the reason he wants to talk to her father is that there has been an incident involving a rifle registered in his name. He assures her that her father is not in trouble. Mamiya is about to leave but Chieko asks him to wait. She leaves the room and comes back naked, offering herself to him. She breaks down when he refuses her advances. Realising that she is merely seeking affection and intimacy, he embraces her tenderly, trying to comfort her. / **85**. The police continue firing at Abdullah and the boys. As Ahmed tries to scamper away again, he is fatally shot in the back, and dies in his father's arms. Yussef grabs hold of the rifle and smashes it on the rocks. He lifts his arms and walks towards the police admitting that

he shot the American and that his brother and father are not responsible. The captain looks on in dismay, understanding that the incident, far from involving terrorist motives, was just a childish game gone wrong. / **86**. It is daybreak in Mexico. The signs of the previous night's festivities are scattered across the deserted celebration venue. Clouds pepper the sky. Amelia and the children lie asleep in the desert as a police car circles the area. Spotting it, Amelia runs after it but fails to hail it. With Debbie in her arms and Mike in tow, Amelia trudges through the arid terrain, following Santiago's car tracks. She becomes disorientated as the tracks split off in different directions. / **87**. She finds a shady spot and lays the semi-unconscious Debbie down on the ground. She tells Mike that she has to go for help and that he should stay with his sister and not to move from the spot. / **88**. Exhausted, Amelia trudges across the desert almost delirious from sunstroke and heat exhaustion, her red scarf trailing behind her. / **89**. She spots a police car and hails it. / **90**. The policeman, thinking she is attempting to cross the border, handcuffs her but agrees to let her show him where the children are. / **91**. The children are no longer in the spot where she left them. / **92**. Another police van arrives with illegal migrants in the back. The policeman asks her if she tried to cross with those people, but she shakes her head. A police helicopter swoops across the sky. / **93**. A weeping Amelia is bundled into the back of the police van, still pleading with the police to find the children. / **94**. Susan, fearing that she is dying, makes Richard promise that he will never leave the children ever again. Richard promises not to. She confesses to having wet her pants. Richard asks Zohra for a pan and asks him to leave the room. In a touching gesture of intimacy, he gently helps his wife urinate into the pan. They embrace tenderly, perhaps for the first time in months, and admit to each other that they are frightened for the future. In a reference to their dead child, Susan pleads that his death was not

her fault. Richard comforts her, assuring her that it was not. The pain and suffering stemming from the bullet fired from Yasujiro's gun has finally allowed them to talk about that other pain that has kept them apart. / **95**. Richard carries Susan towards the waiting helicopter in a makeshift stretcher, as the soundtrack plays an earlier phone conversation between Richard and an American official about arrangements that have been complicated by political factors. / **96**. At the Wataya's apartment, Lieutenant Mamiya squeezes Chieko's hand reassuringly, trying to comfort her. Chieko scribbles a note on a piece of paper, folds it, and places it into his hand. When Mamiya tries to read it she takes it from him and places it into his breast pocket, indicating that he should read it after he has left the apartment. She hands him his jacket used to cover her naked body, standing naked before him once more. Mamiya gently wipes a tear from her eye and leaves. / **97**. A series of shots show deserted city streets and alleys. / **98**. In the police station, Amelia is treated coldly by the officer in charge who informs her that the children have been found alive and that Richard Jones has decided not to press charges against her. Because she is an illegal migrant, however, she is being deported, despite her having been in the United States for sixteen years. She enquires about her nephew, Santiago, but the police officer tells her they have no information about him. He urges her to accept voluntary deportation. Trying to fight it would make things worse for her. Back in Mexico, a shattered Amelia is picked up on a bustling street by her son. / **99**. In Morocco, Ahmed's dead body is carried down from the hill by police officers as Yussef looks on tearfully. Images of himself and his brother flash through his mind. / **100**. The helicopter lands and Susan is taken on board while the entire village watches. Richard offers Zohra money in gratitude, but he refuses to accept it. Richard thanks him and joins Susan inside the helicopter. The helicopter takes off in a swirl of dust

as the villagers walk on after it. / **101.** A series of shots show the helicopter flying over the desert, gradually approaching the city. It lands on the roof of a building and Susan is carried on a stretcher to the hospital below as American officials tell reporters that they will find those responsible and punish them. / **102.** A doctor approaches Richard in the passage and tells him that they have done all they can to save Susan's arm, which has suffered clotting. / **103.** The earlier scene (12), in which the syuzhet showed Richard talking to Amelia on the phone from Amelia's perspective, is replayed, this time from Richard's point of view. From a call box at the Moroccan hospital, Richard informs Amelia that Rachael will be arriving to take care of the children. He then asks to talk to Mike. Richard fights to stifle the tears as Mike chats to him about his day at school. / **104.** On his way out of the apartment building, Lieutenant Mamiya runs across Yasujiro, who is returning late from work. The receptionist informs Yasujiro that the lieutenant is looking for him. Mamiya introduces himself and questions Yasujiro about his rifle, informing him of its involvement in an attempted murder, and learning that it had been given to Hassan Ibrahim, a Moroccan guide in gratitude for his services. Mamiya tells Yasujiro that Chieko told him how his wife committed suicide by jumping off the balcony. Yasujiro informs him that this was not what happened. His wife shot herself in the head. Chieko was the first to find her. He asks that they stop bothering them about this since he has told the police the story many times. Mamiya apologises and leaves. / **105.** Mamiya walks thoughtfully down the street. / **106.** In the lift, Yasujiro looks blankly towards the camera as if drained of all emotion. Reaching the thirtieth floor, he enters his apartment. / **107.** Taking his seat at a small restaurant, Mamiya reads the note given to him by Chieko. He seems saddened and touched by its contents. / **108.** Mamiya glances up from the letter at a television screen. A Japanese newsreader

reports on the Susan Jones incident, branding it a terrorist attack. The announcer reports that after five worrying days in hospital, the American patient is finally on her way home with her husband. / **109.** Yasujiro walks out into the balcony and sees his naked daughter looking down on the streets below. Chieko reaches out and takes his hand in a gesture that conveys her need for love, and perhaps, forgiveness. They embrace, tearfully. The camera pulls back, engulfing the two lone figures against the evening cityscape. Fade to end credits.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

16 Candles 1984, motion picture, Channel Productions, USA.

21 Grams 2003, motion picture, This Is That Productions, USA.

Aarseth, EJ 1997, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA.

Abrams, MH 1971, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 3rd edn, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., NY.

Adams, R 1972, *Watership Down*, Rex Collins, UK.

Allen, M 2003, 'Talking About a Revolution', in J. Stringer (ed.), *Movie Blockbusters*, Routledge, London.

American Beauty 1999, motion picture, DreamWorks, USA.

Amores Perros 2000, motion picture, Altavista Films, Mexico.

Ang, I 1996, *Living Room Wars*, Routledge, London.

Anscombe, E & Geach, PT (eds.) 1970, *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., Middlesex

Aristotle 2000, *Aristotle on Poetics*, St. Augustine's Press, Indiana.

Armageddon 1998, motion picture, Touchstone Pictures, USA.

Aronson, L 2010, *The 21st Century Screenplay*, Allen & Unwin, Australia.

Aylesworth, G, "Postmodernism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (winter 2010 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), viewed 21 November 2010,
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/postmodernism/>

Azcona, M 2010, *The Multi-Protagonist Film*, Willey-Blackwell, UK.

Babel 2006, motion picture, Paramount Vantage, USA.

Back to the Future 1985, motion picture, Universal Pictures, USA.

Barthes, R 1974, *S/Z*, Hill and Wang, NY.

Baudrillard, J 1983, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), NY

---- 1993, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Sage Publications, London.

---- 2001, 'The Gulf War: Is it Really Taking Place?', in S Malpas (ed.), *Postmodern Debates*, Palgrave, London.

Bazin, A 1967, *What Is Cinema?*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Being John Malkovich 1999, motion picture, Malkovich Films, USA.

Berger J 1972, *Ways of Seeing*, British Broadcasting Corporation & Penguin Books, London.

Biro, Y 1982, *Profane Mythology: The Savage Mind of the Cinema*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

Biskind, P 1998, *Easy riders, raging bulls: how the sex-drugs-and-rock 'n 'roll generation saved Hollywood*, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, NY.

Blade Runner 1982, motion picture, Ladd Company, USA.

Blind Chance 1981, motion picture, P.P. Film Polski, Poland.

Bolter, J & Grushin, R 1999, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Booker, MK 2007, *Postmodern Hollywood*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT.

Bordwell, D 1985, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Methuen & Co. Ltd. London.

Bordwell, D, Staiger, J, & Thompson, K 1985, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, Columbia University Press, NY.

Bordwell D 1991, *Making Meaning*, Harvard University Press, MA.

---- 1996, 'Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory', in Bordwell, D & Carroll, N (eds), *Post-Theory*, The University of Wisconsin Press, MA.

---- 2002, 'Film Futures', *SubStance* 97, Vol. 31, No. 1, University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 88-104.

---- 2006, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, University of California Press, CA.

Borges, JL 1941, *The Garden of Forking Paths*, Sur, Buenos Aires.

Borst, CV 1970, (ed.), *The Mind/Brain Identity Theory*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, London.

Bounce 2000, motion picture, Miramax Films, USA.

Box Office Mojo n.d., *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, viewed 21 August 2010,

<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=eternalsunshine.htm>

Box Office Mojo n.d., *Next*, viewed 21 August 2010,
<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=next.htm>

Box Office Mojo n.d., *Babel*, viewed 24 August 2010,
<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=babel.htm>

Branigan, E 1992, *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, Routledge, London.

Breckon, N 2007, 'Hollywood vs. Games: Oh God The Numbers', viewed 20 July 2010, <http://www.shacknews.com/featuredarticle.x?id=540>

Bretts, RF 2004, *A History of Popular Culture*, Routledge, NY.

Brinkman, R 1999, *The Art and Science of Digital Compositing*, Morgan Kaufmann, CA.

Buckland, W (ed.) 2009a, *Puzzle Films*, Wiley-Blackwell, UK.

---- 2009b, 'Making Sense of *Lost Highway*', in W Buckland (ed.), *Puzzle Films*, Wiley-Blackwell, U.K.

Buckland, W (ed.) 2009c, *Film Theory and Contemporary Hollywood Films*, Routledge, NY.

Byars, J 1991, *All That Hollywood Allows*, Routledge, London.

Cameron, A 2008, *Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema*, Palgrave MacMillan, UK.

Campbell, J 2008, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 3rd edn, New World Library, CA.

Campora, M 2009a, 'Art cinema and New Hollywood: multiform narrative and sonic metalepsis in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 7: 2, pp. 119 – 131.

---- 2009b, *From the Art House to the Multiplex: An Exploration of Multiform Cinema*, PhD thesis, University of Queensland, Brisbane.

Capra, F 1992, *The Tao of Physics*, 3rd edn, Flamingo, London.

Carrie 1976, motion picture, Redbank Films, USA.

Carroll, L 1865, *Alice in Wonderland*, Macmillan, UK.

Carroll, N 1996, 'Prospects for Film Theory: A Personal Assessment', in D Bordwell & N Carroll (eds), *Post-Theory*, The University of Wisconsin Press, MA.

Carroll, N 1998, *Interpreting the Moving Image*, Cambridge University Press, UK.

Cast Away 2000, motion picture, DreamWorks, USA.

Castells, M 1996, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Blackwell Publishers, Inc. Cambridge, MA.

'Cause and Effect' 1992 *StarTrek: The Next Generation*, series 5, episode 18, Paramount Pictures/Viacom, aired 23 March 1992.

Chang, J 2007, 'Next', *Variety*, 26 April, viewed 22 June, 2009, <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117933448?refcatid=31>

Chatman, S 1978 *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Cornell University Press, NY.

Christopher, J 2004, 'Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind', *Timesonline*, 29 April, p. 1, viewed 31 January 2010, http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/film/article845780.ece

Cieply, M 2008, 'Saving the Story', *The New York Times*, 17 November, p. 1, viewed 2 December 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/18/movies/18story.html>

Cohen, DS 2004, 'Revolution turns to sci-fi', 11 November, viewed 22 June 2009, <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117913428?refCatId=10>

Cortazar, J 1963, *Hopscotch*, Pantheon, Argentina.

Crash 2004, motion picture, Bob Yari Productions, USA.

Crimes and Misdemeanors 1989, motion picture, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA.

Crowther, P 2003, *Philosophy After Postmodernism: Civilized Values and the Scope of Knowledge*, Routledge, London.

Dances with Wolves 1990, motion picture, Tig Productions, USA.

Dark City 1998, motion picture, Mystery Clock Cinema, Australia.

Darley, A 2000, *Visual Digital Culture*, Routledge, London.

Deleuze, G 1989 *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, Athlone Press, London.

---- 1994 *Difference and Repetition*, Athlone Press, London.

Denby, D 2007, 'The New Disorder', *The New Yorker*, 5 March, viewed 2 November 2008,

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2007/03/05/070305crat_atlarge_denb

∫

Digital Nation 2010, Public Broadcasting Corporation, (PBS), 2 February.

Dirks, T n.d., *Main Film Genres*, filmsite, viewed 11 September 2008,

<http://www.filmsite.org/genres.html>

Doctor Zhivago 1965, motion picture, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA.

Donnie Darko 2001, motion picture, Pandora Cinema, USA.

Doom 3 2004, video game, id Software, USA.

Doom 2005, motion picture, Universal Pictures, USA.

Ebert, R 1989, 'Crimes and Misdemeanors', *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 13 October, viewed 2 March 2010,

<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19891013/REVIEWS/910130302/1023>

---- 1999, 'The Matrix', *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 31 March, p. 2, viewed 1 November 2010,

<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19990331/REVIEWS/903310303/1023>

---- 2004, 'Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind', *rogerebert.com*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 19 March, viewed 1 January 2010,

<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20040319/REVIEWS/403190302/1023>

---- 2005a, 'Crash', *rogerebert.com, Chicago Sun-Times*, 5 May, viewed 17 February 2010,

<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050505/REVIEWS/50502001/1023>

---- 2005b, 'Crimes and Misdemeanors', *rogerebert.com, Chicago Sun-Times*, 11 September, viewed 2 March 2010,

<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050911/REVIEWS08/509110301>

---- 2005c, 'Syriana', *rogerebert.com, Chicago Sun-Times*, 9 December, viewed 22 March 2010,

<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051208/REVIEWS/51130002/1023>

---- 2006, 'Babel', *rogerebert.com, Chicago Sun-Times*, 22 September, viewed 22 March 2010,

<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070922/REVIEWS08/70922001/1023>

---- 2009, 'Avatar', *rogerebert.com, Chicago Sun-Times*, 11 December, viewed 5 January 2010,

<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091211/REVIEWS/912119998>

Egan, J 1997, 'Multiple Plots in Recent Cinema', *Script Magazine*, viewed 2 March 2009, <http://www.6millionandcounting.com/filmtheory/ft1.php>

Egri, L 1993, *The Art of Creative Writing*, Kensington Publishing Corp., NY.

Elephant 2003, motion picture, HBO Films, USA.

Enter the Matrix 2006, video game, Atari, USA.

E.T. 1982, motion picture, Universal Pictures, USA.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind 2004, motion picture, Focus Pictures, USA.

eXistenZ 1999, motion picture, Alliance Atlantis Communications, Canada.

Fargo 1996, motion picture, Gramercy Pictures, USA.

Field, S 2006, *The Screenwriter's Workbook*, 2nd edn, Bantam Dell, NY.

Fight Club 1999, motion picture, Fox 2000 Pictures, USA.

Foucault, M 1967 *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Tavistock Publications Limited, London.

Friedman, J n.d., *Roll over Beethoven: An impassioned plea for faithful interpretations*, viewed 20 June 2010,
http://www.jayfriedman.net/articles/Roll_Over_Beethoven.php

Genette, G 1997, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Ghislotti, S 2009, 'Narrative Comprehension Made Dificult: Film Form and Mnemonic Devices in *Memento*', in *Puzzle Films*, Wiley-Blackwell, U.K.

Gombrich, EH 1972, *Art and Illusion*, 4th edn, Phaidon Press, London.

---- 2000, *The Uses of Images*, Phaidon Press Ltd., London.

Gomery, D 1996, 'Towards a New Media Economics', in Bordwell, D & Carroll, N (eds), *Post-Theory*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin.

Gone with the Wind 1939, motion picture, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA.

Grau, C 2008, '*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and the Morality of Memory', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 64 (1), pp. 119-133, viewed 22 June 2011,

http://clemons.academia.edu/grau/Papers/135061/Eternal_Sunshine_of_the_Spotless_Mind_and_the_Morality_of_Memory

Grau, C (ed.) 2009, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Routledge, London.

Green, DW, et al. 1996, *Cognitive Science: An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.

Greene, G 1954, *Nineteen Stories: The Destructors*, William Heinemann Ltd., London.

Gribbin, J 1996, *Schrodinger's Kittens and the Search for Reality*, Phoenix, London.

Grodal, T 2002, *Moving Pictures*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

---- 2003, 'Stories for Eye, Ear, and Muscles', in Wolf, MJP & Perron, B (eds), *The Video Game Reader*, Routledge, London.

Groundhog Day 1993, motion picture, Columbia Pictures, USA.

Hall, S, Neale S 2010 *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters*, Wayne State University Press, USA.

Halloween III: Season of the Witch 1982, motion picture, Dino De Laurentiis Company, USA.

Harvey 1950, motion picture, Universal International Pictures, USA.

Hassler-Forest, D 2007, 'Multiple Narrative Structures', viewed 23 November 2008,
http://www.euronet.nl/users/mcbeijer/dan/home_burton.html

Hauge, M 1988, *Writing Screenplays That Sell*, Collins, NY.

Hayes, G 2008, 'Video: Cinematic Game Renaissance – Game Now Leading Film?'
September 28, viewed 4 December 2008,
http://blog.futurelab.net/2008/09/video_cinematic_game_renaissan.html

Hayles, NK & Gessler, N 2004, 'The Slipstream of Mixed Reality: Unstable
Ontologies and Semiotic Markers in "*The Thirteenth Floor*, *Dark City*, and
Mulholland Drive"', *PMLA*, Vol. 119, No. 3, Special Topic: Science Fiction and
Literary Studies: The Next Millennium, pp. 482-499.

Hayward, P & Wollen, T 1993, (eds.), *Future Visions: New Technology of the
Screen*, British Film Institute, London.

Hazell, L 2010, 'Up, Up and Away: The Superhero Genre' *Flash Fiction Chronicles*,
September 13 March, viewed 22 June 2011,
[http://www.everydayfiction.com/flashfictionblog/up-up-and-away-the-superhero-
genre/](http://www.everydayfiction.com/flashfictionblog/up-up-and-away-the-superhero-genre/)

Honeycutt, K 2009, 'Avatar', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 10 December, viewed 5 January 2010, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/film-reviews/Avatar+--+Film+Review-1004052868.story>

Howell, P 2007, 'Next: Lousy Timing', 27 April, viewed 22nd June 2009, <http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/article/207813>

Hudson, JA, 2004 "'No Hay Banda, and yet We Hear a Band": David Lynch's Reversal of Coherence in Mulholland Drive', University Film & Video Association, University of Illinois Press, *Journal of Film and Video*, Vol. 56, No. 1, pp. 17-24.

Huntley, C 2007, 'A Comparison of Seven Story Paradigms', viewed 15 September 2008, http://www.dramatica.com/downloads/Dramatica_paradigms-0707.pdf

Inception 2010, motion picture, Warner Bros, Pictures, USA.

International Movie Data Base (IMBD) n.d., *The Matrix*, viewed 21 August 2010, <http://www.imdb.com/chart/top>

Jacob's Ladder 1990, motion picture, TriStar Pictures, USA.

Jameson, F 2001, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in S Malpas (ed.), *Postmodern Debates*, Palgrave, London.

Jancovich, M, & Faire, L 2003, 'The Best Place To See A Film', in J. Stringer (ed.), *Movie Blockbusters*, Routledge, London.

Jerry Maguire 1996, motion picture, Gracie Films, USA.

Jurassic Park 1993, motion picture, Universal Pictures, USA.

Kant, I 2003 *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd edn. (Revised), Palgrave Macmillan, NY.

Kaufman, C 2004, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, Newmarket Shooting Script Series*, Newmarket Press, NY.

Kellner, D 1995, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity And Politics Between The Modern And The Postmodern*, Routledge, London.

---- 2007, *Jean Baudrillard*, Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 7 March, viewed 10 June 2008, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ baudrillard/>

Kempley, R 1989, 'Crimes and Misdemeanors', *The Washington Post*, 13 October, viewed 3 February 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/crimesandmisdemeanorspg13kempley_a09fe2.htm

King, G 2003, 'Spectacle, Narrative, and the Spectacular Hollywood Blockbuster', in J. Stringer (ed.), *Movie Blockbusters*, Routledge, London.

----. 2005, *American Independent Cinema*, I.B.Tauris, London.

Kracauer, S 1947, *From Caligary to Hitler: A Psychological History of The German Film*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey.

Kramer vs. Kramer 1979, motion picture, Columbia Pictures, USA.

Kuhn, TS 1970, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edn, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Lacey, N 2000, *Narrative and Genre: Key Concepts in Media Studies*, Palgrave, London.

Lacey, N 2002, *Media Institutions and Audiences: Key Concepts in Media Studies*, Palgrave, London.

Landow, GP 2006, *Hypertext 3.0: Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization*, 3rd edn, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA.

Laurel, B 1991, *Computers as Theatre*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, MA.

Last Year at Marienbad 1961, motion picture, Cocinor, France

Leish, KW 1974, *Cinema*, Newsweek Books, NY.

Levi-Strauss, C 1963, *Structural Anthropology*, Basic Books, NY.

Lister, M, Dovey, J, Giddings, S, Grant, I & Kelly, K 2003, *New Media: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, USA.

Little Shop of Horrors 1986, motion picture, Geffen Company, USA.

Litwak, M 1987, *Reel Power: The Struggle for Influence and Success in the New Hollywood*, Sidgwick & Jackson, London.

Lolita 1962, motion picture, Metro-Golden-Mayer, UK.

Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring 2001, motion picture, New Line Cinema, USA.

Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers 2002, motion picture, New Line Cinema, USA.

Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King 2003, motion picture, New Line Cinema, USA.

Lost Highway 1997, motion picture, October Films, USA.

Lytard, JF 1984, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, University of Minnesota Press, MN.

MacDonald, M 2007, 'Yeah, "Next!" is what we say, too', 27 April, viewed 22 June 2009, http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/movies/2003682701_next27.html

Mackenzie, D & Wajcman, J (eds.) 1999, *The Social Shaping of Technology*, 2nd edn, Open University Press, Buckingham.

MacNabb, DGC 1951, *David Hume: His Theory of Knowledge and Morality*, Hutchinson House, London.

Magnolia 1999, motion picture, Ghouardi Film Company, USA.

Mailonline 2010, 'Disney boss quits after Pearl Harbour flop', viewed 15 August 2010, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-54968/Disney-boss-quits-Pearl-Harbour-flop.html>

Malpas, S 2001(ed.), *Post Modern Debates*, Palgrave, Hampshire.

Manovich, L 2001, *The Language of New Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Martin LH, Gutman, H, Hutton, PH (eds.) 1998, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, The University of Massachusetts Press, MA.

McCarthy, T 1999, 'The Matrix', *Variety*, 29 March, viewed 1 November 2010, <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117491971.html?categoryid=31&cs=1&p=0>

---- 2004, 'Crash', *Variety*, 21 September, viewed 17 February 2010,

<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117924965.html?categoryid=31&cs=1&p=0>

---- 2005, 'Syriana', *Variety*, 20 November, viewed 22 March 2010,

<http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=features2006&content=jump&jump=review&head=berlin&nav=RBerlin&articleid=VE1117928912&cs=1&p=0>

---- 2006, 'Babel', *Variety*, 23 May, viewed 22 March 2010,

<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117930621.html?categoryid=31&cs=1&p=0>

McCloud, S 1994, *Understanding Comics*, HarperPerennial, NY.

---- 2006, *Making Comics*, Harper, NY.

Mckee, R 1997, *Story*, Harper Collins Books, NY.

Mechner, J 2005, 'Interview: Jordan Mechner', in Rouse III, R (ed.), *Game Design:*

Theory & Practise, 2nd edn, Wordware Publishing Inc., Texas.

Memento 2000, motion picture, Summit Entertainment, USA.

Men in Black 1997, motion picture, Amblin Entertainment, USA.

Minority Report 2001, motion picture, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, USA.

Mitchell, D 2002, '*Twisted Tales: Cognitivism and Narrative Distortion*', An essay for 'Media Technology and Culture: Theory and Practice', viewed 12 June 2010, <http://www.zenoshrdlu.com/zenotwist.htm>

Mulholland Drive 2001, motion picture, Les Films Alain Sarde, USA.

Murphy, JJ 2007, *Me and You and Memento and Fargo: How Independent Screenplays Work*, Continuum, NY.

Murry, JH 1997, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*, The Free Press, NY.

Nashville 1975, motion picture, ABC Entertainment, USA.

Next 2007, motion picture, Initial Entertainment Group, USA.

Noe, G 2002, *Irreversible*, Les Cinémas de la Zone, France.

On Golden Pond 1981, motion picture, IPC Films, UK.

Ordinary People 1980, motion picture, Paramount Pictures, USA

O'Sullivan, M 1999, 'A Derivative Dazzling 'Matrix'', *The Washington Post*, 2 April, viewed 1 November 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/matrixosullivan.htm>

Paycheck 2003, motion picture, Paramount, USA.

Peggy Sue Got Married 1986, motion picture, TriStar Pictures, USA.

Pleasantville 1998, motion picture, New Line Cinema, USA.

Powell, D 2006, *Studying Donnie Darko*, Auteur, Bedfordshire.

Primer 2004, motion picture, ThinkFilm, USA.

Prince of Persia 1989, computer game, Broderbund, USA.

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time 2010, motion picture, Walt Disney Pictures, USA.

Propp, V 1968, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd edn, University of Texas Press, Austin.

Pulp Fiction 1994, motion picture, Miramax, USA.

Raiders of the Lost Ark 1981, motion picture, Paramount Pictures, USA.

Rashomon 1950, motion picture, Daiei Motion Picture Company, Japan.

Reservoir Dogs 1992, motion picture, Live Entertainment, USA.

Resident Evil 4 2004, video game, Capcom, USA.

Rickitt, R 2007, *Special Effects: The History and Technique*, Billboard Books, NY.

Ricoeur, P 1984a, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

---- 1984b, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 2, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

---- 1988, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

----1991, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, Northwest University Press, USA.

---- 1992, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Rouse III, R 2005, *Game Design: Theory & Practice*, 2nd edn, Wordware Publishing, Inc, Texas.

Run Lola Run 1998, motion picture, X-Filme Creative Pool, Germany.

Ryan, ML 2004, 'Metaleptic Machines', *Semiotica*, Vol. 150, No. 1-4, pp. 439-69.

Ryle, G 1963, *The Concept of Mind*, Penguin Books, Middlesex.

Saenger, D n.d., *Next*, Review Express, viewed 22 June 2009,

<http://www.reviewexpress.com/review.php?rv=455>

Scream 1996, motion picture, Dimension Films, USA.

Seger, L 1990, *Creating Unforgettable Characters*, Holt Paperbacks, NY.

---- 1994, *Making a Good Script Great*, 2nd edn, Samuel French Trade, CA.

---- 2003, *Advanced Screenwriting*, Silman-James Press, CA.

Seiter, E, Borchers, H, Kreutzner & Wrath, EM (eds.) 1991, *Remote Control*,
Routledge, London.

Shklovsky, V 2005, *Knight's Move*, Dalkey Archive Press, Illinois.

Shortcuts 1993, motion picture, Spelling Pictures International Avenue Pictures,
USA.

Shutter Island 2010, motion picture, Paramount Pictures, USA.

Singing in the Rain 1952, motion picture, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA.

Sliding Doors 1998, motion picture, Intermedia Films, UK.

Smith, GM 2003, *Film Structure and the Emotion System*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Snatch 2000, motion picture, Columbia Pictures, UK.

Solaris 2002, motion picture, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, USA.

Stadler, J & McWilliam, K 2009, *Screen Media: Analysing Film and Television*, Allen & Unwin, NSW.

Stagecoach 1939, motion picture, Walter Wanger Productions, USA.

Strange Days 1995, motion picture, Lightstorm Entertainment, USA.

Stringer, J (ed.) 2003, *Movie Blockbusters*, Routledge, London.

---- 2003, Introduction to *Movie Blockbusters*, Routledge, London.

Strunk, W & White, EB 1999, *The Elements of Style*, Allyn & Bacon 4th edn, MA.

Swain, DV 1976, *Film Screenwriting: A Practical Manual*, Focal Press, London.

Synecdoche, New York 2008, motion picture, Likely Story, USA.

Syriana 2005, motion picture, Warner Bros, USA.

Tasker, Y 1995, *Spectacular Bodies*, Routledge, USA.

The Abyss 1989, motion picture, Twentieth Centaury Fox Film Corporation, USA.

The Butterfly Effect 2004, motion picture, BenderSpink, USA.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligary, motion picture, Decla-Bioscope AG, Germany.

The Elegant Universe 2003, 3-Part Documentary Series, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), began airing 28 October.

The Evil Dead 1981, motion picture, Renaissance Pictures, USA.

The Gift 2000, motion picture, Lakeshore Entertainment, USA.

The Last Temptation of Christ 1988, motion picture, Cineplex-Odeon, USA.

The Matrix 1999, motion picture, Groucho II Film Partnership, USA.

The Matrix Reloaded 2003, motion picture, Warner Bros, USA.

The Matrix Revolutions 2003, motion picture, Warner Bros, USA.

The Ring 2002, motion picture, DreamWorks SKG, USA.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show 1975, motion picture, Twentieth Century Fox, UK.

The Searchers 1956, motion picture, C.V. Whitney Pictures, USA.

The Sixth Sense 1999, motion picture, Batty Mendel Productions, USA.

The Shining 1980, motion picture, Warner Bros. Pictures, UK.

The Usual Suspects 1995, motion picture, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, USA.

The Vanishing American 1952, motion picture, Republic Pictures, USA.

The Virtual Revolution 2010, 4-part series, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), began airing 30 January.

The Weekend Australian Magazine, April 26-27, 2008, p. 20, viewed 30 April 2008.

Thompson, K & Bordwell, D 2010, *Film History*, 3rd edn, McGraw-Hill,

Titanic 1997, motion picture, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, USA.

Tobias, R 1993, *20 Master Plots and How to Build Them*, Writer's Digest Books, Cincinnati.

Todorov, T 1975, *The Fantastic: A structural Approach to Literary Genre*, Cornell University Press, NY.

Too Many Ways to be Number 1 1997, motion picture, Golden Harvest Company, Hong Kong.

Triangle 2009, motion picture, Icon Entertainment International, UK.

Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story 2005, motion Picture, BBC Films, UK.

Turan, K 2005, 'Syriana', *Los Angeles Times*, 23 November, viewed 4 April 2010, <http://www.calendarlive.com/movies/turan/cl-et-syriana23nov23,0,7214793.story>

Vogler, C 2007, *The Writer's Journey*, 3rd edn, Michael Wiese Productions, CA.

Walter, R 1988, *Screenwriting: The Art, Craft and Business of Film and Television Writing*, Plume, NY.

Wardrip-Fruin, N & Montfort, N (eds.) 2003, *The New Media Reader*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Weiberg, B 2002, 'Beyond Interactive Cinema', August, viewed 20 September 2008,
<http://www.keyframe.org/txt/interact/>

Wikipedia n.d., *Next*, viewed 22 June 2009, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Next_film

Willett, J (ed.) 1974, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, 2nd edn,
Eyre Methuen Ltd., London.

Williams, SD 2006, *The Moral Premise*, Michael Wiese Productions, CA.

Williamson, J 1978, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd., London.

Wolf, FA1991, *Parallel Universes*, Paladin, London.

Wollen, P 1972, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, 3rd edn, Indiana University
Press, Bloomington.

Young, K 2002 ' "That Fabric of Times": A Response to David Bordwell's "Film
Futures" ' *SubStance* 97, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 88-104, viewed 16 June 2011,
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3686812>

Zalis, E 2008, *Remediated Visions & Digital Memories*, 2nd edn, Elayne Zalis, CA.